

**McGill University**  
**School of Information Studies**

**Archival Principles and Practices**  
**Winter 2021 GLIS 645**  
**Gordon Burr**

**Course Description:**

This course is an introduction to the fundamental principles and practice of archival studies. Basic problems and solutions related to archival functions such as acquisition, appraisal, arrangement, description, preservation, and public services will be discussed. An exploration of both past and present societal organizational structures and records keeping systems will be undertaken from the archival perspective.

**Goals and objectives:**

The course introduces students to the principles of archival science and the activities of professional archivists. The objectives are to make students familiar with the history and societal context for archives, archival reference tools, basic professional skills of archivists and the management of archives.

**Content:**

The course will cover the following areas: professional values and principles, institutional records keeping practices, historical methodology and archival research, history and functions of archives, legal frameworks for Archives, and the archival functions of preservation management, reference services and outreach, arrangement, description, acquisition, as well as appraisal theory and practice.

**Topics: (by week) All lectures will be pre-recorded and available before class.**

1. Defining Archives

Definition of Archives

- American, British, and Canadian perspectives

2. History of Archives

- Ancient world
- Archives pre-1789
- Modern Archives

### 3. Records Keeping Practices and Systems

- Classification systems
- Retention schedules
- Digital records

### 4. Archival Profession

- Custodial Age
- Information Age
- Post Modern Age

### 5. Arrangement

- Principle of arrangement
- Problems of physical arrangement
- Reclassification procedures

### 6. Historical Methodology

- Traditional approach
- Focus on records keeping
- Diplomatics

### 7-8. Description

- Conceptual levels from general to specific
- Scope and content notes
- Diverse types of finding aids
- Descriptive standards in Canada and beyond

### 9. Acquisition

- Acquisition process
- Acquisition policies and cooperation
- Total archives

### Appraisal

- Theories on appraisal

- Evaluation of the future use for records
- Defining the values of records: administrative, legal, financial, and historical
- Selection process

#### 10. Preservation Management

- Preservation planning
- General measures of protection
- Disaster planning
- Restoration techniques

#### 11. Public Service

- Archives as a tool for researchers
- Public access
- Diffusion programme including the use of web sites
- Reference issues

#### 12. Archives and the Law

- Copyright
- Access issues
- Ethical questions

### **Learning Outcomes:**

Students are expected to familiarize themselves with archival literature from the lectures and needed readings added to MyCourses. For other background material please consult the suggested readings. The lectures will explore the major themes and some issues relevant to archives management and practice, particularly in the Canadian context. Workshops will illustrate the practical aspects of some topics and issues. Each student will be expected to write a research paper using a variety of sources. By the completion of this course students are expected to be able to identify core issues in archival theory and practice and be ready to present a synthesis of one of these issues from an archival perspective based on the relevant literature.

### **Evaluation:**

Term Paper: (40%): Each student is expected to work on a term paper project involving an issue in archival studies. The due date for the term paper is April 20<sup>th</sup>.

Examination: (25%): A take home mid-term exam due on February 26<sup>th</sup>. The exam will reflect the material covered in class as well as relevant readings from MyCourses and will be

distributed one week (February 19<sup>th</sup>) before it is due. There will be a Practice Exam workshop on February 19<sup>th</sup> to review the format of the exam.

Assignment: (25%) The due date for the assignment on a description case study will be March 26<sup>th</sup>. The project will be distributed due on March 12<sup>th</sup>. This is a group project.

Class Participation (10%) Active involvement in Discussion Forums.

Office Hours: ZOOM by appointment. Contact me by e-mail [gordon.burr@mcgill.ca](mailto:gordon.burr@mcgill.ca)

Please note:

### **Language of Submission:**

“In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.” (Approved by Senate on 21 January 2009) Note: In courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives, the assessments shall be in the language of the course.

« Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue). »

### **Academic Integrity:**

“McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures” (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information). (Approved by Senate on 29 January 2003)

« L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/)).»

### **SUGGESTED BACKGROUND READINGS: On Reserve in HUSSAL (To Be Confirmed before class begins)**

Couture, Carol and Jean Yves Rousseau. The Life of a Document. 1987.

Cox, Richard J. Archives and Archivists in the Information Age. 2005.

Bastian, Jeanette A. and Alexander, Ben. (eds). Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory.2009.

Bemington, Jackie et al (ed). Keeping Archives (3rd ed.). 2008.

Millar, Laura A. Archives: Principles and Practices. 1st edition 2010.

Purcell, Aaron J. Academic Archives: Managing the Next Generation of College and University Archives, Records and Special Collections. 2012.

Theimer, Kate Outreach: Innovative Practices for Archives and Special Collections, 2014

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<b>McGill University</b>	<b>Schedule of Courses</b>
<b>School of Information Studies</b>	<b>Archival Principles and Practice</b>
	<b>Winter 2021 GLIS 645</b>
	<b>Gordon Burr</b>

Class meets Fridays from 2:30 to 5:30 online. ZOOM Office Hours: by appointment through e-mail [Gordon.Burr@mcgill.ca](mailto:Gordon.Burr@mcgill.ca)

January 15 - Week 1	Defining Archives lecture: What are archives about? Defining Archives Workshop
January 22 – Week 2	History of Archives lecture Future of Archives: Guest speaker: Rachel Black, Outreach manager, Data Rescue and Archives Weather Projection on User Engagement through Social Media
January 29 - Week 3	Records keeping practices and systems lecture Guest speaker: Sarah Lake, Digital Preservation Librarian, Concordia University. on Archivematica
February 5 - Week 4	Archival Institutions and Professional Practice lecture Guest Speakers: 2:30 –3:30 Maya Pasternak- Jewish Public Library Archives Francois Dansereau – Jesuit Archives Sarah Gauntlet – Avataq - Innu of Northern Quebec Archives
February 12 – Week 5	Arrangement lecture Arrangement Workshop
February 19 – Week 6 Mid-term exam distributed	Historical Methodology lecture Practice Exam Workshop Guest Speaker: Sharon Rankin: Liaison Librarian for SIS on Research Resources on archival topics
February 26 – Week 7 Mid-term Exam (25%) due	Description lecture Currie Fonds Workshop

March 5	Study Week
March 12 - Week 8 Description Assignment Distributed	RAD Description Workshop: Deconstructing a Finding Aid
March 19 – Week 9	Acquisition lecture and Workshop Appraisal lecture
March 26 – Week 10 Description Assignment (25%) Due	Preservation Management lecture Public Services lecture
April 2 Legal Holiday	
April 9th – Week 11	Outreach lecture Outreach in Action: Mariana Meija Ahrens, Musée des ondes Emile Berliner, Digital Collections and Exhibits
April 16 <sup>th</sup> - Week 12 Term Paper (40%) Due April 20th	Legal Issues including Copyright lecture Guest Speaker on Copyright: TBC