# Grassroots Self-Documentation: Community Archives among North American Muslims

Spring 2022



---

## Instructor

**Salma Abumeeiz, MA, MLIS**
Research & Instruction Librarian
Powell Library
Email: salmabumeeiz@library.ucla.edu

Virtual Office hours: **Mondays 1-2PM** and
**Fridays 10 -11AM** on Zoom or by appointment
Pronouns: she/her/hers

## Course Information

**Course Day & Time:** T, 9:00AM - 11:50AM

**Location:** Kaplan A48

**Credits:** 6.0

**Course Site:**
https://ccle.ucla.edu/course/view/22S-CLUSTER27CW-6

# Acknowledging the Land

In this class, we will grapple with the legacies of colonialism, slavery, imperialism, assimilation, and other structures of oppression. As such, I want to acknowledge that UCLA is located on the historic homeland and unceded territory of the Tongva, Kizh, and Chumash peoples. We pay our respects to the Honuukvetam (Ancestors), 'Ahiihirom (Elders) and 'Eyoohiinkem (our relatives/relations) past, present and emerging. Public and land-grant institutions across the United States of America, including the University of California system, were built on stolen land through the Morrill Act of 1862, which allowed indigenous land to be stolen and sold for university campus construction.

The practice of land acknowledgements did not originate in colonial institutions like universities, but has been customary for many indigenous peoples for centuries, if not millenia. For non-indigenous folks, land acknowledgments are both an opportunity for education and a call for action. To learn more about the land on which UCLA operates, as well as the original and continuing Tongva caretakers, you can visit the official tribal website, or learn from Julia Bogany, teacher, activist, and tribal member, whose books can be purchased here**.**

# Acknowledging the Ongoing Pandemic

This course is taking place during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has presented, and continues to present, enormous impacts on people locally and around the world. In addition to the challenges that the pandemic posed on education in the last 2 years, many of us have been directly impacted by the effects of COVID-19 in areas outside of education, including our health, the health of our loved ones, and our jobs. The consequences of the pandemic have been especially significant for people and communities who already face marginalization, including people of color, people with disabilities and chronic health conditions, people without immigration documentation, those with family caregiving responsibilities, those without health insurance or limited access to health-related resources, incarcerated people, and those with low income.

As we continue to grapple with the effects of COVID-19 and monitor its impact on our campus, I have designed this course to be as accommodating and flexible as possible. I am aware of the extraordinarily challenging circumstances we are all living under as we go through this quarter. Please let me know how I can best support you. Additionally, I am are available to help you navigate the resources available at UCLA, including (but not limited to) the following:

- The Bruin Resource Center (BRC) - the BRC "is the home for a number of campus centers and programs that provide support to different student communities including students who have been part of the foster care and probation systems, students who are undocumented or a part of mixed-status families, parenting students and students who are taking care of other dependents such as siblings, students in recovery, students were formerly incarcerated or impacted by the carceral system, and students who have experienced houselessness";

- [The Black Graduate Student Association](#) and the [Afrikan Student Union](#) continue to offer a supportive space and advocate for Black students at UCLA;

- [The Black Bruin Resource Center](#) "will provide space for Black students, faculty, staff, alumni to build community and celebrate the Black/African diaspora's various cultures to enhance the UCLA experiences for all";

- UCLA's Asian American Studies Center maintains a directory of AAPI community organizations [here](#);

- [First To Go](#) - "Housed under the First Year Experience ... promotes campus involvement and visibility with a focus on the retention and success of all first-generation college students at UCLA. We are here to serve as a resource hub to assist current UCLA undergraduate students as they navigate the campus and provide support in building community";

- [CAPS](#) is a counseling service offered by UCLA for students;

- [UCLA LGBTQIA Resource Center](#) - The UCLA LGBTQ Campus Resource Center provides "a comprehensive range of education and advocacy services supporting intersectional identity development as well as fostering unity, wellness, and an open, safe, and inclusive environment for UCLA's LGBTQ community";

- [Economic Crisis Response Team, ECRT](#), which is useful for anyone experiencing economic hardships;

- UCLA provides support for victims/survivors of assault through [CARE](#), including 24/7 crisis counseling.

# Course Materials

**All materials** for this course will be available to you through the Library's electronic collections or freely available through online resources.

# Course Description & Learning Outcomes

How do North American Muslims preserve their own histories and determine what is of **enduring value**? This seminar will explore how Muslims in North America participate in the growing movement of "independent grassroots initiatives within communities to collect, preserve, and make accessible historical records outside of mainstream archival institutions" (Caswell, 2012).

