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LIT 6856 (26205; 1KK1)
Spring 2026
W 6-8, Smathers 104

Office: TUR 4008
Hours: T 6-8
and by appointment

Into the Archive: Reading in the Baldwin

Collaboratively taught with Curator Dr. Fiona Hartley-Kroeger, this course will introduce you to the treasures of UF's Baldwin Historical Library of Children's Literature, one of the largest such collections in the world. The Baldwin is an extraordinary resource even for those not specializing in children's literature, and a major aim for the course is to encourage exploration and use of the collection. Students in previous iterations of this course – as well as researchers across fields and subfields -- have published their Baldwin-based research as articles, book chapters, databases, even a documentary. We'll read scholarship on children's literary and material culture as well as on the archive, library, collection, and canon. Meanwhile, everyone will develop research projects in the Baldwin and will give regular reports on such. We'll experiment with methods of encounter and analysis, such as topical research, browsing, textual criticism, and distant reading. The course will function as part-seminar, part-workshop, with presentations scheduled regularly on findings. We'll tour the Conservation and Preservation unit and meet with other experts within UF Libraries.

No materials to purchase; no fees

Book to consult or download (free): *B is for Baldwin: An Alphabet Tour of the Baldwin Library* (2022), edited Suzan Alteri: <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00088630/00001/pdf/0>

Books We'll Sample

Amy Chen, *Placing Papers: The American Literary Archives Market*
Lisa Gitelman, *Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents*
Laura E. Helton, *Scattered and Fugitive Things: How Black Collectors Created Archives and Remade History*
Leslie Howsam, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book*
Matthew Jockers, *Macroanalysis: Digital Methods & Literary History*
David McKitterick, *The Invention of Rare Books: Private Interest and Public Memory, 1600-1840*
Geoffrey O'Brien, *The Browser's Ecstasy: A Meditation on Reading*
Lissa Paul, *The Children's Book Business*
Ted Underwood, *Distant Horizons: Digital Evidence and Literary Change*

Plus assorted articles and chapters, some available via our Canvas site and some available via electronic reserves, under LIT 6856. You may need to check both places.

Canvas: <https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/555572>

Ares: <https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/ares//ares.dll?Action=10&Form=60&Value=28002>

Assignments and Evaluation

Catalog & materiality assessments	25%
2-3 Baldwin projects	50%
2-3 In-class reports on projects	25%

Evaluation of writing will assume writing in the exploration and discovery mode, since the point of the class is to explore the collection, report on your findings, and reflect on your process.

Grading will be on a letter-grade basis and follows and is compliant with UF grading policies: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

This course follows and is compliant with all UF academic policies and resources (honesty policy, in-class recording, course evaluations, academic accommodations, academic resources) as detailed here: <https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>

Catalog & Materiality Assessments. This assignment encourages you to explore the collection as you like – either randomly or with a topic or writer or genre in mind -- and helps you become fluent in navigating special collections item records and attuned to working with material objects. Choose any book in the Baldwin and write 1-2 paragraphs in which you assess its item record in the UF Library online catalog (Primo) and compare the information in the record to what you observe from exploring the book itself. (Some of the item records are very minimal!) What does the record convey or not convey about the book? What do you notice when examining the book itself? Include the book's title, author, and permalink to the book's item record in the electronic catalog. 3-5 assessments required. These are all due by the last day of term but can come in at any point.

Baldwin Project(s). You can do 2 or 3 projects for the class, depending on complexity and labor and your level of interest. You will report on these projects in class for around 20 minutes, including discussion. The options are 3 shorter projects, at 5-7 double-spaced pp. each, or 1 short paper of 5-7 pp. and a longer one of double that length, roughly, which can grow out of your shorter paper (but does not have to). This means you will need to try at least two of the below options. Note: you can use any of the titles you use for the catalog & materiality assessments in any of these writing projects.

1. Topical Research. Write a research paper on a topic of your selection, drawing on Baldwin texts. The paper can be all analysis OR it can take the form of some analysis plus proposal for a longer version. Either way, incorporate or make reference to scholarly resources pertinent to the topic or material. You can include a literature review, or add an annotated bibliography, or fold in more organically.

