The Curator's Toolkit:

Up Close and Personal with The Rosenbach's Collections

Course Syllabus



William Morris, *The Well at the World's End* Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1896.

Rosenbach call no. FP .K29 896m.

Course Description

Do you love discovering fascinating stories from history? Have you ever wanted to get up close and personal with museum and library collection objects, including rare books, manuscripts, paintings, furniture, precious metals, and ceramics? If so, then this course is for you.

The Curator's Toolkit will equip you with knowledge and skills for handling, studying, preserving, and learning from fine art, antiques, rare books, and manuscripts at The Rosenbach and beyond, and give you hands-on, behind-the-scenes access to world-renowned museum and library collections. You will even write an object label for a real Rosenbach museum exhibition. In this course, the historic Rosenbach house becomes your laboratory for the study and enjoyment of art, artifacts, and historic texts.

Course Schedule

The Curator's Toolkit will meet onsite in the Denworth Room at The Rosenbach from 6:00 – 8:30 p.m. every other Tuesday night, from September 14 through December 14, 2021. (There are small variations to this pattern; consult the course schedule and online information for details.) Most course sessions will be divided into two sections. The first hour of most sessions will consist of presentations and lectures focused on the session's theme, as well as seminar-style discussions of readings covering issues in artifact study. Following a brief break, the second hour of most class sessions will consist of a hands-on Artifact Lab, in which class participants will study Rosenbach collections objects under the guidance of Rosenbach Collections Department staff.

The course schedule includes two Research & Writing Workshops, when students and instructors will collaborate on understanding research tools at The Rosenbach that assist in label writing for the class curation activity. Students are welcome and encouraged to make other research appointments during regular reading room hours. Visit the website for details.

Class Curation Activity

Students in *The Curator's Toolkit* will have the opportunity to choose an object of special interest to them from The Rosenbach's collection, and, using the skills they acquire in the course, write a museum object label about the piece for inclusion in the Rosenbach digital exhibition "I Am an American!": The Authorship and Activism of Alice Dunbar-Nelson (www.alicedunbarnelson.com). Students will work with the course instructors to choose an artifact of focus that fits within the themes of the online exhibition, conduct their own research about the piece, and then write the label for online publication. This project will likely involve some extra time spent at The Rosenbach, outside of class hours, if students wish to complete an object label for publication. (Completion of the activity is entirely optional!)

Grading

There are no grades! This course is just for fun.

Learner Outcomes

By the end of the course, you will possess a metaphorical toolbox to help you continue artifact study on your own. You'll know how to look at historic objects, safely handle them, research them, write about them, and continue digging into collections at The Rosenbach. You will have a deeper sense of how museums and libraries function as sites of cultural memory.

Recommended Texts

Three books are recommended for the course. Digital copies of articles, podcast episodes, and TED Talks will occasionally be assigned; see schedule for details.

PLEASE NOTE: The Rosenbach has partnered with the books' publishers to offer discounts on the volumes for students in this course. Information regarding the discounts is below.

The recommended books are:

Rosemary T. Krill, *Early American Decorative Arts, 1620-1860: A Handbook for Interpreters* (Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History).

[Order the book using the code **RLFANDF30** from the website https://rowman.com/ISBN/9780759119468/Early-American-Decorative-Arts-1620-1860-A-Handbook-for-Interpreters-Revised-and-Enhanced to receive a 30% discount on the e-book of the latest edition.]

Steven Lubar, *Inside the Lost Museum: Curating, Past and Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

[This book is available at a 25% discount when ordered directly from Harvard University Press: https://www.hup.harvard.edu/exhibits/HX7634.]

Nazera Sadiq Wright, *Black Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century* (Champagne: University of Illinois Press, 2016).

[Order this book from the University of Illinois Press using the discount code **ROSENGH19** to receive a 20% discount. You must order the book from this website to activate the code: https://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/catalog/54fkh7kt9780252040573.html.]

One copy of each of these books will be placed on deposit in the Rosenbach reading room and made available for student consultation during regular reading room hours.

