

University of Mary Washington, Department of Historic Preservation

HISP 491, Individual Studies: Archaeological Collections Management (EL)

Fall 2012
Combs 2012

Prof. Douglas Sanford
W: 3-5 PM; F: 3-4 PM

Course Description:

This course provides a hands-on and group research experience in archaeological collections management, utilizing the artifact, material, archival, and digital collections within the Department's laboratory and storage facilities. The course relates to a State-wide effort by the Council of Virginia Archaeologists (COVA) to improve the recognition, conditions, and accessibility of archaeological collections in public and private settings. Class activities will include addressing issues of storage and preventative conservation; updating database management systems; undertaking collections-based research; and, developing the archaeology laboratory's policies for its collections. The course will include guest speakers and one or more field trips to regional archaeological collections facilities. Besides involvement with tasks related to the inventory, assessment, and reorganization of existing collections, students will design and establish an Internet presence for the archaeology lab and its collections within the Department's and the Center for Historic Preservation's websites, thereby promoting greater visibility and use.

Course Objectives:

1. Gain familiarity with the practical methods of archaeological collections management.
2. Promote an informed awareness of the goals and ethics of archaeological collections management.
3. Contribute to the inventory, assessment, and reorganization of the Department's archaeological collections.
4. Develop an Internet presence for the Department's archaeological collections.
5. Develop a mission statement and a set of management policies for the Department's archaeological collections.

Course Format:

As a group-based research endeavor, the course combines a seminar approach with applied tasks, blending "brainstorming" with discussion of readings, practical activities, and periodic updates of progress on selected projects. As feasible, we will use the Wednesday class meeting for "laboratory" time, while the Friday class meeting will serve more for discussions.

Instructor Information: Office – Combs 128; Phone: 540-654-1314 (voice mail); **I work best by e-mail:** dsanford@umw.edu. Office hours: M: 2-3 PM; Tu.: 3-4 PM; W: 10-11 AM; Th.: 11 AM – 12 noon; F: 10-11 AM; and by appointment.

Grading: the overall course grade will be determined by student performance on the following tasks and assignments.

Class participation – 30%; Directed response to White & Breen 2012 – 15%; Team-based projects: – 35% {website development – 10%; Combs Hall lab & Trinkle Hall sub-basement “position papers” – 25% }; PowerPoint Presentation: 10%; Final exam – 10%.

Assignments submitted after established deadlines will receive a letter grade penalty per day. All submitted work is bound by the provisions of the Honor Code.

Grading Scale: In keeping with the University’s grading system, the following numerical divisions will be used to determine letter grades: A: 94-100; A-: 90-93; B+: 87-89; B: 83-86; B-: 80-82; C+: 77-79; C: 73-76; C-: 70-72; D+: 67-69; D: 60-66; F: <60%.

An overall course grade of D or F will be reported as unsatisfactory on the mid-semester report.

Classroom Behavior: During class students should turn off cell/I phones; and, should not engage in texting, twittering, or blogging. Students should demonstrate proper respect for the course instructor, class speakers, and other students.

Office of Disability Services: This office serves to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you receive service through this office and require accommodations for this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodation needs. Please bring your accommodation letter with you to the meeting and, know that I will hold any information your share with me in the strictest confidence unless you give me permission to do otherwise. If you need accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (654-1266).



Course Topics, Readings & Schedule

Week 1: August 29th and 31st

Course introduction; Initial course brainstorming & lab tour; Collections Management – key components (see Sutton & Arkush text from HISP 462); Visit to storage facilities in Trinkle Hall (sub-basement)

Week 2: September 5th and 7th

Selection of collections projects by student teams (“position papers”); lab session on projects

Discussion: “A Survey of Archaeological Repositories in Virginia,” Esther White and Eleanor Breen (2012): <http://cova-inc.org/resources/COVAcollectionsSurvey.pdf>

2nd Reading: “Repositories: What Are They, and What Do They Do?” Lynne Sullivan & Terry Childs, from *Curating Archaeological Collections: From the Field to the Repository*, pp. 45-57 (2003).

Week 3: September 12th and 14th

Lab session on collections projects (& initial drafting of position papers)

Friday: Class speaker: Eleanor Breen (Mt. Vernon) – discussion of the COVA Survey

Week 4: September 19th and 21st

Readings discussion:

Preparing for the worst – “Disaster Planning for Archaeological Collections,” Emily Williams, *Journal of Middle Atlantic Archaeology* 20:119-123 (2004).

“Managing Curated Collections: The Basics,” Lynne Sullivan & Terry Childs, from *Curating Archaeological Collections: From the Field to the Repository*, pp. 59-77 (2003).

Lab session on collections projects

Week 5: September 26th and 28th

Field trip: visit to the collections facility of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (Richmond)

Readings discussion: Considering Management Policies (mission statement, strategic plan, ethics, acquisition & de-accessioning) – brainstorming I

“The Current Status of Archaeological Collections,” Lynne Sullivan & Terry Childs, from *Curating Archaeological Collections: From the Field to the Repository*, pp. 23-44 (2003).

An updated view -

http://www.sha.org/documents/research/collections_management/AssessmentFrameworkINTRODUCTIONWEB1.pdf

Week 6: October 3rd and 5th

Work in Trinkle sub-basement

Discussion: Curatorial Standards (web-based information) – SHPO’s; professional societies (SAA, SHA); regional archaeological organizations (such as Colonial Williamsburg)

Week 7: October 10th and 12th

Topic: Research & Database Creation from Archaeological Collections

Readings: “The Virginia Archeobotanical Database Project: A Preliminary Synthesis of Chesapeake Ethnobotany,” Justine McKnight and Martin Gallivan, *Quarterly Bulletin of the Archeological Society of Virginia* 62(4):181-189; **OR**, “Constructing Chronologies from Curated Collections for Northern Virginia’s Late Woodland Period: A Threatened Sites Project,” Bernard

Means and Justine McKnight, *Quarterly Bulletin of the Archeological Society of Virginia* 65(1):16-29.

Week 8: October 17th and 19th

Website development – brainstorming I

Work on Trinkle Hall collections: inventory, draft “position papers”

Website development II – meeting with Prof. Smith

Week 9: October 24th and 26th

Website & Management Policies development III – website tasks assignment

Reading: “A Proposed Assessment Framework for Responsible Collections Management”, Society for Historical Archaeology website (www.sha.org)

Work in Trinkle sub-basement

Week 10: October 31st. and November 2nd

Fieldtrip: artifact processing and collections management in the CRM world (Dovetail Cultural Resources Group)

Brainstorm mission statement & accession policy; Photography; Work on Combs collections

Week 11: November 7th and 9th

Working session: photography; Combs & Trinkle collections/position papers

Reading: “Conservation Assessment of the Archaeological Collection at Colonial Williamsburg,” Emily Williams, *Journal of Middle Atlantic Archaeology* 18:97-103 (2002).

Week 12: November 14th and 16th

Work in Trinkle sub-basement (draft of Trinkle position paper due)

Reading: “The Future of Archaeological Collections Curation,” Lynne Sullivan & Terry Childs, from *Curating Archaeological Collections: From the Field to the Repository*, pp. 103-119 (2003).

Web section drafts due (11/16)

Week 13: November 21st and 23rd – No Class - Thanksgiving

Week 14: November 28th and 30th

Website & Management Policies development IV

Combs position paper due (11/28)

Week 15: December 5th and 7th

PowerPoint Presentations of Position Paper

Class Summary & Overview

Projecting the Collections Management Future for the Archaeology Lab at Mary Washington

Final Exam: TBA