

Archives in Transcultural Circulation



Comprised of faculty and graduate students with a wide variety of regional and period expertise in the humanities, this working group will host monthly workshops to explore a variety of disciplinary approaches to the archive. Beyond the rather specific bureaucratic documents that concern Archival Science, workshop participants will explore a variety of other approaches and perspectives in the humanities. When might the archive be thought of productively as a verb: “a general system of the formation and transformation of statement,” as Foucault once put it? What are the metaphysics of the archive: that “repository of ultimate value” that seduces “by its appearance of the real”? What fundamental act of violence is the archive? “The archive is, in this case, a death sentence,” writes Saidiya Hartman in her stunning work on nameless African girls murdered in Atlantic transit and only barely documented. Such documentation may be only “a tomb, a display of the violated body, an inventory of property, a medical treatise on gonorrhoea, a few lines about a whore’s life, an asterisk in the grand narrative of history.”

Beyond the forms of knowledge and exclusion reproduced in the archive and archival practices, the working group is interested in thinking about the transcultural circuit of archives, a very understudied frontier in archival history. Indeed, there has been hesitancy “to focus on the bewildering variety of non-European historical phenomena in the archival sphere.” Our proposed interdisciplinary CIS working group would place this “bewildering variety” in the center of our attention, bringing scholars of circulatory, “non-Western,” subaltern, post-colonial, slave, trans, and Indigenous archives into critical conversation with more traditional historians of European archives.

References

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Download the [Call for Participants](#) for more information

Faculty Coordinators:

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