Readings Policy: The instructors are aware that the realities of life may make it difficult to complete each and every reading and other videos and podcasts for every session. Readings are *recommended*, not *assigned*, and we simply ask students to complete enough of them to be able to participate actively in class discussions. The instructors and students may occasionally collaborate to assign smaller teams to focus their efforts on different subsets of readings.

(You will notice that readings drop off toward the end of the class; it is expected that students will want more time to work on the class curation activity near the conclusion of the course.)

Inclusion at The Rosenbach

The Rosenbach is committed to stewarding diverse histories and creating inclusive interpretations, striving toward the best in library and museum practice. The Curator's Toolkit class curation activity builds on work undertaken in the "I Am an American!" exhibition to diversify our museum interpretation, and the course curriculum will explore inclusive approaches to artifact study and interpretation. To learn more about The Rosenbach's Commitment to Equity, visit https://rosenbach.org/commitment/.

Attendance

Students are encouraged to attend all or as many of the class sessions as possible, but instructors realize that individual schedules may prevent perfect attendance. If you need to miss a session, please contact the instructors who are leading the session you will miss for guidance.

Tuition and Class Size

Because of COVID restrictions and space constraints and the logistical management of Artifact Labs, class size is limited to 10 students. Tuition rates are outlined below.

General public: \$400

Delancey Society and Rosenbach members: 10% discount

At least one Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, & Inclusion full scholarship is available for the course. Contact Dr. Alexander L. Ames (alames@rosenbach.org) for details.

Photography Disclaimer

Rosenbach staff will be taking photographs of class activities throughout the run of The Curator's Toolkit to promote future offerings of the course. If you are uncomfortable with your image being used in Rosenbach digital communications and Rosenbach social media, please alert the instructors. Otherwise, participation in the course sessions indicates permission to use your likeness in the efforts of Rosenbach employees and course instructors to promote this and future iterations of the course.

Course Logistics

First-floor Lockers – Large bags and food/beverage containers are not allowed in the Denworth Room during the course. Students are free to lock their belongings in a locker on the first floor of The Rosenbach for the duration of the course or make use of the student lounge (see below).

Student Lounge – Because we will be engaging with collection objects during Artifact Labs, food, drink, and large bags (including purses and backpacks) will not be allowed in the Denworth Room. Therefore, the South Study, across the hallway from the Denworth Room, has been reserved as a student lounge, where drinks and other supplies can be kept.

Hand Washing – Before objects can be handled, students must freshly wash their hands and should expect to receive this request from instructors regularly. There is a sink in Denworth for easy hand-washing. (Note: as far as collection preservation is concerned, hand washing is not about germs but rather grime, and making sure no substances are transferred to objects that could harm them. COVID makes handwashing even more important for our shared safety.)

Supplies – In order to keep our books, manuscripts, and other objects safe, you will be required to write with a pencil rather than a pen during course sessions. Please bring pencils with you to class. Also, you will receive many handouts during the sessions, so a folder and/or binder is recommended.

Instructors

The Curator's Toolkit will be taught by the staff of The Rosenbach's Collections Department, who oversee the daily work of taking care of The Rosenbach's books, manuscripts, and museum objects. Dr. Alexander Ames will serve as Instructor of Record, managing the logistics of each class session, leading discussion seminars, and serving as students' chief point of contact during the run of the course. Other Collections staff will offer lectures and lead Artifact Labs during various class sessions. Instructional staff include:

Judith M. Guston, Curator & Director of Collections

Elizabeth E. Fuller, Librarian

Jobi Zink, Registrar

Dr. Alexander L. Ames, Collections Engagement Manager (Instructor of Record)

Judith M. Guston is Curator & Director of Collections at The Rosenbach. She graduated from Smith College with an A.B. in Classical languages and literatures and from Yale University with an M.A. in Classics. Guston later earned a masters in American material culture from the Winterthur Program of the University of Delaware, for which her research focused on material

expressions of Jewish identity in early America. At The Rosenbach, Judy works with a wide range of collections, from the museum's single, historic Japanese manuscript to its significant American historical collections. She has also worked extensively with the Judaica collections in exhibitions, programs, and through conservation projects and significant acquisitions. When not working, Judy enjoys travel, particularly to visit family in the southwest United States, where she is an avid hiker. At home, she keeps busy with ongoing improvements to her historic Center City Philadelphia home.

