

Updated: 9/19/05

Documenting Performance: Queering the Archive
H42.2709-001

Tuesdays 3:30 – 6:00 PM

Location: Berol Seminar Room, 3rd Floor, Bobst Library

Instructor:

Tavia Nyong'o

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2-4 PM

721 Broadway, 6th Floor, Room 628

Office telephone: (212) 998-1979

Email address: tavia.nyongo@nyu.edu

Course Description:

This course is limited due to space restrictions in the archive, so you must apply to the instructor for admission. Please do not be reluctant to apply. If you are interested, please e-mail tavia.nyongo@nyu.edu 2-3 sentences detailing a possible topic for your proposed research, and please also indicate your degree program (M.A., Ph.D, etc.) and your academic department.

This course investigates Jonathan Weinberg's proposition that "things are queer" (see <http://www.queerculturalcenter.org/Pages/Weinberg.html>). Employing theoretical and methodological tools from queer and feminist theory, art history and visual culture, deconstruction and psychoanalysis, and performance and performativity theory, this limited enrollment seminar will provide a semester-long immersion in the materials of the Downtown Collection of Fales Library, an archive that documents the extraordinary range of art, culture, and live performance in lower Manhattan and beyond from the 1970s to the present. The course will develop critical thinking around issues of documentation for performance, including those raised by the recent resurgence of documentary art. Students will also engage the new media technologies that are transforming how archives are created, accessed, and used. Each student will develop a research project that bridges the resources of the Downtown Collection with another archive of their choosing, possibly one they have developed themselves.

Required Texts:

All books are available for purchase at Bluestockings (172 Allen Street between Stanton and Rivington, Tel: (212) 777-6028) *and not at the NYU bookstore*. They are also available on reserve in Bobst.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*. New York: Penguin, 2003.

Halberstam, Judith. *In a Queer Time & Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York University Press, 2005.

Moore, Patrick. *Beyond shame: reclaiming the abandoned history of radical gay sexuality*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2004.

Myles, Eileen. *Cool for you*. New York: Soft Skull Press, 2000.

Articles are available through eReserves.

Assignments:

The structure of this seminar is research and presentation intensive. Each member of the seminar is expected to contribute to the collective outcome through participation and collaboration. The first four sessions are designed to orient the students to the nature archival holdings and to introduce into discussion three major modes of archival investigation: empirical/recovery, psychoanalytic, and performative. In the next three sessions, students will present mini-projects that demonstrate their own approach. The following four weeks will concentrate on the kinds of objectives archival research might have, including exhibition, artwork/performance, scholarship and activism. The final three classes will be devoted to presentations of the final projects, which will form the basis of the final paper due December 9th.

Class meetings:

1. September 6
Introduction to Fales and Downtown collection
2. September 13
Materials: The Downtown Scene
Reading: Patrick Moore, *Beyond Shame*; Gayle Rubin, "Its Déjà vu all over again."
3. September 20
Materials: Personal and Institutional Papers
Reading: Eileen Myles, *Cool For You*
4. September 27
Materials: Artwork and Photography
Reading: Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* & "Mourning and Melancholia"
Assignment #1 due in-class (1.5 page paper)
5. October 4
Materials: Film, Video, Sound and Electronic Media
Readings: Catherine Russell, *Experimental Ethnography*, Lucas Hilderbrand, "Grainy Days and Mondays"
6. October 11
Materials: Group Presentations
Reading: TBA
Assignment #2 due in-class (1 page proposal, 1 page bibliography)
7. October 18
Materials: Group Presentations
Reading: TBA
8. October 25
Materials: Group Presentations
Reading: TBA
9. November 1
Materials: Display

Updated: 9/19/05

Meyer, "At Home in Marginal Domains"
Assignment #3 due in-class (3-4 page paper)

10. November 8

Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*

11. November 15

Abelove, *Deep Gossip*

12. November 22

Final presentations

Reading: TBA

13. November 29

Final Presentations

Reading: TBA

14. December 6

Final Presentations

Reading: TBA