

**PGHT 5030 – Archive / City  
Topic Proposal  
Due 18 Sept 2015**

Term Project Overview

Over the course of the semester, you will execute a semester-long project of your own design. Projects may be undertaken individually or collaboratively in small groups. The term project counts as 30% of final grade.

There is significant latitude in the form projects may take: examples include a traditional research paper, creative essay, exhibit, web site, video, film, catalogue, art installation, or cultural resource report. The project can also take the form of a grant or exhibit proposal, as long as it is backed by research. It could also be an opportunity to develop a new archive or to make a creative intervention into an existing one. Some students may elect to work on specific components of their thesis projects.

In all cases, the work must be grounded in primary research. By primary research, I mean the deployment of methods and processes that are specific to your field for the production of substantive new knowledge and understanding of the world.

Proposing a Topic

To begin the process, each of you will compose a brief topic proposal. The proposal should be no more than one page of double-spaced text (please use 1.25" side margins and 12-point Times font). **The proposal is due Friday, 18 Sept 2015.**

In the proposal, you will want to cover several key elements:

- Your general area of scholarly or creative interest and the media through which you typically like to work. For example:

--In my work as a historian of Medieval French art, I am primarily concerned with the changing approaches to the integration of secular texts into religious worldviews. I am particularly interested in the decorative schemes deployed by 12<sup>th</sup> century illuminators of Greek philosophical tracts.

--As a multimedia artist, much of my work is geared toward the creation of 'memory objects' that provoke a collective reckoning with the difficult past. Recently I used techniques of bronze casting and ironwork to fashion slave ship shackles as part of a project on the Atlantic slave trade.

--Much of my work emerges out of the interdisciplinary space between photography and literature. In my latest exhibit, I created images that draw on the tradition of documentary photography as well as techniques in post-exposure layering to examine "realism" as a narrative construct.

Depending on where you are in your studies, this aspect may or may not be fully formed for you. However, you should use this opportunity to play with some ideas. This is not a document set in stone; rather, it is intended to be exploratory. So have fun with this!

- The specific topic or problem that interests you for this project. For example:

--For this project, I would like to explore the notion of state secrecy and the use of national security as a rationale for the surveillance of citizens.

--Over the course of the semester, I will examine the production of what I call “bourgeois sociability” as a key affect of class status in early twentieth century America.

- The actual material with or through which you would like to work. For example:

--In order to understand the national culture of surveillance, I will study the practice of redaction in official documents of state, such as the black slashes through lines and bits of text in FBI files. I have accumulated a collection of FBI files through successive Freedom of Information Act requests.

--In my search for evidence of “bourgeois sociability” I will examine postcards created by the Detroit Publishing Company between 1900 and 1920. The company’s records and postcards are housed at the New York Public Library.

--I am interested in the rituals surrounding access to archival materials. Rather than studying the actual objects and documents in any one collection, I will look at a range of practices, approaches, and affects of archiving in five different institutions.

- The approach you will take to the project, including elements such as methods, format, and outcomes. For example:

--To call attention to issues of state secrecy and surveillance, I will project a series of FBI files onto the façade of the Federal building in downtown New York. The files contain information on well-known people such as celebrities, activists, politicians, and scientists.

--After conducting extensive visual analysis of the postcards in the Detroit Publishing Company collection, I will convey the results in a research paper formatted for publication in an academic journal such as Winterthur Portfolio, the Journal of Design History, or the Journal of Visual Culture.

--Once I have concluded my fieldwork gathering data on archival practices, focusing on rituals of circulation, I will design a series of new rituals that illuminate the underlying premises and assumptions of archival access and meaning.

- Finally, any special circumstances that concern the project. For example, if this term project is part of a larger thesis, be sure to define what aspect of the thesis you will work on in this course. Also, if the result of the project is a grant or some other kind of proposal, state this clearly.