

Archive as poetry

POETRY AS ARCHIVE

What do we want to remember and what do we try to forget.

H2030 Spring 2017 T&Th 3-4:30

Professor Mullen



What do we treasure and what do we trash? What do we try to remember and what do we want to forget? Ideas and questions about the transient and the durable form the basis of our value system and our sense of identity. “Archive” and “Dump,” as categories, structure our relationship to the realities we accept and attempt to hold onto, and those we reject and make an effort to discard. Archives demarcate areas of attention and stand as declarations of value: they preserve against loss, amass things held dear, manifest our desires, whittle down (or enshrine) the detritus of history, and construct cultural memory, while the dump or landfill becomes the archive’s opposite number: a place for all we want to ignore. But anyone who has gone to either site will tell you how fluid the categories are, and how thin the line, as the song says, between love and hate. In the archive and the dump we find a creativity posing as criticism, and apparently critical and editorial gestures exposed as creative. To foreground the critical and creative possibilities of these sites, we will read a mix of texts including contemporary poetry informed by an archival poetics; as well as criticism and theory about both the archive and “rubbish.” **H2030** will offer an exciting reading list and provide opportunities for all students to explore creative and critical impulses and responses.