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19C American Writers and the Digital World
Class Time: 15-17
Class Location: 24.3.11

NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN WRITERS AND THE DIGITAL WORLD

Major digital archive projects have, in the past few years, made literary manuscripts, correspondences, and ephemera internationally accessible as never before. In this class, we will study two canonical nineteenth-century American authors—Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson—through both print editions and the curated online exhibits and archives of their work. In the process, we will consider the value of archival work to literary study, interrogating the ways that archives are and have been formed, and considering the benefits and challenges that they offer us as students of literature.

Course Objectives: The goals of this class are threefold: to survey archival theory in relation to literary study, to analyze the major works of two canonical nineteenth-century writers, and to think critically about the ways that digitization affects our reading and research practices.

Required Texts:

The print editions for this course are available at Academic Books and online. They are:

- Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings* (Norton Critical Edition; ed. Michael Moon; 2002; ISBN-13: 978-0-393-97496-6)
- Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* (Little, Brown and Company; ed. Thomas Johnson; 1976; ISBN-13: 978-0-316-18413-7)

Other readings will be available on Absalon or online.

Exam Form: This course follows exam form C, and the standard requirements for the course (including attendance, short writing assignments, and final essay) are built around the assignments for the exam formats that the majority of the students follow (Exam 2A or 3A and Exam Tilvalg A og B). If you are following a different exam format, you are responsible for being aware of your exam requirements. A summary of the different formats for exam form C is available on Absalon.

Course Requirements:

Preliminary Requirements:

Students need to complete the following requirements and assignments satisfactorily in order to be eligible to take the final exam:

- 80% attendance (12 out of 15 class sessions)
- Weekly tweet: Students are required to set up a twitter account (www.twitter.com) and compose one weekly tweet (a question, response, or synopsis) in relation to that week's reading before the beginning of class. The tweets should all include the tags #digitalarchives and the tag for that week (#week1, #week2, and so on). Students should follow me (@christavogelius) and the other class members once the list of usernames is circulated.
- One short paper (1-2 normal pages) in response to one of the readings for that week, raising points that the student found interesting, confusing, or troubling. These papers are intended to help to shape discussion, and should therefore be submitted to Absalon no later than the Tuesday before class. Questions raised in these papers may help to shape the final exam question.
- One longer paper (3-5 normal pages) in response to one or several of the readings for that week, raising points that the student found interesting, confusing, or troubling. These papers are intended to help to shape discussion, and should therefore be submitted to Absalon no later than the Tuesday before class. With these slightly longer papers, students should feel free to make connections to earlier reading in the course as well. Questions raised in these papers may help to shape the final exam question.
- Oral Presentation: A 10-minute oral presentation during the last class unit (weeks 19 & 20) on a literary digital archive drawn from a list to be determined by the instructor. Presentations should include a summary of the archive, its scholarly value, and its possible pitfalls, drawing on any readings from the course as appropriate.

Final Exam:

- A 5-7 page paper, submitted electronically and based on a question composed by the instructor. Exams will be graded according to the 7-step scale. Students will have 24 or 48 hours to complete the assignment, depending on their exam format.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 6: Introductions

Unit 1: Archive Studies

Week 7: Archive Fevers

Reading: Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression" (9-26); Carolyn Steedman, "Something She Called a Fever: Michelet, Derrida, and Dust" (essays, Absalon)

Week 8: The Interdisciplinary Archive

Reading: Marlene Manoff, "Theories of the Archive Across the Discipline"; Dana Goia, "The Magical Value of Manuscripts" (essays, Absalon)

Week 9: Controversies and Conflicts in the Archives

Reading: Gayatri Spivak, "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives"; Brent Edwards, "The Taste of the Archive" (essays, Absalon)

Week 10: The Archive Goes Digital

Reading: Nicholar Carr, "Is Google Making Us Stupid"; Jim Collins, "Reading, In a Digital Archive of One's Own" (essays, Absalon); "(Re)presenting the Archive," (interviews, archivejournal.net)

Unit 2: The Walt Whitman Archive

Week 11: Editions of Whitman

Reading: Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself" (poem, *Norton* 26-78); Michael Moon, "The Twenty-Ninth Bather: Identity, Fluidity, Gender, and Sexuality in Section 11 of 'Song of Myself'" (essay, *Norton* 850-855); familiarize yourself with the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass* (poem, *Norton* 662-752)

Week 12: Reading the Walt Whitman Archive

Reading: Ed Folsom, "Database as Genre: The Epic Transformation of Archives"; Responses to "Database as Genre" (essays, Absalon); familiarize yourselves with the WA (www.whitmanarchive.org)

Week 13: Whitman in Print and Manuscript

Reading: Walt Whitman, "O Captain, My Captain" (poem, under "Published Works, Periodicals" in the WA and *Norton* 284); "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" (*Norton* 276), "Death's Valley" (poem, under "Published Works, Periodicals" in the WA and *Norton* 489); "Eidolons" (poem, under "In Whitman's Hand, Poetry Manuscripts" and *Norton* 6)

Week 14: no class, Easter break

Unit 3: The Emily Dickinson Archive

Week 15: Editions of Dickinson

Reading: R.W. Franklin, "Introduction" from *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*; Virginia Jackson, "Beforehand" from *Dickinson's Misery* (essays, Absalon); Emily Dickinson, "Success is counted sweetest" (J67), "I heard a Fly buzz—when I died—" (J465), "I'm ceded—I've stopped being Theirs—" (J508), "I dwell in Possibility" (J657), "Because I could not Stop for death" (J712), "Tell all the Truth But tell It Slant" (J1129); familiarize yourself with edickinson.org, particularly in relation to these poems

Week 16: Dickinson in Letters

Reading: Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Letter to a Young Contributor" and "Emily Dickinson's Letters" (essays, Absalon); Emily Dickinson, "This is my letter to the World" (J441), "I cannot live with You" (J640), "A Letter is a joy of Earth" (J1639); familiarize yourself with edickinson.org, particularly in relation to these poems and the ones that Higginson mentions in his essay

Week 17: Dickinson in Fascicles

Reading: Sharon Cameron, "Amplified Contexts"; David Porter, "Strangely Abstracted Images" (essays, Absalon); Emily Dickinson, J228, J259, J260, J261, J322, J262, J291, J325, J292 (in print and on edickinson.org in the context of packet IIXXX, fascicle 13)

Unit 4: Other Digital Archives

Week 18: Student presentations on digital archives

Week 19: Royal Library Archives tour

Week 20: Conclusions and exam preparation