Community Pedagogy Through Decolonial Archival Construction

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A. **Institutional Description:**
The American University of Beirut is the first American university in the Middle East. It prides itself as the pinnacle of liberal arts in the region. It is an English-medium institution in the heart of Beirut. The university student population includes domestic and diaspora Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian refugees, regional international students, and scholarship students from across Africa. The university enrolls students across degree programs and boasts one of the best medical centers in the region.

As the first American university in the Middle East, it hosts resources and enables to access to regional histories that other universities and their pedagogies may not be privvy to. This is particularly important to the pedagogy of an archival construction course, which this manuscript-in-progress discusses. Being asked to house family histories and literature in our archives is a sense of academic and elitist belonging, which provides a description to the breadth of our institutionalized archives and the prestige the university holds.

B. **Key Theorists**: Some of the key theorists, schools of thought, and frameworks center around the following:

• Jamila Ghaddar is activist archivist fighting against the erasure of Palestinian and Lebanese histories. Noting that archival science is a Western discipline, she works to 1) invite regional archivists to learn the science and 2) expose the colonial discipline of archiving for what it is.

• Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage theory is an argument of engaging in activity systems as both complacency and de-subjugation. We can look at archives as assemblages of the nation-state, and we can re-create where materiality collectively belongs to develop a material and community dialogic to that de-subjugates from the dominant narrative of silence.

C. **Glossary**:
Archives: there are institutionalized archives that have methodological and scientific process of cataloguing, discovering, and making available. This manuscript and my course use the term "archive" loosely to mean any way of preserving and providing access to the preserved.

Public Memory: the public recollection/narrative of the community through the dialogic of assembled material.

Postmemory: the memorialization of generational trauma passed through elder stories in the home.

Post-war Lebanon: when I discuss post-war Lebanon, I am discussing post-civil war (1990). All conflicts and wars that have occurred since the end of the civil war reinforce the entrenched narratives of division and silence.

Abstract

Composition faculty have begun incorporating archival methodology in their classrooms to entrench students into the community while teaching research methodologies (Brock Carlson, 2023; Proszak & Cushman, 2022). While these pedagogies help students discover the past, in transnational spaces, where archives are cultivated or eradicated by colonial powers, engendering archives has the power of creating new narratives of the nation-state (Ghaddar & Caswell, 2019).

This manuscript unpacks a pedagogy of decolonial archival development, asking students to consider how preserving the near and distant past can inform the future. Decolonial archival pedagogies in a writing classroom also help students to develop a criticality of colonial infrastructures, thinking beyond the binaries of the global north and south and beginning to think within the practices and processes of their own daily movements, recognizing that those movements can be preserved as part of nation-state assemblages.

- Data was gathered in this Fall 2025 term, but because of IRB constraints, I cannot de-anonymize and analyze work until grades are submitted and the semester is over.
- This was originally conceived as a qualitative manuscript, but I am wondering if there is now a qualitative and praxis opportunity.
- I would love to know where I am not giving enough Lebanese context, where I am giving too much, and where more literature review and less Lebanon would be preferred.

In the past few decades, faculty in composition and rhetoric have turned to archival methods for both pedagogies and research. On the pedagogy end, teacher-scholars have articulated that utilizing archival research in FYC classrooms helps to connect students to their campus community while preparing students for diverse methods of research and analysis (Evans, 2025; Mastrangelo, 2022). Faculty also utilize archival methods to connect students to the community their university is located in, helping students uncover new meaning-making about the social and historical dynamics of the location (Brock Carlson, 2023; Proszak & Cushman, 2022). Pedagogically, archival investigations provide students with a "way in" to placed-based, community literacies and processes through primary document collection and analysis.

Archival research in composition and rhetoric has been dedicated to amplifying and rediscovering pasts that have been silenced and buried. Takayoshi (2021) traces the literacy practices and institutional experiences of women subjected to incarceration at the Eastern State hospital insane asylum. VanHaitsma (2021) attempts to mitigate the historical erasure of Black bisexual histories through a bisexual framework that negotiates 21st century practices with written histories. Arnold (2025) traces the rhetorical conventions and language practices of 19th century Syrian Protestant College student to show how transnational students have been disinvited from America during controversy. In each of these studies, archival methods in composition and rhetoric insist on employing feminist and decolonial methodologies, maintaining reflection with each method and point of analysis and consistently revisiting positionality.

In the context of Lebanon, near-constant regional crises since the 1960s have engendered a culture of amnesia and silence. Amnesia occurs not only because Lebanese residents and families are forgetting their silenced histories, but also because colonizing factions have stolen the history of the country and its neighbors' histories (Mandel, 2021; Ouahes, 2018; Sela, 2022. Theft of the past has eradicated knowledge of what once was, reinforcing the notion of a lack of history while relying on oral forms of knowledge transfer. Theft and destruction from colonizing factions is one way in which historical erasure is also perpetuated. In Lebanon, amnesia and erasure is perpetuated by infrastructural silencing of history and conflict for fear of the return to violence. The consequences of these practices have resulted in generations of residents silent to their own cultural value and identities, lacking the esteem and methodology to preserve their own creations.

