General Washington reminds the hero in Lin-Manuel Miranda’s Hamilton that people have no control over “who tells your story.” This is no news to Caribbean-born Alexander Hamilton, who grew up in a region where archives have had a fleeting history: Pirates looted them; colonial administrations shipped the archives’ contents to Europe; corrupt governments erased records entirely. Because of that history, it has been argued that Caribbean nations have no recorded history. Contrary to historical narratives that have denied the existence of the region’s archives, like Miranda’s Hamilton we will reimagine the ways in which, from the 19th-century revolutionary period to the digital present, Caribbean nations have assembled private and public archives and transformed them into a political tool to produce historical knowledge about their people. Through readings in theory, Caribbean historiography, literature, film and visual art, we will consider important archival functions such as colonial governance, state coercion and corruption, the forming of race and gender identities, art, and technology. While discussing how and why societies build their archives, students will become familiar with current debates on cultural heritage and reflect on how theoretical frameworks function in cross-cultural contexts.

**Required Materials**

Books available for purchase:

All other readings and audiovisual materials can be found in Blackboard (Bb).

Course Guidelines

The course consists of weekly seminars and includes mandatory field trips to archives, libraries, and museums in New York City. Home to some of the world’s top Caribbean collections, these institutions will offer students the opportunity to study and gain first-hand knowledge of the psychological and material layout of Caribbean archives, and how these elements instill an experience of history in visitors. In addition to critical papers on these collections, students will create and curate a digital archive of Caribbean records.

45% papers (15% each): Students will write three 3-4 page critical essays. The first of these should summarize and question the criticism we discuss in the first weeks of classes. The other two will examine a collection visited during our field trips and must incorporate the texts and other materials covered in the course. The aim of these papers is to improve your academic writing skills. I will work one-on-one with you to help you assess your writing and move it forward. Deadlines are detailed in the calendar below.

15% participation: Students are expected to come prepared and to actively participate in each class. Do the readings and watch the films ahead of time, push yourself to think critically and analytically about them. How do the assigned readings and the visual art connect with other ideas or materials that we have seen in class? What impact does the text, object, or movie seek to have (regarding audience, field, historical context)? Write down the questions and comments that emerge along the way so that you can use them in the discussion.

5% oral presentation: In pairs, students will present one of the assigned readings once during the semester. The presentation will last 20 minutes and should revolve around your interpretation of the text and not a summary of it. Your presentation must also include an activity that involves the class. Be creative! On the day of your presentation, you have to provide a copy of your presentation outline to each of your peers and me. Each pair should discuss their presentation with me a week in advance.

15% weekly entries on your Omeka collection: By the end of each week, using our site visits and readings you will post an entry on your Omeka gallery online (about 5-6 double-spaced pages total). The gallery allows you to choose an object, theme, or idea and curate it using your set of criteria. You can use the entries in your collection to write your papers. By the end of the semester, you will curate your collection and prepare a digital exhibition (more details on that assignment below). The web page is not available to the public, but it is open to the class.

20% multimedia academic essay, also known as Omeka exhibition: Omeka allows users to create complex and rich narratives using their collections. For the final project, students will weave their Omeka entries into a 6-8 page multimedia essay. Students will individually discuss their essay with me during the semester. A description of your essay with a main hypothesis, supporting arguments, and a bibliography is due on Wednesday, October 11. You should turn in a detailed outline of your essay on Wednesday, November 8, where you explain how your thesis works using your project’s most relevant materials, and how these connect to the topics in our course. On the last two weeks of class, students will present a polished draft of their exhibition and engage the class in discussing their ideas. The final draft of the exhibition is due on the date of the final, which will be announced in due course.
LATE ASSIGNMENTS will not be accepted unless you have spoken to me a week in advance and we have agreed upon an extended deadline.

