Ephemeral things are marginal things. They have been cast away or ignored; they have been consigned to no archive, fond, collection, treasury or compendium. Ephemera are statements and communications that are not meant to be kept; they were produced with no intention of preservation or consignment. They are of the moment.

This graduate course disentangles ideas of ephemerality through an explicit study of collecting/not collecting and archiving/not archiving. Theorizing the ephemeral must be a theory of the everyday. It is a theory of gazes; it is a theory of the mobility of things; it is a theory of passing by: of the world passing us by and of us passing by things. One thinking of the ephemeral is that it is something that is truly a fleeting experience, one that cannot be remembered. This is the ephemeral that is opposed to persistence and permanence. That which passes into oblivion with no enduring record can be said to have been ephemeral—a judgment or valuation that is only proven in hindsight.

One approach to exploring the ephemeral will be through a close examination of archives. We will be visiting multiple archives (on and off campus) and exploring archival theory with the goal of understanding the limits of the practice and concept. As such students will develop a critique of the archive alongside tools for conducting research within it and on it.

**Professor:** Craig Campbell  
**Class room:** 4.120 SAC building  
**Seminar schedule:** Mondays, 1-4pm  
**Office hours:** By appointment or Wednesdays 11-noon.  
**Office location:** SAC 4.122

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**Seminars.** We meet weekly for our seminars. Each Monday we will pursue close readings of assigned articles. We will also use this time to report on, share, and workshop ongoing projects. In addition to our meetings (sometimes in place of our meetings) we will visit various archives.

**Assignments.**

As a major project for this course students will curate a collection of images or things from a public archive (or from their own collections or research). We will be actively work-shopping the projects as they move through various stages until a final presentation at the end of the course.

Another important assignment is the Theory Surge project. Theory Surge is an experimental element in the seminar designed to re-construct a typical advanced theory course. The idea behind theory surge is to generate a reading course that is collaboratively developed by the instructor and the students. The principle behind theory surge is collaborative emergent design. The instructor will lay down a number of critical readings in the study of a core topic or theme. Within the first weeks the instructor and the students extend the theme by choosing a series of readings and cultural texts that
extend the syllabus. By the end of the course there will be a collaboratively built conceptual framework from which participants can build further independent studies. This is an active learning approach that seeks to get seminar participants thinking about intellectual and ideational trajectories.

- **Participation +/- grade.**
  - Are you present in class (bodily & socially)? Does it appear as though you’ve read the articles and come to class prepared to fully participate?
  - Weak participation will negatively impact your grade just as strong participation will positively impact your grade (ie. A to A-, B to B+).

- **Collection 30%**
  - You are expected to make weekly additions to an physical and virtual collection and to participate by way of commentary and analysis that makes explicit effort to engage with theories, critiques, and histories explored in our readings. I will provide a Tumblr or Wordpress blog to which you will participate.

- **Archival report 25%**
  - Independent research into an archival collection. Consider this as a kind of preliminary ethnography of an archival institution. Your report must reflect upon on the structure of the archive (how it fits into a larger archive or group of archives), who runs it, how it runs, who uses it, how they use it. You will consider mundane things like spatial organization, location of the archive, access, etc. The report should feature visual documentation as well as description and analysis. I’m looking for a 5-6 page written report (plus images).

- **Reading notes 20%**
  - Hand in reading notes every week.
    - This is at least one page summary for the materials are reading any given week. We will take turns being lead discussant. In that case you are required to email reading notes to the group on the Friday before Monday’s class.

- **Theory Surge 10%**
  - Phase I: Propose two or three possible readings and cultural texts to the class. The class will vote on one of these and it will be added to our weekly reading schedule. These readings should link your own research but they must be convincingly linked to the themes that emerge in the class.
  - Phase II: Lead a close reading of the readings/texts in class.

- **Final Project 15%**
  - This is a self-directed project. A proposal is due by September 30th. It can be a paper, an annotated collection, a scrapbook, a website, or something else. It should be roughly equal to the amount of work it takes to produce a 10-20 page paper but must include at least ten pages of well-researched, articulated, and argued critique.
Due on the last day of class or three days before I have to hand in grades.

Reading

I am assigning two books (Foucault and Merewether) and a series of articles (to be distributed in class). Readings will be elaborated in class (and listed on-line) in collaboration with the seminar participants. Readings will also include those selected by your classmates as outlined in the Theory Surge assignment.

Books you need to purchase


Notices.

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259, [http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/](http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/)

UT Honor Code (or statement of ethics) and an explanation or example of what constitutes plagiarism (Link to University Honor Code: [http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html](http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html))

“By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.”

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.

Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.

Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.

In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors.

Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050

Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: [www.utexas.edu/emergency](http://www.utexas.edu/emergency)