

HIS100-03: Writing From the Margins

Dr. Kelly J. Maynard • History Department • Fall Semester 2022

Tuesdays 10:00-11:50 a.m., Thurs 10:00-10:50 a.m.

HSSC S2116



L: Dave the Potter, storage jar, 1858 (Lewis Miles Pottery, photo Gavin Ashworth)

R: Agnes Richter, the little jacket, 1895 (Prinzhorn Collection, Heidelberg)

OVERVIEW

Whose lives get preserved in the historical record? How? Why? This course is an introduction to issues of historical causation, argumentation, positionality, and evidence. Through the dual lenses of autobiography and material culture, we explore the stories of people who lived at the very margins of their social contexts. Exploring the ceramic work of an enslaved person in the U.S. named Dave and the embroidered jackets of a German psychiatric patient named Agnes Richter, we consider how, despite the odds, first-person traces of individual existence survive. Students develop their own research projects on the stubborn, willful interactions of hand, text, and material.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this course are:

- to engage critically with a range of primary sources, learning to interrogate their authorship, biases, contexts, and variably interpretable meanings
- to examine the work of modern scholars, identifying their arguments and use of evidence, and positioning their arguments in relation to one another
- to familiarize ourselves with some of the ways that historians – as well as scholars from other disciplines – approach material culture, social status, and writing about the self
- to cultivate speaking and listening skills and the clear presentation of our ideas through class discussions
- to become familiar with the work, lives, and contexts of Dave the Potter and Agnes Richter in early-to-mid nineteenth-century South Carolina and late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century Germany, respectively
- to develop research and writing skills to contextualize and analyze individually-selected case studies of “writing from the margins”
- to present case studies at the end of the course clearly, thoughtfully, and engagingly

PRINCIPLES, REQUIREMENTS, & GRADING

Principles

As we navigate together the upside-down C19 world of online learning, please bear in mind the THRIVE principles codified at the College in the spring of 2020. These are:

Talk to improve transparency,
Health and safety must remain a top priority for our entire campus community,
Re-imagine and reconsider what is possible and necessary,
Inclusion requires flexibility,
Value all experiences of vulnerability,
Empathy requires all of us to be aware, sensitive, and responsive.

This means that above all, we are working TOGETHER as a community to learn, to push each other, to respect each other, to empathize with each other, and to be humans together. So I am doubling down here on the necessity for us to embrace mutual support and grace as we move through the semester. Requirement number one, then, is that we all do our best as humans.

Class Meetings

As for the nuts and bolts, please arrive on time to class and be prepared to stay through the scheduled end of the meeting. **Come to class having done the work listed on the syllabus for that day and collected in advance your thoughts, questions, and comments for discussion.** A fruitful conversation stems from prepared participants who come ready to engage, both by speaking AND by listening and responding to others' ideas.

Attendance

Because of the nature of the C19 pandemic and its effects, I am not implementing a hard and fast penalty for absences from class. However, pandemic or no, I DO value communication with you above all things. If you must miss class for whatever reason, please alert me via email as soon as possible. We can discuss ways to get materials that you missed to you.

Similarly, because participation in discussions and discussion boards is such an integral part of the class (see below), your grade will suffer from extended absences from class and boards. Please do your best to keep up at all times.

Deadlines

There will be a number of different, small assignments as the course progresses and each has reasonable deadlines for completion. As with attendance, however, I recognize that there are many things happening in your lives of which this course is but one piece. I am much more interested in you doing your best on an assignment than in you handing it in "on time" per se, as long as we can strike a balance and avoid debilitating procrastination or the triumph of crippling perfectionism. Please try to meet deadlines, communicate with me if you are unable for any reason, and we can work together to make arrangements from there.

- Participation 35%
- Film review assignment 10%
- Thesis statement assignment 10%
- Article review paper 10%
- Research project scaffolding components 10%
- Research project annotated bibliography 15%
- Research project presentation 15%

All of the items here are designed to build skills and provide exposure to many of the kinds of assignments you will be asked to master in future history classes. Each of these will be explained in more detail over the course of the term. The most substantive assignment is an individual project developed in consultation with the instructor on any topic relating to marginalized historical voices, autobiography, and/or material culture. You will be responsible for 1) a number of small scaffolding assignments as you develop your project, 2) an annotated bibliography recording the research your project entailed, and 3) an end-of-semester presentation of your research findings. Also, please note that there is no final exam for this class.

PARTNERS AND RESOURCES

I want every person in this class to succeed and am deeply committed to creating an environment that helps make that possible. I encourage students with documented disabilities in any form to discuss reasonable accommodations with me. If you have not yet, please start a conversation about and provide documentation of your disability to Jae Hirschman, Coordinator for Student Disability Resources, at hirschma@grinnell.edu.

