MATERIAL HISTORIES OF THE HUMAN RECORD

https://materialhistories.yale.edu

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GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN MATERIAL HISTORIES OF THE HUMAN RECORD

The archive, the book: Our ability to bear witness, hold history to account, and imagine a more just future is at the core of the humanities as a scholarly project. The certificate in Material Histories of the Human Record is designed to expose students to multiple forms of expertise within Yale's special collections libraries, equip emerging scholars with new analytical skills, and teach them the methodologies that scholars, librarians, archivists, conservators, and curators employ as they preserve, interrogate, and steward the human record. Drawing on Yale Libraries’ extraordinary collections and staff expertise, and the ongoing faculty interest in the histories and politics of archives, the material text, and metadata, the graduate certificate in Material Histories of the Human Record fosters innovation at the interstices and intersections of disciplines.

"Material histories" signals an expansive interest in a wide variety of materials and media—not only manuscripts, written documents and paper-based records, but also papyrus fragments, tablets, photographs, film, textile, audio, three-dimensional works, and other formats. The purview of the certificate also necessarily includes an engagement with the opportunities and challenges of new digital methods for preservation, cataloging, and research. Areas of particular focus for the certificate may include: archival studies and theories of archives; global histories of the book; material formats and their histories; the non-neutrality of metadata; privacy and questions of evidence; social injustice in/and/as the historical record; preservation and conservation science; international law, the book trade, and provenance.
Eligibility

The certificate is open to graduate students pursuing the Ph.D. or a professional school degree, with the approval of their director of graduate studies (DGS). Interested students should meet with one of the certificate’s directors during their first two years of graduate study. Requirements for the certificate must be completed by the time that the student’s dissertation (or equivalent program requirement) is filed.

Requirements for the Certificate in Material Histories of the Human Record

Students who wish to receive the certificate must complete the following course work, research, and teaching requirements:

**Course work** Each student must take MHHR 700, Theory and Praxis of Material Histories. In addition, each student will be required to take two elective courses, which will also count towards the student’s doctoral coursework in their department. At least one of these courses would need to be substantively taught with collections; the other course may be a directed reading or focus on archives, book history, or metadata as a theoretical or historical object of study. Each student will be expected to organize their elective courses around a concentration related to their departmental coursework and doctoral research. A list of eligible Yale courses will be compiled each academic year.

**Practicum** In addition to the two elective courses, in order to facilitate specialization, students will be expected to propose a capstone project with one of Yale’s cultural heritage institutions (to be approved by the student’s DGS and the co-directors of the Certificate). This practicum can take place either during the academic year (in years 2 or 3 of graduate study), or during the summer (at the end of years 2 or 3). It will be structured as a directed reading/independent study for course credit and will involve practical experience in the field. From the start of their pursuit of the certificate, students will consult with the co-directors on what kinds of projects would work best for them. Possible projects include assisting with: the curation of an exhibition, reparative archival description, the Black Bibliography Project, provenance research, scientific conservation analysis. The practicum should culminate in either a final paper and/or a public presentation (which might take the form of a symposium, a finding aid, a descriptive bibliography, an edition, an exhibit, a digital humanities project, etc.). The co-directors will maintain an ongoing list of possible opportunities and also help to facilitate new ones based on students’ and librarians’ interest. Students will then be matched with an appropriate advisor/mentor who help guide the project.

**Teaching** Students will commit to doing significant teaching in the collections through one of the following pathways: (a) serving as a teaching fellow in a course with a substantial collections-based curriculum (such as courses associated with the “Six Pretty Good Ideas” first-year program); (b) assisting with a Beinecke intensive course 3-4 times a semester; (c) supporting collections-based courses on a one-off basis 4-6 times over the course of a year. In addition to providing students with pedagogical training, this requirement will expand the opportunities for undergraduates to be exposed to and engage with Yale’s collections. The co-directors will also work on creating Graduate Professional Development opportunities for students within the Yale libraries which can
be used as a substitute for the teaching requirement. Students should plan to consult early with the certificate co-directors and their DGS to plan for this requirement.

CERTIFICATE WORKSHOP

MHHR 700: Theory and Praxis of Material Histories

This year-long workshop, to be offered every other year, will take the form of a half-credit course in each semester that meets six times a term to develop students’ understanding of the concepts, debates, methodologies, theories, and real-world constraints of the material histories of the human record. The first semester will focus on key concepts, genealogies of the archival and library science fields, the history of the market for archives and books, and current polemics in the field including addressing legacies of racism and white privilege, the tensions between privacy and censorship, provenance issues and export laws, and post-custodial approaches. The second semester will focus on methods and skills in teaching with and doing research in the material histories of the human record.