Elizabeth E. Fuller is the Librarian of The Rosenbach. She holds an A.B. in history and historic preservation from Goucher College and an A.M. from the University of Chicago Graduate Library School. In a career at The Rosenbach that has spanned more than three decades, Fuller has held a wide variety of responsibilities, ranging from cataloging manuscripts to heading Rosenbach security and managing the library's active reader services program. She has curated and co-curated numerous exhibitions at The Rosenbach, including, most recently, *The Rights of Woman: Gender in Robert Burns's Enlightenment* (2020); *Ulysses and the Marble Halls of Memory* (2019), and *Alice in Phillyland* (2015-2016). Active in the regional and national professional communities, Fuller is a member of the OPAC Working Group of the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCL) and on the Advisory Board of the Marianne Moore Digital Archive Notebooks Project.

Jobi Zink (she/her) has over 20 years of professional experience in the field of collections stewardship. In addition to managing the incoming and outgoing loan program at the Rosenbach and the intake process of new acquisitions, Ms. Zink maintains the collections management system for objects and routinely conducts inventories of the collections. She manages The Rosenbach's research queries and image requests. Ms. Zink has held leadership positions on the board of the Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums (MAAM) and the Registrar's Committee of MAAM (RC-MAAM), and has served as a grant reviewer for the IMLS Museums for America program. Before joining the Rosenbach in 2014, Ms. Zink was the Senior Collections Manager and Registrar at the Jewish Museum of Maryland where she worked for 15 years. Ms. Zink earned her M.A. in Art History with distinction from American University and her B.A. in Art History from Emory University. She has also taken Museum Studies coursework at George Washington University.

Dr. Alexander Lawrence Ames is Collections Engagement Manager at The Rosenbach. He holds an M.A. in public history from St. Cloud State University (St. Cloud, Minnesota), as well as an M.A. in American material culture, an M.A. in history, and a Ph.D. in history of American civilization and museum studies from the University of Delaware. His book, *The Word in the Wilderness: Popular Piety and the Manuscript Arts in Early Pennsylvania,* was published by the Pennsylvania State University Press in 2020. Ames has also published scholarly essays on library

history and bookbinding history, including an essay in volume 6 of *Suave Mechanicals: Essays* on the History of Bookbinding titled "The Faith that Binds: Swiss-Anabaptist Devotional Bookbindings in Early America," coauthored with book conservators Chela Metzger of UCLA Libraries and Erin Hammeke of Duke University Libraries. He also hosts *Cloister Talk: The Pennsylvania German Material Texts Podcast*, available at https://anchor.fm/cloistertalk.

Course Schedule

Session 1, September 14: Introduction to Material Culture Studies

Discussion Seminar: Defining "material culture": theories and approaches to studying artifacts (led by Alexander L. Ames)

What makes a rare book rare? (Presentation by Judith M. Guston, Jozi Zink, and Elizabeth E. Fuller)

Artifact Lab: Crash course in artifact study (led by Alexander L. Ames)

Recommended Readings to Be Completed Before Class on 09/14:

- Charles Montgomery, "The Connoisseurship of Artifacts," in *Material Culture Studies in America*, ed. Thomas J. Schlereth (Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History, 1982), 143-152. [Copy provided by instructors.]
- Chapter 1, "Interpreting Decorative Art Objects"; Chapter 2, "Looking at Objects"; and Chapter 3, "Understanding Style"; in Krill, Early American Decorative Arts.
- Introduction, "Explore"; Chapter 1, "Why Collect?"; and Chapter 2, "Collectable"; in Lubar, *Inside the Lost Museum*.
- "Introduction: Toward a Genealogy of Black Girlhood" and "Black Girlhood in the Early Black Press," in Nazera Sadiq Wright, *Black Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century*.

