Research and Methodology in Biography and Memoir—BAM 70200-1 (64192)
Fall 2019, Mondays, 6:30-8:30 PM, GC 3307

Professor Kate Culkin
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Office Hours: Mon., 5:15-6:15
Office: GC 5402

Course Description: This core course will teach students historical methodologies and basic research skills in the writing of biography or memoir. They will learn how biographers and autobiographers acquire information through interview techniques, oral history collections, research in government and private archives, or sophisticated use of databases and digital humanities sources. Students will make personal trips to New York area archives and libraries, and will conduct practice oral history interviews with sources.

Disability Services: It is Graduate Center and CUNY policy to provide appropriate accommodations to students with disabilities. Any student with a disability who may need accommodations in this class is advised to speak directly to the manager of Student Disability Services, located in Student Affairs, room 7301, or call 212-817-7400 as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential.

CUNY Policy on Academic Honesty: The Graduate Center of The City University of New York is committed to the highest standards of academic honesty. Acts of academic dishonesty include—but are not limited to—plagiarism, (in drafts, outlines, and examinations, as well as final papers), cheating, bribery, academic fraud, sabotage of research materials, the sale of academic papers, and the falsification of records. An individual who engages in these or related activities or who knowingly aids another who engages in them is acting in an academically dishonest manner and will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the bylaws and procedures of The Graduate Center and of the Board of Trustees of The City University of New York.

Class website: https://bamfall19.commons.gc.cuny.edu/

Requirements:
Attendance and Participation—10%
Response Papers—10%
Questions for a Source—5%
Review of Public Event—15%
Archives Report—15%
Research Proposal—10%
Annotated Bibliography—10%
Final Project—20%
Final Project Presentation—5%
Attendance and Participation: You are expected to be in class on time and participate in class discussions and activities actively and thoughtfully. If a situation arises that keeps you from class, please email me to let me know.

Response papers: Over the semester, you will write 7 response papers. These are short, informal pieces of writing that should help you begin to gather your thoughts and process your ideas about the assignments before class. Each one should be 250-300 words, typed. As long you turn these response papers in on the day they are due, you will receive full credit.

Review of a public event: You will attend a public event related to biography or memoir and write a 2-page review discussing what you learned about the process of research and writing biography or memoir during the event. Details on the assignment will be distributed separately.

Archives report: You will visit an archive and conduct research and write a 3-page report. If there is an archive accessible to you during the semester which holds a collection related to your topic, you are encouraged to visit it. If there is not an archive that relates to your research that you can visit during the semester, you should identify an archive and collection that interests you for other reasons. Details on the assignment will be distributed separately.

Questions for a source: You will draft 6-7 questions for a source you might interview for your project. Details on the assignment will be distributed separately.

Research project: You will work on a semester-long research project. This might be a portion of a biography or an element of a memoir that requires research. You will turn in an initial proposal, an annotated bibliography, and a final paper, and you will present your findings to the class at the end of the semester. Details on the assignments will be distributed separately.

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment/Topic</th>
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<td>Sept. 2</td>
<td>Labor Day—No Class</td>
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| Sept. 5    | Graduate Center on a Monday Schedule!  
Topic: Introduction  
In-Class Writing: First Reflection |
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| Sept. 16 | **Topic: Historiography and Secondary Sources**  
| Sept. 23 | **Topic: Newspapers & Genealogy**  
| Sept. 30 | **Rosh Hashanah—No Class**      |                                                                       |                                           |
| Oct. 7   | **Topic: Oral History & Interviewing**  
Read: Sullivan, Sady with Maggie Schreiner. “If You’re Thinking of Starting an Oral History Project.” *The City Amplified: Oral Histories and Radical Archives.* Edited by Allison Guess and Prithi Kanakamedala. New York: Center for the Humanities, CUNY, 2019. [https://cuny.manifoldapp.org/read/untitled-1102e586-8f09-4b60-835f-78634ad473dd/section/83e46635-d139-42f9-a1f6-253401e9baab](https://cuny.manifoldapp.org/read/untitled-1102e586-8f09-4b60-835f-78634ad473dd/section/83e46635-d139-42f9-a1f6-253401e9baab)  
| Oct. 14  | **Columbus Day/Indigenous People’s Day—no class** |                                                                       |                                           |
| Oct. 16 (Wed.) | GC on a Monday Schedule!  
**Topic:** Historic Context  
**Due:** Research Proposal |
| Oct. 21 | **Topic:** Reading Primary Sources/Documentary Editions/Digital Humanities Collections  
**Select and Read:** An exhibition from the Digital Public Library of America: [https://dp.la/](https://dp.la/)  
**Read:** “About Documentary Editing.” Association for Documentary Editing. [https://www.documentaryediting.org/wordpress/?page_id=482](https://www.documentaryediting.org/wordpress/?page_id=482)  
**Due:** Response Paper 4 (also—be prepared to discuss which exhibition you selected). |
| Oct. 28 | **Topic:** Images as Sources  
**Due:** Response Paper 5  
**Bring:** An image that might serve as a source |
| Nov. 4 | **Topic:** Filling in Gaps  
**Due:** Annotated Bibliography |
| Nov. 11 | **Topic:** Literature as a Source  
**Due:** Report on visit to an archive |
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<td>Dec. 9</td>
<td><strong>Final Projects</strong></td>
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<td>5-minute presentation on final project</td>
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