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# Engaging with Difficult Topics in the Archives: Suicide and Historical Empathy

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# Engaging with Difficult Topics in the Archives: Suicide and Historical Empathy

Kayla Harris  
Librarian/Archivist  
The Marian Library, University of Dayton



# Institutional Context

- University of Dayton
  - Private
  - Catholic
  - Marianist
- University Libraries
  - University Archives and Special Collections (2 FTE)
  - U.S. Catholic Special Collection (1 FTE)
  - Marian Library (7.5 FTE)



# UDI 204: Archival and Primary Source Research

- 1 credit = 15 hours
- 6 librarian / archivist instructors
- Independent course listing
- Open to all undergraduates



Spring 2019 Semester

**UDI 204**

**This is UD:**  
**Archival and Primary Source Research**

Learn about the campus, community, Catholic and Marianist past with this hands-on research course. Students will connect to the past by analyzing the University Libraries collections and by researching individual artifacts.

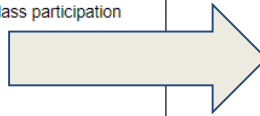
**1 credit hour**

**9:05-9:55 a.m. Mondays and Wednesdays**  
**from Jan. 14 through March 27, 2019 in Norwick Library**





UDI 204 Course Objectives		
Bloom's Taxonomy	By the end of the semester, students will be able to	Artifacts / Criteria for Assessing Learning
Remember	List and find the locations/departments for University Libraries archival and primary source collections	Research Days Bibliography citation for primary source
Remember	Identify themes and current issues within archives and special collections, such as historical empathy, silences in the archives, visual literacy, material culture, and privacy	Class participation
Understand	Read, understand, & summarize a primary source	Class participation Final project
Analyze	Analyze a primary source for context and relevance	Final project
Apply	Locate, utilize, and cite secondary sources for the research project	Citation session and bibliography for final project
<b>Synthesize</b>	Communicate the context and relevance of a primary source to an audience	Presentation of final project
Create	Connect their present campus experiences with the Catholic, Marianist, campus and/or community past	Written reflection of final project
	Develop confidence in their ability to navigate special collections protocols	Research Days Class participation



Identify themes and current issues within archives and special collections, such as **historical empathy**, silences in the archives, visual literacy/material culture, and privacy



#### 4. F

Demonstrate historical empathy,  
curiosity about the past, and  
appreciation for historical  
sources and historical actors.



### Case Studies on Teaching with Primary Sources

#### **GUIDELINES FOR PRIMARY SOURCE LITERACY**

Developed by the SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force on the Development of  
Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy (JTF-PSL)

*Approved by the ACRL Board of Directors, February 2018.  
Approved by the SAA Council, June 2018.*



**SOCIETY OF  
American  
Archivists**







# Readings and Discussion



*“How do you think you would reconcile your own values and morals with those you find in the archives - some of which you may find strange or even offensive?”*





CITIZENS ARE MOST HAPPY AND INDUSTRIOUS WHEN THEY OWN PROPERTY, HOWEVER MODEST.







# Final Assignment

- Digital Poster
  - Historical context
  - Connection to a theme
- Reflection
  - How do the themes play into the research you conducted?
- Bibliography
  - Primary and secondary



## Suicide.

A. B. LINGER, '16; CLARENCE J. SCHMITT, '15.

**S**UICIDE is the willful taking of one's life. Now, though suicide seems to be something new—a fad, it is in reality almost as old as the race itself, and has accompanied the decadence of all the great nations of antiquity. When the Egyptian monarchy had seen the grandeur of its period of conquest and internal development, had watched the pyramids under the mighty rulers that subdued Israel, slowly raise their massive forms above the plain, corruption came, and with corruption, misery, and with misery, suicide. Greece, too, was a prey to the same malady. The Roman Eagle swooped down upon that fair prey, and suicide among that subdued but haughty race was very common. When great Rome herself, trembled at the approach of Goth and Hun and Visigoth, suicide appeared a lesser evil than the ruthless hands of the barbarians.

In the Middle Ages, however, it was different. In that grand old age of faith, when man walked on earth and looked toward heaven, what place had suicide? It could hide beneath no mask of promised rest, for with the eyes of faith men saw it in all its hideousness, as a willful renouncement of their birth right to eternal happiness, and an offence against Him they called their Heavenly Father.

Times change, however, and history repeats itself. With license of thought and consequent weakening of faith that directly or indirectly followed in the steps of the Renaissance, the evil of self-destruction grew apace, continuing to increase with apparent advance of civilization. In the nineteenth century there were recorded one million and a half suicides in the countries of Europe and America. Though we, children of liberty, true to our time-honored custom, have taken up the suicide "fad" and are making laudable efforts towards preeminence, we have not as yet rivalled our neighbors across the sea. Of the nations that make up the Old World, France is easily the leader, with two hundred and thirty-nine cases out of every one million of inhabitants to her record. Denmark comes second with two hundred and thirty-four, while Germany's average was two hundred and six, and England's eighty four. With such figures staring us in the face, we are tempted

*"I found in my research that it was difficult to employ this 'historical empathy' to something from as close to home as the University of Dayton."*

*-Junior, history major (honors)*

**The Exponent Vol. XIII, January 1915**





## Active Minds

[Home](#)[Blog](#)[Events](#)[Newsletters](#)[Photos](#)[Surveys](#)[Members](#)[Forum](#)[Contact Us](#)[About](#)[Officers](#)


### ABOUT US

Active Minds is a student group advocating for mental health awareness at the University of Dayton. We focus to celebrate humanity, and seek to be a positive resource for students, faculty, and staff!

### USEFUL LINKS

We have not posted any links yet.

### GROUP ACTIVITY

 Brianna Gavin is now Vice-President of Active Minds.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

There are no upcoming events.

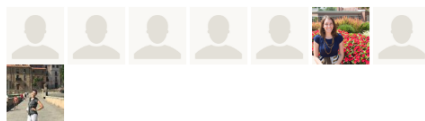
### QUICK FACTS

**8** Group officers

**113** Group members

**21** Events

**36** Emails/Newsletters



# Mental Health

[Division of Student Development](#) / [Health and Wellness](#) / [Mental Health Promotion & Suicide Prevention](#) / [Mental Health](#)

## Mental Health Promotion & Suicide Prevention

Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention initiatives at the University of Dayton strive to enrich the community of care that is an intrinsic piece of our institutional identity. To be successful as an institution, all within the UD community must be involved and take an active role to model an ethos of wellness that destigmatizes mental health issues and educates around mind, body, and spirit issues. By providing training, education and resources, we are committed to building each individuals' capacity to be an active member of our community of care. The knowledge and skills students learn during their time at UD allow them to successfully navigate the complexities of life in order to thrive, graduate and go on to live productive lives.

**Mental Health** is defined as the state of well-being in which an individual realizes their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community (World Health Organization, 2014).

### 24 Hour Immediate Crisis Assistance:

Call **Public Safety**: 937-229-2121

Call 911

**Suicide Prevention Lifeline**: 1-800-273-8255 (1-888-628-9454 for Spanish)

**Crisis Text Line**: Text HOME to 741741





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