<u>Session 2, September 28: Research & Writing Workshop: Artifact Selection, Research</u> Orientation, and Safe Object Handling

Discussion seminar: History of collecting at The Rosenbach (with Elizabeth E. Fuller)

This class session will continue with a tour of Rosenbach artifacts available for selection for the class curation activity and include a discussion of how to conduct research and write about the objects. Students will be given instructions on how to begin work on the class curation activity. The session will end with a tutorial on safe object handling.

Recommended Readings to Be Completed Before Class on 09/28:

• Chapter 3, "Acquisitions"; Chapter 4, "In the Field"; and Chapter 5, "Who Collects?"; in Lubar, *Inside the Lost Museum*.

• Carol Bossert, "Labels Unleashed: Breaking the Tyranny of Information," *Exhibition* (Spring, 2016): 17-22. [Copy provided by instructors.]

- Judy Rand, "Less is More. And More is Less." *Exhibition* (Spring, 2016): 37-41. [Copy provided by instructors.]
- "Episode 5: Creating Inclusive Museum Spaces: A Conversation with Vashti DuBois,
 Founder of The Colored Girls Museum," Voices of Change: A Podcast Inspired by Alice
 Dunbar-Nelson, https://rosenbach.org/virtual-exhibits/podcast/.
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, (2009) "The Danger of a Single Story," TED Talk, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg
- Sophie White, "Geographies of Slave Consumption: French Colonial Louisiana and a World of Goods," *Winterthur Portfolio*, vol. 45, 2/3, Summer/Autumn, 2011. 229-248. [Copy provided by instructors.]

Examples of Rosenbach object labels:

- American Voyager: Herman Melville at 200, Gallery Gateway at https://rosenbach.org/gallery-gateway-melville/
- Manjiro: Drifting, 1841 2020, https://rosenbach.org/gallery-gateway-manjiro/
- "I Am an American!": The Authorship and Activism of Alice Dunbar-Nelson, www.alicedunbarnelson.com

In preparation for our label-writing workshop, please review interpretive text found in these recent Rosenbach exhibitions. What do you like about the labels' structure, tone, and content? How would you interpret artifacts differently? What makes label-writing a distinctive genre?

Session 3, October 12: Furniture, Textiles, and Historic Interiors

Discussion Seminar: Reading economies, labor systems, and cross-cultural currents in decorative arts and historic interiors of the North Atlantic world

Artifact Lab: Craft, style, and labor economies: encountering class, race, and gender in The Rosenbach's parlor (led by Judith M. Guston)

Recommended Readings to Be Completed Before Class on 10/12:

- Chapter 7, "Furniture in the Chippendale or Rococo Style" and Chapter 8, "Furniture in the Federal or Early Classical-Revival Style," in Krill, *Early American Decorative Arts*.
- Chapter 19, "Textiles," in Krill, Early American Decorative Arts.
- Chapter 20, "Needlework," in Krill, Early American Decorative Arts.

 Ann Smart Martin, "Magical, Mythical, Practical, and Sublime: The Meanings and Uses of Ceramics in America," *Ceramics in America 2001*, Chipstone Foundation. Accessible here: <a href="http://www.chipstone.org/article.php/4/Ceramics-in-America-2001/Magical,-Mythical,-Practical,-and-Sublime:-The-Meanings-and-Uses-of-Ceramics-in-America-2001/Magical,-and-Sublime:-The-Meanings-and-Uses-of-Ceramics-in-America-2001/Magical,-and-Sublime:-The-Meanings-and-Uses-of-Ceramics-in-America-2001/Magical-2001/

- Jonathan Prown and Richard Miller, "The Rococo, the Grotto, and the Philadelphia High Chest," American Furniture (1996), Chipstone Foundation. Accessible here: http://www.chipstone.org/article.php/229/American-Furniture-1996/The-Rococo,-the-Grotto,-and-the-Philadelphia-High-Chest
- Thomas Chippendale, The Gentleman and Cabinet-maker's Director (London: Printed for the author, 1754), https://archive.org/details/gentlemancabine00Chip/mode/2up.
 Please just look at the engraved images in the book to get a sense of high design standards in the British Atlantic world in the middle of the eighteenth century.
- Object labels 40 44 (pages 75 76), In the Beginning: Three Jewish Firsts from The Rosenbach Collection Gallery Gateway. Accessible here: https://rosenbach.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/GG-ITB-FINAL.pdf.
- Please peruse the correspondence described in the Gallery Gateway; digital copies of all the letters as well as images of Henrietta Clay's copy of A Book Hunter's Holiday will be emailed to you.