In situating Muslims' community-based archives within this context, this seminar will engage you on the importance of **thinking locally** when understanding how and why North American Muslims engage in community-based archives; and how these archives are inextricably **shaped by structures of power**, including White supremacy, Islamophobia, imperialism and colonialism.

Acknowledging that the nature and characteristics of community archives are vast and varied among North American Muslims, this seminar will also **challenge any notion of a monolithic, unchanging, and uncontested Muslim 'community,'** as evidenced by the various self-documentation efforts throughout the continent.

Throughout the quarter, you will …

- Improve the range and proficiency of your writing skills, particularly as they relate to communicating disciplinary research with wider/non-specialist audiences;

- Describe core issues and themes related to community archives, with particular emphasis on the diverse landscape of community archives among North American Muslims;

- Examine the role of race and power in shaping community archival practices among North American Muslims;

- Consider how and why individuals and communities make documentary decisions, while critically reflecting on the limitations of non-community members in understanding community needs;

- Explore the roles of archival and information professionals in shaping archival practices;

- Apply knowledge of community archival practices and considerations to support ongoing community archival efforts at the Islamic Center of Southern California;

# How to Succeed in this Course

1. Attend and participate actively, inquisitively, respectfully, and collaboratively in all class discussions, activities, workshops, and guest speaker events.

2. Approach writing assignments as opportunities to revise and workshop your own writing ideas, skills, and style.

3. Complete all assigned readings prior to attending class, and be prepared to share your observations. [See this handout for tips on reading efficiently in the humanities.](#)

4. Challenge and expand your own ideas, engage in new ways of thinking, and demonstrate growth in areas related to community archival practices and ethics.

# Instructor Availability

I care about your learning, this course, and all of you as people, and am working hard to help you get the most out of the course. That said, I work in an 'academic staff' position at UCLA that primarily operates within a traditional work week Monday through Friday. While I will do my best to respond to your requests in a timely manner, I will likely not respond to emails during evenings or weekends.

# Assignments and Grade Distribution

*Rubrics for each assignment can be found on the course website.*

## Participation in Seminar Discussions (30% of grade)

**Due:** Throughout the quarter

*Participation grading will be based on attendance (10%), and engagement in class discussions, activities, workshops, and with guest speakers (20%). Please reach out to me if you would like to discuss additional/alternative opportunities to participate if you are not able to meet these requirements.*

## Community Archive Profile (20% of grade)

**Due:** Apr 18, 2022

*Select one of the community archives we explored during week 2. Construct a 5-7 page profile for your selected archive addressing all the following areas/questions:*

1) *The 5 Ws (who, what, when, where, and why) surrounding your chosen archive;*

2) *A discussion of how 'community' is conceived and defined in the context of your chosen archive;*

3) *An exploration of how the archive relates to historical and/or contemporary processes relevant to North American Muslims, including, but not limited to, symbolic annihilation, immigration and displacement, race and racism, Islamophobia, intergenerational relationships, etc.;*

4) *An analysis of the archival records present in the archive (e.g. oral histories, photographs, letters), and how these records represent particular historical and cultural memories.*

*Further, you are expected to consult, cite, and meaningfully integrate* **at least 2 secondary sources** *using the [Global Islam Library Reserach Guide](#) to inform your archive profile.*

## Exhibit Presentation (20% of grade)

**Due:** May 24, 2022

*With your exhibit group, present your photo heritage collection in class for 15 minutes. This presentation should not just be a reading or summary of your exhibit, but rather:*

1) *a compelling overview of your approach to building your exhibit and how you researched it;*

2) *a discussion of its contextual relevance to the Islamic Center of Southern California;*

3) *and an explanation of its enduring value to community and non-community members.*

*In preparation for this presentation, your group is expected to meet with me in office hours or in consultation to receive specific feedback/guidance.*

*Please note, Sadik, Hashem, and other members of the Islamic Center, will be invited to these presentations.*

## Final project - Photo Heritage Exhibit (25% of grade)

**Due:** Jun 6, 2022 **(draft due May 17th)**

*In groups of 3 - 4, you will compile a digital photographic heritage exhibit to accompany the budding Islamc Center of Southern California Community Archive.*

*Your group will choose one of the provided collections of images that capture historical and contemporary processes and experiences related to the Islamic Center.*

*Your group's portion of the virtual exhibit will include:*

1) *an introduction to your collection of photographs introducing viewers to the themes represented in your collection and its significance to community self-documentation;*

2) *a description of each item in the collection;*

3) *a detailed catalog entry that expounds on the historical and/or contemporary significance of the collection;*