You may use any or all of the books for which you've written catalog & materiality assessments. You can give the most emphasis to how these particular materials handle or render the topic in question – meaning, you are not responsible for covering everything about said topic.

2. Textual Criticism. Develop a textual analysis of Baldwin material(s), drawing on the insights of Larkin, McGann, and G. Thomas Tanselle, most principally the distinction between the text and the work. Compare variant editions, perhaps, in terms of typography, binding, or other aspects of material form. Although Tanselle doesn't talk about the paratext, that's another approach: how is the text always already both plural and piecemeal – both part of a network of texts and itself a kind of fragment? This option is the closest to a “conventional” one; I list it here only because textual criticism is less familiar than it used to be.
3. Browsing. Chapters 15-18 of O'Brien's *The Browser's Ecstasy* make a distinction between browsing and “proper reading” (63), and those chapters especially, and book at large, is a kind of browsing experiment or report. Browsing occurs somewhere between aimless drifting and focused research. It isn't as explicitly instrumentalist as traditional research. That doesn't mean it's entirely unmotivated. But its logic is associative. Browsing allows flirtation with interests and objects.

For this option, devise and report on a browsing project, explaining the terms and reflecting upon not only the material you're exploring, but also the activity as a mode of information gathering or the satisfaction of desire. O'Brien provides one possible model. What does browsing look like or do as a research method? What can be learned or unlearned?

The Baldwin may be closed stacks, but you can browse in other ways – you can browse the catalog, or the digital collection, or you can call up titles based on topic or author or keyword or just randomly. If you'd prefer a more guided browsing experiment, consider working with, say, a six month's run of one of our periodicals like *St. Nicholas*.

4. Distant Horizons. Develop a distant/quantitative experiment with Baldwin materials, drawing on our readings about distant reading, macroanalysis, and statistical modeling. It might be computational, but it doesn't have to be. One could make, for instance, a graph, map, or tree as Moretti models such. The project should in some way deal with issues of scale and move beyond traditional close reading of just a few texts. Or it could draw on both close and distant reading (thus being “resourceful” reading). What did you learn, or become curious about, through this project?
5. Digital subcollection project. The Baldwin has a number of digital subcollections, most of which are identified on the website (under “digital collections”). Some of the existing ones could benefit from development and expansion. Working with Fiona, improve one of these collections, identifying materials and updating or

adding content (historical, contextual, interpretive, pedagogical). OR begin designing a new digital subcollection. This option may not look like a paper per se; we can discuss expectations.

6. Pedagogy project. Plan and to begin to develop a pedagogy project based in the Baldwin. It could be subject or methodology based, and it could be designed in part to expand access to or visibility of the Baldwin. You might, for example, design a syllabus around a set of holdings or a period of focus. Or you could design a module (with readings, suggested assignments) that could be incorporated into your existing or future classes (such as Writing through Media, or any topical course on children's literature).

Schedule

January

- 14 Introductions and tour of the Baldwin Library stacks.
- 21 **The Baldwin in Context.** Smith, "Caught Up in the Whirlwind"; Kidd, "The Child, the Scholar..."; Alteri, "Mediating the Archives: Child Readers and their Books in Special Collections"; Alteri, "The Classroom as Salon"; Whyte and O'Sullivan, "Beyond Traditional Hierarchies"; skim *B is for Baldwin*.
- Optional: Basbanes, "Obsessed Amateurs" (esp. the section on Baldwin); Bodmer, "A. S. W. Rosenbach"; Lundin, "'A Dukedom Large Enough'"; Hoyle, "The Kerlan Collection"; Murphy, "Unpacking."
- 28 Joyce, "The Evolution...", Chen, *Placing Papers*, Introduction, Ch. 1, Ch. 6; Helton, "Introduction: Value, Order, Risk – Experiments in Black Archiving." Mullens, "It is..."
Meet with UF English PhD student Noah Mullens.