Session 4, October 26: Manuscripts and Rare Printed Books, ca. 1200 - 1870

Discussion Seminar: Historical perspectives on manuscript and print cultures

Artifact Lab: Book construction and design from the Middle Ages through the 20th century (led by Elizabeth E. Fuller)

Recommended Readings to Be Completed Before Class on 10/26:

- Raymond Clemens and Timothy Graham, Part One, "Making the Medieval Manuscript,"
 Introduction to Manuscript Studies (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007). [Copies
 of some contents of this section will be provided by instructors; the book is on deposit
 in Rosenbach reading room.]
- British Library, "An Introduction to Illuminated Manuscripts," view this website for contextual information and to see examples – https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/TourIntroGen.asp
- Watch this video, made accessible by Rare Book School: "How to Operate a Book" with Gary Frost (1986) – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YgzsOy0Vd9I
- Watch this video, made accessible by Rare Book School: "The Anatomy of a Book: Format in the Hand-Press Period" (1991) – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Efxddk09p0g

• Familiarize yourself with the PACSCL digital project *Bibliotheca Philadelphiensis*, of which The Rosenbach is a major participant: https://bibliophilly.pacscl.org/

For those of you interested in reading a highly academic and scholarly but very useful and important essay that will prepare you well for the session's the Artifact Lab, read:

• Harold Love, "Early Modern Print Culture: Assessing the Models," *Parergon* 20, no. 1 (January, 2003): 45-64. [Copy provided by instructors.]

Please choose at least one of these chapters from *Black Girlhood* to read prior to class:

- "Youthful Girls and Prematurely Knowing Girls: Antebellum Black Girlhood," in Nazera Sadiq Wright, *Black Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century* (Champagne: University of Illinois Press, 2016).
- "'Teach Your Daughters': Black Girlhood and Mrs. N.F. Mossell's Advice Column in the New York Freeman," in Nazera Sadiq Wright, Black Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century.
- "Moving the Boundaries: Black Girlhood and Public Careers in Frances E.W. Harper's *Trial and Triumph,"* in Nazera Sadiq Wright, *Black Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century*.
- "Black Girlhood in Early-Twentieth-Century Black Conduct Books," in Nazera Sadiq Wright, *Black Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century*.

Session 5, November 9: Archives, Historic Documents, and Cultural Memory

Discussion Seminar: The Politics of the Archive

Artifact Lab: Creating, organizing, preserving, and (re)interpreting archives: A Case Study of the Marianne Moore Papers (led by Alexander L. Ames with assistance from Elizabeth E. Fuller)

Recommended Readings to Be Completed Before Class on 11/09:

- Hellen Willa Samuels, George Orwell and Arthur C. Clarke, "Who Controls the Past," *The American Archivist* 49, no. 2 (Spring, 1986): 109-124. [Copy provided by instructors.]
- Lesley Wheeler and Chris Gavaler, "Impostors and Chameleons: Marianne Moore and the Carlisle Indian School," *Paideuma: Modern and Contemporary Poetry and Poetics* 33, no. 2/3 (Fall & Winter 2004): 53-82. [Copy provided by instructors.]
- "Episode 4: Preserving LGBTQIA+ History: A Conversation with Ainsley Wynn Eakins and John F. Anderies of the John J. Wilcox, Jr. Archives, William Way Community Center," Voices of Change: A Podcast Inspired by Alice Dunbar-Nelson, https://rosenbach.org/virtual-exhibits/podcast/.
- "Episode 6: How to Uncover Hidden Voices in the Archive: Tips from Melissa Benbow, Kelli Racine Coles, and Mariam I. Williams, Researchers of Black and Women's History,"

Voices of Change: A Podcast Inspired by Alice Dunbar-Nelson, https://rosenbach.org/virtual-exhibits/podcast/.