4) *a bibliography containing at least 5 reference sources to supplement your exhibit and direct viewers to additional reading materials.*

*Extensive instruction will be provided in-class throughout the quarter on how to populate the exhibit using Omeka software, and how to write for non-specialist audiences. You will also be assessed on your demonstrated collaboration with Islamic Center members in pursuit of your portion of the exhibit.*

## Personal Reflection on Final Project (5% of grade)

**Due:** Jun 6, 2022

Submitted along with your final exhibit, this assignment provides you with an opportunity to reflect on your experience building the exhibit and working with your group in approximately 1 page. **Each group member must complete this individually.**

*Late Policy: I will be flexible with all deadlines on an as-needed basis in order to accommodate your well-being. Please email me as soon as possible if you are not able to meet a particular deadline due to extenuating circumstances or emergencies.*

## Accessible Education

I encourage students who require accommodations to meet with me so we can work together to address your learning needs. If you are already registered with the Center for Accessible Education (CAE), please request your Letter of Accommodation in the Student Portal. If you are seeking registration with the CAE, please submit your request for accommodations via the CAE website. Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations should submit their request for accommodations as soon as possible, as it may take up to two weeks to review the request. For more information, please visit the [CAE website](#).

If there are accommodations that will make our class more accessible to you that are not met by CAE, please contact me and I will work with you to provide an accessible and equitable learning environment.

## An Important Note on this Course

Within this course, you will have several opportunities to explore community archives and memory in a variety of contexts, while also considering how historical and contemporary processes impact community self-documentation.

**Integral to this work** will be continuously reflecting on positionality and power. This will apply to all the community archives we examine, as well as our project collaboration with the Islamic Center of Southern California (ICSC). As UCLA students, likely unaffiliated with the ICSC, you are asked to approach your work with the Center from a place of reciprocity, relationship-building, humility, and sustainability.

# Course Schedule

---

## Week 1, 3/29/2022
## What are community archives?

**Reading before class**

Caswell, M. (2012). **SAADA and the Community-Based Archives Model: What Is a Community-Based Archive Anyway?** South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA); South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA).
[Blog Post]

Gilliland, A., & Flinn, A. (2013). **Community Archives: What are we really talking about?** CIRN Prato Community Informatics Conference 2013: Keynote.
[20 pages]

**In-class scope/discussion**

- Course introduction, assignment overview
- Class code of ethics, expectations
- What is a community?
    - What is the "Muslim community"? Who defines it?
- What are (community) archives, why do they exist, why do they matter?

---

## Week 2, 4/5/2022

## Tracing and Rethinking Muslim Diaspora

**Reading before class**

Shams, T. (2021). **Homeland and Heartland: Conceptualizing the "Muslim" "Diaspora."** *Diaspora* (New York, N.Y.), 21(1), 47–63.
[16 pages]

Leonard, K. (2013). **Organizing Communities: Institutions, Networks, Groups**. In J. Hammer & O. Safi (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to American Islam* (Cambridge Companions to Religion, pp. 170-189). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CCO9781139026161.013
[19 pages]

Explore/browse the list of community archives provided on the course website (also listed below):

- [South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA)](#)
- [Umi's Archive](#)
- [Creative Memory of the Syrian Revolution](#)
- [Religions Texas: Muslim Voices](#)
- [The ArQuives – Canada's LGBTQ2+ Archives](#)
- [The War on Terror Resistance Archives](#)

## In-class scope/discussion

- What is a diaspora, and how does it relate to religion?
- How are Muslims' sense of the past reenacted in new ways and in new contexts?
- In what ways can community archives serve diasporic/dispersed/invisibilized communities?
- How might we represent the diverse "Muslim community" in archival settings?

---

# Week 3, 4/12/2022

## Building Partnerships, Reckoning with Institutional Violence
### *Sign up for exhibit project groups in class*

## Guest Speakers

Sadik Aloo (Islamic Center of Southern California); Hashem Sherif (Islamic Center of Southern California); Iman Dagher (UCLA Library)

## Reading before class

Gabiola, J. and Caswell, M. (2017). **"'Are You a Spy?': Methodological Challenges to Studying Community Archives,"** Society of American Archivists Research Forum Proceedings, 2017.
[14 pages]

Carpenter, Z. (2015). **Librarians Versus the NSA.** *The Nation.*
[short *Nation* article]

Reciprocity in Research Records Collaborative, **"'Come Correct or Don't Come at All': Building More Equitable Relationships Between Archival Studies Scholars and Community Archives."** White Paper. (December 2021).
[24 pages]

Lopez, C., Ravaei, K., Romero, R., & Page, S. (2020). **Positionality & Research [Tutorial].**
[Complete this tutorial]

