English 490 - Unearthing the Archives
Carl Sandburg

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This web-based course is essentially an interdisciplinary course that draws on Literature, the Arts, History, Political Science, and Archival studies. It will introduce students to some of Carl Sandburg’s handwritten, typewritten, and published texts located in the Rare Book & Manuscript Library at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Students will investigate ways that these texts embody and transmit the ideas, values, and assumptions of American culture from 1900-1930.

The primary goal of the course is to develop awareness that texts are not pristine, ahistorical objects but that through use, decay or editorial tampering, they record both an author’s intentions and cultural documentation.

The format of the course will be comment, response, discussion, and written analysis.

- **Journal entries** will summarize readings, attend to their interdisciplinary content, and pose questions about the interdisciplinary connections.
- **Discussion Board** topics will situate the readings and interpret key issues in Sandburg’s personal poetics and politics.
- **A Group Transcription** project will focus on “translating” a handwritten page of Sandburg’s early 1904 Notebook. Groups will then collaborate on preparing annotations and a critical introduction for their combined transcription (3-5 pages).
- **A response paper** (3-5 pages) will investigate a category of folksongs from *The American Songbag* (e.g., Pioneer Memories, Prison and Jail Songs, Railroad and work Gangs).
- The course will culminate in a **final project** (e.g., 8-10 written pages; 20 minutes PowerPoint or oral interpretation, teaching unit) that will address the significance of archival study in the context of the Sandburg texts studied in the course.

**Textual materials:**

**Course Resources on Blackboard**
1. From Rare Book & Manuscript Library, U of IL
   - 1904 Notebook
   - Publicity Brochures
   - Letters 1 (sisters, Paula)
   - Letters 2 (Harcourt Brace, Lomax)
   - *Songbag* revisions
2. Archive Study
3. How to write discussion board entries
4. How to write a journal
5. How to write a literature paper
6. Peer editing
7. Grading criteria