- Review the website of the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project: https://www.wlrp.org/
- Please review the Marianne Moore Collection Guides available at https://rosenbach.org/research/catalogs-databases/. Pay special attention to the front matter at the beginning of each guide, and how the Moore Papers as a whole are organized.

Session 6, November 23: Fine Art, Metals, Ceramics, and Glass

DUE: First drafts of object labels (submit to Alex Ames by 5:59 p.m.)

There will be no formal discussion seminar this week. Rather, the session will consist of two Artifact Labs, with the standard half-hour break between them.

Artifact Lab #1: Technologies and cultures of production – prints and paintings in the Rosenbach collection (led by Alexander L. Ames)

Artifact Lab #2: Technologies and cultures of production – metals, ceramics, and glass in the Rosenbach collection (led by Judith M. Guston)

Recommended Readings to Be Completed Before Class on 11/23:

- Chapter 12, "Ceramics"; Chapter 13, "Glassware"; and Chapter 14, "Silver Objects"; in Krill, Early American Decorative Arts.
- Chapter 17, "Paintings and Pictures"; and Chapter 18, "Prints"; in Krill, *Early American Decorative Arts*.
- Jill Weitzman Fenichell, "Fragile Lessons: Ceramic and Porcelain Representations of Uncle Tom's Cabin," *Ceramics in America* (2006), Chipstone Foundation. Accessible here: http://www.chipstone.org/article.php/280/Ceramics-in-America-2006/?s=prints
- Digitized pages from John Henry Brown, journal and account book, 1844-1890. AMS 573/14.1. [Will be distributed via email by instructor.]
- Alexander Lawrence Ames, "The Art of the Bookplate: Common Bookplate Printing Processes Explained and Illustrated." [Instructors will email the document to you.]
- (For context about *The Art of Ownership* companion material assigned above, visit https://rosenbach.org/visit/exhibitions/the-art-of-ownership-bookplates-and-book-collectors-from-1480-to-the-present/ and consider perusing the gallery guide here: https://www.alexanderlawrenceames.com/uploads/7/0/7/6/70766925/g15-aofo_object_labels-final_1.pdf)

<u>Session 7, December 7: Research & Writing Workshop, Nooks-and-Crannies Tour of The Rosenbach</u>

Research & Writing Lab: Object label crit session and instructor feedback. Students and instructors will spend the first hour in small groups, discussing object label first drafts and the revision process.

Artifact Lab: Special nooks-and-crannies tour – exploring preservation and collections management practices at The Rosenbach (led by Jobi Zink)

Recommended Readings to Be Completed Before Class on 12/07:

- Chapter 6, "Into the Storeroom"; Chapter 7, "Paperwork"; and Chapter 8, "The Ethics of Objects"; in Lubar, *Inside the Lost Museum*.
- Please continue reviewing Rosenbach object labels available online via *Gallery Gateways* as you work on your own label.

<u>Session 8, December 14: Behind-the-Scenes Tour of the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA)</u>

DUE: Final drafts of object labels (submit to Alex Ames by 5:59 p.m.)

MEET AT CCAHA AT 6 P.M. SHARP – 264 South 23rd Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103

Discussion Seminar: Tour of the conservation labs at CCAHA (6:00 – 7:00 p.m.)

Following the tour of CCAHA, walk back to The Rosenbach and be ready for Artifact Lab from 7:30 – 8:30. Wash your hands upon return to The Rosenbach, before reporting to Denworth.

Artifact Lab: The Rosenbach's Chaucer manuscript: a case study in artifact conservation (led by Judith M. Guston and Elizabeth E. Fuller, with special guest Richard Homer of CCAHA)

Recommended Readings to Be Completed Before Class on 12/14:

- Review the CCAHA website: https://ccaha.org/
- Read the "Frequently Asked Questions" page and other "About Conservation" content on the website of the American Institute for Conservation: https://www.culturalheritage.org/about-conservation/what-is-conservation/faqs
- Debra Hess Norris, "Preservation of our Photographic Heritage," Ted Talk, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSw0PCwe1oE