**In-class scope/discussion**

- Project groups, setting expectations
- Institutional cooperation with community archives
    - Ethics, relationship-building, power, erasure
- Strategies for ethical and equitable engagement with community archives as non-community members
    - How do we build trust?
    - Is equity possible?
- Survey of institutional archives
    - [Muslims in Canada Archives - University of Toronto](#);
    - [Muslims of the Midwest - Michigan State University](#);
    - [Muslims in Brooklyn - Brooklyn Public Library](#);
        - Opportunities, considerations, contexts

---

## Week 4, 4/19/2022

## Resisting Neutrality: Community Archives as Political Projects

**Guest Speaker**

Lizeth Ramirez - Librarian/Archivist for Los Angeles Communities and Cultures | Bibliotecaria/Archivista para Comunidades y Culturas de Los Ángeles

**Reading before class**

Caswell, M. (2021). **From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in Archives.** UCLA.
[20 pages]

Caswell, M. (2014). **"Seeing Yourself in History: Community Archives in the Fight Against Symbolic Annihilation."** *The Public Historian* 36(4): 26-37.
[11 pages]

Perkins, C. (2010) **"Beyond the Rhetoric: Negotiating the Politics and Realizing the Potential of Community-driven Heritage Engagement,"** *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 16 nos.1-2: 107-122.
[15 pages]

Said, E. (1980). "**Islam Through Western Eyes**." *The Nation*.
[short *Nation* article]

**In-class scope/discussion**

- Share/discuss community archive profiles

- How are these community archives different? What do they tell us about how different archives conceive memory, history, and heritage?
- How do these archives relate to the reality of "symbolic annihilation" and documenting historically under-documented communities?
- Consider positionality and how it shapes your relationship with your selected archive
- Radical empathy and its limitations
- Application of the 'reverse curatorial model'
- [The Blacktivists](#) and [Archivists Against History Repeating Itself](#)
- Relationship between (dispersed) Muslim communities and structures of power
- Unpacking the impulse to be value-neutral

---

## Week 5, 4/26/2022
## Race and Power

## Guest Speaker

[Moska Rokay](#) (Toronto, Canada) - Archivist, Muslims in Canada Archives, University of Toronto

## Readings before class

Bayoumi, M. (2020). **"[Racing Religion](#)**." In *This Muslim American Life* (pp. 48–72). New York University Press.
[23 pages]

Turner, R. (2013). **"[African Muslim Slaves in Antebellum America](#),"** in *The Cambridge companion to American Islam* / edited by Omid Safi, Juliane Hammer. Cambridge University Press.
[17 pages]

Nadine N. (2008). **"[Look, Mohammed the Terrorist Is Coming!': Cultural Racism, Nation-Based Racism and the Intersectionality of Oppressions after 9/11](#)."** In *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11.* Syracuse University Press.
[30-minute read]

Rahemtullah, O.-S. (2021). **[Refugees On Stolen Land](#)**. South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA); South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA).
[short blog post]

## In-class scope/discussion

- Legacies of slavery, colonialism, settler colonialism, imperialism

- How do these legacies matter (or not) for American muslims?
- [Islamophobia is Racism Syllabus](#)
- Role of community-based memory work in regard to power and activism
- ["No Ban on Stolen Land"](#)
    - Coalition-building and its implications for community archiving

---

## Week 6, 5/3/2022
## Public History and Digital Humanities

**Readings before class**

Posner, M. (n.d.) **Key Terms – Introduction to Digital Humanities.**
[short blog post]

Posner, M. (2016) **"What's Next: The Radical, Unrealized Potential of Digital Humanities,"** in *Debates in the Digital Humanities.* University of Minnesota.
[short chapter]

Kassim, S. (2019). **The Museum is the Master's House: An Open Letter to Tristram Hunt**. *Medium*.
[*Medium* article]

Lau, T. C. W. (2022). **Notes Toward an Ethics of Editorial Care**. *S Y N A P S I S.*
[short blog post]

**In-class scope/themes**

- Virtual Field trip! [Museum of Anthropology (UBC) Virtual Tour](#)
    - Complete the field-trip reflection activity
- Interrogating structures of power in the sphere of public history and digital humanities
    - Do community archives challenge/provide alternatives to these approaches to memory?
- Ethics and public history/digital humanities
- Public history writing
    - Collaborative curation, editing and implications for community archives
    - How can editorial ethics inform your approach to the final exhibit?