February

- 4 **Collecting and Preserving.** Tour of UF Conservation and Preservation Unit (<https://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/conservation/Index.aspx>), with Conservator Katie Smith. Benjamin, "Unpacking," "Old Forgotten Children's Books", "Children's Literature," "Program"; Benjamin (with Leslie); *Walter Benjamin's Archive*; Sanchez-Eppler, "In the Archives of Childhood"; Tanselle, "Libraries, Museums, and Reading."
- 11 **Book, Document, Archive.** Howsam, "The Study of Book History," intro to *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book*; McKitterick, *The Invention of Rare Books*, Prologue and Chs. 1 & 2; Gitelman, selections from *Paper Knowledge*; Giannachi, Ch. 1, "A Brief History of the Archive." Stead, "Introduction."
Meet with Florence Turcotte, Literary Collections Archivist.
- 18 **Childhood and Kid Lit.** Steedman, Introduction to *Strange Dislocations*; Paul, Intro and Ch. 1, *The Children's Book Business*; Weikle-Mills, "'My Book and Heart.'" Clark, "Kiddie Lit."
Meeting and possible tour with Brittany Kester, Education Librarian, UF Education Library.

- 25 **Browsing and Serendipity.** Selections from O'Brien, *The Browser's Ecstasy*. Kidd, Pearson, Pyke, "Serendipity."
Project 1 due.
 Meet with Jim Cusick, Curator of the PK Yonge Library of Florida History.
 Reports and discussion.

March

- 4 **The Text and the Work.** Larkin, "A Neglected Responsibility"; McGann, "The Socialization of Texts"; Tanselle, "Reproductions and Scholarship."
 Meet with Steve Hersh, Public Services & comics/pop culture assistant, UF Libraries.
- 11 **Distant Horizons.** Part 1, Jockers, *Macroanalysis*; Giddens, "Distant Reading and Children's Literature"; Cross, Alan, and Kilner, "Digital Curation, AusLit, and Australian Children's Literature."; skim Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees*; Underwood, Ch. 2, "The Life Spans of Genres" and "Theorizing Research Practices We Forgot to Theorize Twenty Years Ago."
- 25 Reading catch-up, reports, other business as needed.
If three projects, Project 2 due.

April

- 1 DH Readings continued. Meet virtually with former Baldwin Curator Suzan Alteri (now Assistant Director of the Center for Children's Books, U of Illinois) and UF alum Rebekah Fitzsimmons, Associate Teaching Professor at Carnegie Mellon University, on digital methods, pedagogy, and career wrangling. Rebekah Fitzsimmons and Suzan Alteri, "Possibly Impossible; Or, Teaching Undergraduates to Confront Digital and Archival Research Methodologies, Social Media Networking, and Potential Failure"
[\(https://jitp.commons.gc.cuny.edu/possibly-impossible-or-teaching-undergraduates-to-confront-digital-and-archival-research-methodologies-social-media-networking-and-potential-failure/\)](https://jitp.commons.gc.cuny.edu/possibly-impossible-or-teaching-undergraduates-to-confront-digital-and-archival-research-methodologies-social-media-networking-and-potential-failure/)
- 8 Reports and discussion.
- 15 Reports and discussion.
- 22 Reports and discussion. *All catalog & materiality assessments due if not already submitted.*

Project 3 (or 2) due April 25

Additional Resources on the Child, the Book, The Archive

- Melissa Adler, *Cruising the Library: Perversities in the Organization of Knowledge*
 Gillian Avery, *Behold the Child* (drawn from Baldwin holdings)
 Nicholson Baker, *Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper*
 Matthew Battles, *Library: An Unquiet History*
 Pierre Bayard, *How to Talk About Books You Haven't Read*
 Patricia Crain, *The Story of A*
 Robert Darnton, *The Case for Books*
 Abigail De Kosnik, *Rogue Archives: Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom*
 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*
 Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Rohan, eds., *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process*
 Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading and The Library at Night*
 Julietta Singh, *No Archive Will Restore You* (<https://punctumbooks.com/titles/no-archive-will-restore-you/>)
 Keith O'Sullivan & Pádraic Whyte, *Children's Literature Collections: Approaches to Research*
 Francis Spufford, *The Child that Books Built*
 Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*
 Susan Stewart, *On Longing*