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 discourses surrounding archives as institutions as well as the archive as a concept. Theorizing the ephemeral is a theory of time and of the everyday. It is a theory of gazes; it is a theory of the mobility of things; it is a theory of duration: 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 seminar participants will develop a critique of the archive alongside tools for conducting research within it and on it.
Archive & Ephemera. Anthropology 394 - Fall 2017
Professor: Craig Campbell
Classroom: SAC 4.120
Class Website: Canvas

Seminar schedule: Fridays, 9am-noon
Office hours: By appointment or Thursdays 1-2pm
Office location: SAC 4.122 – (note that my office is a gun free zone).

Inclusive learning environment statement

The best learning environment is one in which all participants feel respected while being productively challenged. I recognize that there are cultural antagonisms towards (and challenges faced by) people of color, women, LGBTQ identified folk, linguistic minorities and others. My goal is to help you feel safe to express your ideas, criticisms, and questions. I am dedicated to fostering an inclusive atmosphere, in which all participants can contribute, explore, and challenge their own ideas as well as those of others. Every participant has an active responsibility to foster a climate of intellectual stimulation, openness, and respect for diverse perspectives, questions, personal backgrounds, abilities, and experiences. I recognize my responsibility for maintaining this climate.

Seminars.

We meet weekly for our seminars. Each Friday we will undertake a close reading 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 on campus.

Reading

I have assigned one book, one comic, one magazine, and a series of articles (to be distributed via canvas). The articles range from theories of everyday life, the anthropology of luminosity, addiction, sensory ethnography, walking, photography, and breathing. We will consider the work of Ann Cvetkovich, Michel Foucault, Ann Stoler, Diana Taylor, Carolyn Steedman, Jacques Derrida, and others. You are expected to read all the assigned pages and to come to seminar prepared to talk critically about them.


“Issue Number Six: The Total Archive | Limn.” 2017. Accessed August 28. http://limn.it/issue/06. You can order a print copy of this special issue of Limn, “The Total Archive.” Or you can view and print the whole thing out on line:

Assignments and Grades

- **Participation. (15%)**
  - 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?

- **Reading notes and seminar discussions (15%)**
  - Upload a single page of notes. With your name, the date, and the readings noted.
  - Upload to canvas by noon the day before classes.
  - You will be asked to lead discussion on a rotating basis.

- **Collection of Ephemera. (25%)**
  - Choose something ephemeral to collect for the duration of the class. As a major project for this course you must curate a collection of images, experiences, or things. We will be actively work-shopping the projects as they move through various stages until a final presentation at the end of the course.
    - 1st Presentation in class: Sept. 15
    - 2nd Presentation in class: Oct. 13
    - Final presentation and paper: Dec. 8

- **Archive report. (20%)**
  - Visit an archive (and a specific collection). Do an in-class presentation. Hand in a five-page report.
  - Presentation on October 20th.
  - Due on November 3rd.

- **Final Assignment. (25%)**
  - Due on December 8, 2017