Bearing witness to the growing aggression (Russia and Ukraine, Israel across the Levant, and United States and Venezuela) and genocides (Uyghar, Palestinian, Sudanese) across the globe reinforces the need for robust archival practices to maintain a unified public memory and to document the multitudes of being within a nation-state. Located in one of those regions, I wanted to show my students the exigency of preservation and their daily desires and routines are of cultural significance. I developed a course on public memory titled "Decolonizing the Archives." Throughout the course, I wanted students to be considering two questions: What are the expected archives of Lebanon? What do they personally want to preserve? From these community negotiations in the classroom, I sought to understand how enacting a pedagogy of decolonial archival theory in a country consistently under threat may help students (re)consider

the preservation of cultural artifacts and the development nation-state through those cultural artifacts.

The Lebanese Post-War Context

When I first moved to Lebanon in 2018, I recall having blasé conversations with Lebanese colleagues saying, “we were due for another war.” Or, “The Italians didn’t win the World Cup this year, so we were safe for another four.” Lebanese residents predict conflict and invasions like Puxatawny Phil predicting winter. The conversation of conflict was never “if” but “when,” and meanwhile, “progress” stands still though the Lebanon is a center for education and medicine for the region, two industries guaranteeing the younger generations passports out of the country. The acceptance of impending conflict is part of the national milieu, which ultimately leads to meaningless statements about the inevitability of crises. But these statements, while not meant to elicit deep debate, just to serve as a reminder to not be comfortable, also remind residents to not feel rooted in the country.

Larkin (2012) explores the tensions within the silences of a post-war Lebanon. He argues that Lebanon has a constructed postmemory that tells a story to those who have yet to live through a war, and for those who especially did not live through the Civil War. Postmemory theories emerged to explain the psychological memory adaptations younger generations, who have not experienced the traumas of their parents and grandparents, develop due to the ways in which trauma is discussed (Frosh, 2019; Hirsch, 2012; Hoffman, 2005; Larkin, 2012).

> Hoffman uses [postmemory] to refer to the generation after, articulating the perception that the postgeneration has a different experience of events than the ‘original’ one, for what is being remembered is not the event but the feeling or sensation. This complicates the question of memory: the unknowable ‘some thing’ that is communicated through the parent’s enigmatic message is primary, its translation into recognisable events and experiences lagging very much after, and subject to many vagaries and distortions. (Frosh, 2019, p. 10).

In postmemory theory, parents who have survived traumas pass those traumas to their children and grandchildren through postmemory cultural artifacts and folklore. Hirsch (2012) and Frosh (2019) contend that younger generations experiencing postmemory traumas often live with the fear that their parents’ and grandparents’ experiences will soon be inflicted on them and the next generation and so on, though no visible threat is evident. Postmemory in Lebanon, though, is a bit more complicated as the country does experience consistent threats of external, internal, and economic violence (Khalaf, 2002; Salabi, 2003). Therefore, post-Civil War generations are subjected to their parents’ and grandparents’ stories and then they are forced to live through their own traumas, which reinforce the fears of violence and destitution.

While postmemory works to memorialize the trauma and suffering for younger generations, it does so in place of cultural apparatuses, such as media narratives and public archives designed to re-tell histories. In the case of Lebanon, and as Larkin (2012) suggests in his study among Lebanese high school and university students, post-war generations growing up in Lebanon were consistently re-told the Civil War stories in the home, while being completely silenced to the atrocities in public (p. 25). As a result, since the Lebanese Civil War, which spanned from 1972 to 1990, generations of Lebanon's residents have been raised in a cultural

context decontextualized from the catalysts and culture actually permeating the nation-state. Generations have acquiesced to silence regarding the country while importing cultures from abroad.

There are two cultural effects of postmemory. The first is the public silence maintained with respect to sectarianism, the war, or relationships permeating Lebanon. **(Ain al Rammeneh & Al Jazeera instances).** This silence is reinforced across education and cultural apparatuses. In both public and private schools, national history is covered only until 1945. Within that history, Lebanese students are taught of the brutalities of the Ottoman Empire and the affordances of the French mandate. High school education culminates in taking the International Baccalureate and the Lebanese Baccalaureate, assessments designed to enable global matriculation, not national memory/citizenship.

The second cultural effect is the lack of belonging within the national narratives that are retold. Because of the decontextualized historicizing of the country, the narratives told are surface level half-truths and representations of the country, without holding real meaning or memorial value. Students (and residents) often boast about trilingual fluency, skiing and swimming in one day, and being the only country where multiple religions coexist. While these highlights of the country and its residents are valid and extraordinary, for residents of Lebanon, they are said so consistently, they have become decontextualized without meaning. In many ways, these throwaway statements are merely the publicly acceptable topics that residents unconsciously learned to communicate to toursits and expats.