---

## Week 7, 5/10/2022
## Archiving Identities

**Guest Speaker**

Nargis Hakim Rahman (Metro Detroit) - Writer

**Readings for next week**

Caswell, M. (2014). **"Inventing New Archival Imaginaries: Theoretical Foundations for Identity-Based Community Archives."** *Identity Palimpsests.* Los Angeles, CA: Litwin Books.
[20 pages]

Paschild, C. (2012). **"Community Archives and the Limitations of Identity: Considering Discursive Impact on Material Needs."** *American Archivist* 75:1: 125-142.
[12 pages]

**"Los Angeles Intifada – Michigan Quarterly Review."** n.d. Accessed February 23, 2022. https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/mqr/2020/10/los-angeles-intifada/.
[20-minute read]

**Hazine—For Researchers of the Diverse Islamic Worlds**. (n.d.). Hazine. From
[browse the Hazine website, particularly the 'Archives', 'Libraries', 'Resources', and 'Interviews' tabs. Read at least 2 entries that are interesting to you.]

**In-class scope/discussion**

- What is essentialism? How does it relate to Muslims on the continent? What role does this play in community archives?
- Diversity, fissures, debates within the Muslim community - how might community archives respond?
- How should community archives account for and honor emotions and traumas?
- What generational issues can arise in community archives?
- How might community archives among North American Muslims look different across space and time, for instance, during the 1980s vs. today?

---

Week 8, 5/17/2022

Spaces: On-site and Online
*Draft Exhibits Due In-Class*

**Guest Speaker**

Fatima VanHattum (New Mexico) - Researcher, Writer, Poet, and Comic Artist

**Readings before class**

Caswell, M., Gabiola, J., Zavala, J., Brilmyer, G., & Cifor, M. (2018). **Imagining transformative spaces: The personal–political sites of community archives.** *Archival Science*, 18(1), 73–93. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-018-9286-7

[18 pages]

Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies. (2020, October 14). **DIGITAL FORAYS: Archives & Activation//Platforms & Publics**.
[recorded panel, only watch until 46:30]

Canon, G. (2020, December 3). **ACLU files request over data US collected via Muslim app used by millions**. *The Guardian.*
[short *Guardian* article]

**What is "Open Access," Really? - A Comic**. (2021, March 22). *Hazine*.
[short comic]

**In-class scope/discussion**

- **Drafts of the written components of your exhibit are due in-class. Be prepared to share your draft and provide/receive feedback**
    - **You will also submit your draft via the course website so I can provide feedback on your writing**
- Omeka demonstration co-hosted with Maizah Ali
- Where should community archives best be kept, preserved, and made accessible?
    - What are concerns/considerations regarding housing community collections in-person or online?
        - What concerns might the Muslims have in particular about their information and data living online?
        - Limitations and opportunities of technology in community-based archives
            - How might Muslims participate in community-building online?
            - Is open information necessarily more accessible?
    - How do online mediums complicate notions of ownership?

---

Week 9, 5/24/2022

Futures and Sustainability

**Readings before class**

Casewell, M. (2021). "**A matter of time: Archival temporalities**". In *Urgent Archives*. Routledge.

[17 pages]

Omowale, Y. (2018). **"We Already Are."** Sustainable Futures series, *Medium*.
[*Medium* article]

Caswell, M. and Samip Mallick. "**Against Precarity: Towards a Community-based Notion of Fiscal Responsibility,**" *Medium.*
[*Medium* article]

Drake, J. (2016). **"Liberatory Archives: Towards Belonging and Believing."** *Medium*, https://medium.com/on-archivy/liberatory-archives-towards-belonging-and-believing-part-1-d26aaeb0edd1  and
https://medium.com/on-archivy/liberatory-archives-towards-belonging-and-believing-part-2-6f56c754eb17 .
[two *Medium* Articles]

## In-class scope/discussion

- Review Architecting Sustainable Futures
- Time, fixity, and futurity
    - "How do we memorialize an event that is still ongoing?" (Sharpe, 2016)
    - Challenging "progress" narratives
        - Where/how do Muslims fit into/complicate these narratives?
- Sustainability: fiscal, emotional, and otherwise
    - Balancing precarity and uncertainty
    - How does this work continue? Who continues it?
        - Reflecting on your experience working with the Islamic Center, how might memory work be sustained within its particular geographic, political, and temporal context?

---

<div align="center">

Week 10, 5/31/2022
Exhibit Presentations and Conclusions

</div>

## Before Class:

Prepare your presentations. Additionally, please complete the Sharing your Research Workshop. The workshop will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

## In-class scope/discussion

- 15-minute exhibit presentations
- Concluding thoughts on community archives, reflections on the quarter
- Course Assessment, goodbyes, thank yous!