Academic Integrity

NYU expects and requires its students to adhere to the highest standards of scholarship, research and academic conduct. Essential to the process of teaching and learning is the periodic assessment of students' academic progress through measures such as papers, examinations, presentations, and other projects. Academic dishonesty compromises the validity of these assessments as well as the relationship of trust within the community. Students who engage in such behavior will be subject to review and the possible imposition of penalties in accordance with the standards, practices, and procedures of NYU and its colleges and schools. Violations may result in failure on a particular assignment, failure in a course, suspension or expulsion from the University, or other penalties. For more information, please visit the Policy on Academic Integrity for Students at NYU, or consult me in the event of any uncertainty on your part about what may constitute academic dishonesty.

Class Reading Schedule

Week 1  Introduction

Wed 9/6  Definition of archive. The hierarchies of archives (private, public, colonial, royal, mobile, fixed, digital, national, libraries, museums, office cabinets, etc.). Why should we study archives? Why should we study Caribbean archives in particular?


Theories of the Archive

Week 2  The Archival Turn: Psycho-Analytic and Poststructuralist Theories


Week 3  Postcolonial Theories of the Archive


**Caribbean Archives in History**

**Week 4  Early Colonial Archives: Records of Religion, Race, Slavery, and Immigration**


Due: First paper

**Week 5  Public Record Archives in the Age of Revolution**


Thu 10/5  Field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art

**Week 6  Archives Between Colonial and Postcolonial Orders**


Due: Omeka exhibition preliminary description and bibliography

**Week 7**  
The Private Record Collector, Collecting in Diaspora and at Home

**Wed 10/18**  


Explore the private collection of Arthur A. Schomburg [here](#). Approx. 25 pages.  
Explore the private collection of Lydia Cabrera [here](#). Approx. 38 pages.

**Thu 10/19**  
Field trip to the Schomburg Center

**Week 8**  
The Secret Archives of War, Foreign Intervention, and Dictatorship I

**Wed 10/25**  
Field trip to the CUNY DSI Archives and Libraries

Due: Second paper

**Week 9**  
The Secret Archives of War, Foreign Intervention, and Dictatorship II

**Wed 11/1**  


**Contemporary Visual and Narrative Expressions of Archives and History**

**Week 10**  
Creole Archives: on the Politics of a Local Cultural Discourse

**Wed 11/8**  


Excerpts from Kempadoo, Roshini. Creole in the Archive: Imagery, Presence and the Location of the Caribbean Figure (2016). 15 pages.

Week 11  Rewrite the Archive through Fiction
Due: Omeka exhibition outline

Week 12  Documenting the Archive: an Archiving Aesthetic
Benaim, Abner. Invasión (2014). 1h 34min.
Thu 11/30  Field trip to El Museo del Barrio
Due: Third paper

Caribbean Archives Now

Week 13  National Archives and Caribbean Digital Collections Today
Caribbean Collections at the Yale University Library Approx. 15 pages.
The Digital Library of the Caribbean Approx. 20 pages.

Project Presentations

Week 14  Conclusions: Caribbean Archives as Aftermath
Wed 12/13  Project presentations
TO HELP YOU WITH YOUR PRESENTATIONS

1. **Content, organization, and vocabulary.** Make sure that ideas are clear, well-organized, and that your use of vocabulary is adequate and relevant. Keep your classmates engaged!

2. **Activity.** A well-structured activity maintains the interest and attention of your audience. It also helps with the analysis of the text, is creative, presents adequate information, and uses visual aids. Be strategic!

3. **Delivery.** Your presentation should be clearly intelligible to your audience.

ADVICE FOR YOUR ACADEMIC WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Evidence of understanding:**
   a) Your thesis should be clear.
   b) Your topic should be relevant, well-organized into paragraphs and topic sentences.

2. **Evidence of analysis:**
   a) Make sure that you show an awareness of the text's importance and demonstrate a thorough reading of it, trace connections with other texts.
   b) Explain your thesis in detail using quotations from the source.
   c) Your analysis of the text should be logical, with a clear presentation of ideas.

3. **Evidence of reflection:**
   a) Present conclusions and implications.
   b) Suggest ideas for future research.

4. **Format:**
   a) Cite using MLA format.
   b) Save enough time to edit your text (it pays off!).