Grinnell's Writing, Reading, and Speaking Center supports students working on papers, projects, presentations, and applications. Schedule a session with one of the Center's professional instructors and get feedback as you interpret readings, talk through your ideas, analyze evidence, develop and organize arguments, craft introductions and conclusions, rewrite sentences and paragraphs, or plan presentations. Center instructors do not proofread papers, but they can show you how to edit your own work effectively. Make an appointment online: <http://mywco.com/grinnell>

COURSE MATERIALS

John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2000 (10th ed.) [ISBN: 019285352X] (REQUIRED TEXT). Additional readings (indicated by a bullet (•)) will be available on PWeb or online. Please note that the scheduling of all assignments is subject to change based on the ebb and flow of class discussions.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Thurs 8/25 **Course Introduction**

DOING HISTORY

Tues 8/30 **True Stories and the History of Doing History**

Reading for Discussion:

- Arnold Chapters 1-3

Thurs 9/1 **Sources + Methods**
 • Arnold chapters 4 + 5

Tues 9/6 **Mentalité, Truths, and the Tools of Dissent**
 • Darnton, “Workers Revolt: The Great Cat Massacre of the Rue Saint-Séverin” (1984)
 • Arnold Chapters 6 + 7

Thurs 9/8 Discussion: *A Midwife’s Tale*
 Film review assignment handed out in class

CONSIDERING AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Tues 9/13 Considering Autobiography
 • Smith and Watson, Introduction to *De/Colonization and the Politics of Discourse in Women’s Autobiographical Practices* (1988), pp. xiii-xxi

Thurs 9/15 • Russell, Heather (excerpt) Chapter 2: “The Poetics of Biomythography: The Work of Audre Lorde” in *Legba’s Crossing: Narratology in the African Atlantic* (2009), pp. 59-65
 Film review assignment due 9:00 p.m.

MATERIAL CULTURE STUDIES

Tues 9/20 Moving into Material Culture Studies
 • Leonie Hannan and Sarah Longair, “Approaches to the Material World” in *History Through Material Culture* (2017), pp. 15-42
 Thesis statement assignment handed out in class

Thurs 9/22 Institutionalizing MCS
 • Miller and Tilley, inaugural editorial introduction to *Journal of Material Culture Studies* Vol. 1, no. 1 (1996): 5-14

Tues 9/27 • AHR Conversation: Historians and the Study of Material Culture in *American Historical Review* (December 2009): 1355-1404
 Thesis statement assignment due 9:00 p.m.

CASE STUDY #1: DAVE

Thurs 9/29 • Leonard Todd, “Dave’s Life” http://leonardtodd.com/daves-life_283.html from *Carolina Clay: The Life and Legend of the Slave Potter Dave* (2008)
 • Dave the Potter, Inscriptions (in *Carolina Clay*, pp. 229-252)

Tues 10/4 • J.W. Joseph, ““... All of Cross” – African Potters, Marks, and Meanings in the Folk Pottery of the Edgefield District, South Carolina” in *Historical Archaeology* 45, no. 2 (2011): 134-155 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23070092>

Thurs 10/6 • Ethan Lasser, “Writing in Clay: The Materiality of Dave’s Poetry” in Michael Chaney, ed., *Where Is All My Relation? The Poetics of Dave the Potter* (2018), pp. 134-144

- Tues 10/11
- Babatunde Lawal, “Signifying Jars, Resonating Like a Banjar: Influence, Politics, and Poetics in Dave’s Pottery” in Chaney, ed., *Where Is All My Relations?*, pp. 86-100
 - Michael Bramwell, “Potter’s Field: Trauma and Representation in the Art of David Drake” in Chaney, ed., *Where Is All My Relations?*, pp. 198-208

- Thurs 10/13
- Reconstructing Dave
- Theaster Gates, Opening Night Lecture “To Speculate Darkly”, Milwaukee Art Museum (2010) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QWXC36fHNc>

FALL BREAK

- Tues 10/25
- Working in Clay – class at the Stew
- Research project proposal due 9:00 p.m.

- Thurs 10/27
- Charles Warnier, “Inside and Outside: Surfaces and Containers” (C12) in Tilley et al, eds., *Handbook of Material Culture* (2007), pp. 186-195

- Tues 11/1
- Considering the Museum with Susan Baley, director, GC Museum of Art
- Reverent Ornament: Art from the Islamic World

CASE STUDY #2: AGNES

- Thurs 11/3
- Hornstein, Gail A. C24 “Visions Wrapped in Riddles” and C25 “Written on the Body” in *Agnes’s Jacket: A Psychologist’s Search for the Meanings of Madness* (2009), pp. 245-269

- 11/3 con’t
- Roger Cardinal, “Madness and Art” in *Outsider Art* (1973), pp. 16-23
- Research project annotation due 9:00 p.m.

- Tues 11/8
- Nancy Reagin, “The *Habitus* of Domesticity” in *Sweeping the German Nation: Domesticity and National Identity in Germany, 1870-1945* (2007), pp. 16-48

- Thurs 11/10
- Catherine Dollard, “The *alte Jungfer* as New Deviant: Representation, Sex, and the Single Woman in Imperial Germany” *German Studies Review* 29, no. 1 (Feb 2006): 107-126
- Article review assignment handed out in class

- Tues 11/15
- Eilizabeth J. Donaldson, “Mental Health Issues: Alienists, Asylums, and the Mad” in Joyce L. Huff and Martha Stoddard Holmes, eds., *A Cultural History of Disability in the Long Nineteenth Century* (2020), pp. 149-168

- Thurs 11/17
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892) in Hemmings, ed. *The Textile Reader* (2012), pp. 305-314

- Tues 11/22
- Working in Thread – class at the Stew
- Article review assignment due 9:00 p.m.

THANKSGIVING

- Tues 11/29 Research project presentations I
- Thurs 12/1 Research project presentations II
- Tues 12/6 Research project presentations III
- Thurs 12/8 Research project presentations IV

FINALS WEEK

- Thurs 12/15 Research project presentations V
2:00-5:00 p.m.
- Fri 12/16 Annotated Bibliography due 12:00 noon