Postmemory and silence have worked in tandem to stunt Lebanon's collective memory growth. The generations following the Civil War have listened to their family's war stories for decades. Those in the diaspora hear the beauty that is Lebanon, but they also hear the pain that is associated with living in the country. The consistent conflicts and crises that have followed the Civil War reinforce the postmemory narrative and traumas. As Larkin suggests, these constant stories and retellings traumatize generations to come, even those who have not lived in Lebanon or experience a Lebanese crisis. Postmemory in Lebanon not only passes generational trauma through this orality, but it also passes divisions and blame. While families and close friends will discuss who is to blame for the Civil War, the garbage crisis, the banking sector, and whatever the distraction of the day is, the conversations across the population remain silent. Silence is reinforced through the school systems and lack of spaces for collective memory. As such postmemory blame remains siloed into family homes, preventing both healing and nation-building through public memory.

Silence is problematic beyond the erasure of historic events. The silence of Lebanon's history coupled with the people and artifacts chosen to be archived and memorialized creates the assumption that archives must be fossilized ruins or the work of masters in their craft. By engraining silence, the generations following the Civil War have not only dissociated from the ongoing problems of Lebanon, but they have also developed a sense of underwhelm across apparatuses, not recognizing what could be archived or what could disappear. Scholars of public memory argue that there must be a dialogic to the development of public memory and nation-building. That dialogic component is dynamic, material, and socially constructed (Halbwach, 1992; Zelizer, 1995).

Decolonizing Archives

Decolonial archiving is praxis of resistance that requires archivists to reconsider the methods of their discipline while attempting to amplify the histories yet to be voiced, yet to be told appropriately, or made to be buried (Comber et al, 2025; Ghaddar and Caswell, 2019). A decolonizing lens asks archivists to amplify the nation-state across multitudes and resurrect the histories of the colonized space. A decolonial lens recognizes that silence and amnesia are tools of the colonizer, long after they have left, and though silence has maintained an unstable peace for Lebanon, it also maintains generational decontextualization to the land (El Shakry, 2015). Decolonial archives, then, need to do the difficult work of un-silencing and remembering (Ghaddar & Caswell, 2019; Haberstock, 2020; Mertens & Perrezon, 2025). For El Shakry (2015), the un-silencing is developed through the exposing the multitudes of philosophies and philosophers within an un-and-under-studied, misconceived time period. She positions national Islamists with pan-Arabists to reveal the range of great Arab thinkers in the 20th century. For El Shakry, coupling the secular and non-secular activists in the same space illustrates the nuances of the Arab political spectrum while showing the goals remained the same: resist imperialism.

However, a decolonial praxis moves beyond archiving the ideas and thinkers of a time and space. The multitudes that El Shakry argues for are also multitudes across silenced disciplines and spheres. Lebanon in particular is known for its token stories, idioms, and public figures, which I argue amounts to the post-war generations' decontextualization of their own history and lived spaces. providing a singular narrative of the country for both the outsider and the insider. For outsiders, these staple representations of Lebanon mark the country as a tourist destination where everyone gets along: Lebanon: where you can ski and swim in the same day; Lebanon: where you'll see Christians living side by side with Muslims; Lebanon: where you can party until 4 am while watching bombs strike the suburbs. While these statements are merely embellishments of the truth, they do not embody the Lebanon my students and I live in, and they certainly do not embody the turmoil we have lived through since 2019. But as a result of the historical amnesia of and within Lebanon, a public memory of constructed identity is not discussed and both the history and the lived experiences of the Lebanese are muted and erased in the public.

The decontextualization of history and lack of embodied connection to the country is a manufactured biproduct of what has been archived and what is assumed should be archived. That which maintains preservation in the country is centuries old, prior to the development of the Lebanese state. These sites include a Crusader fort from the 13th century in the old city of Saida, the largest Roman ruins in Baalbek, and a 12th century citadel from Raymond of Saint-Gilles' siege of Tripoli. The preservation and maintenance of these sites maintains the narrative of the development of the Lebanese nation-state: as a land that was consistently colonized, fought for, and a product of conquerors moving in and out of what would become Lebanese borders. For El Shakry (2015), the first step to combatting decontextualization through decolonial archival praxis would be to resurrect the very people and rhetoric the country attempts to silence: the historical conversations from 1945 to today.

However, a decolonial lens need not only be a smattering of thinkers, but it should also detail the everyday artifacts of the everyday resident.

Decontextualized State

As stated above, Lebanon embraces the narrative that it has experienced forms of colonization from religious wars through their own brutal Civil War. The Ottoman empire was the first to establish settlements through walled cities. These settlements, particularly in Tripoli and Beirut, were marked with winding souks and courtyards, insisting on community engagement and shared space. After the Ottoman Empire, the French instituted a mandate that reorganized public property to private, institutionalized government mechanisms, and re-designed the city-state. Following the mandate's redesign of the city and its processes, Lebanon moved from city souks centered around community to a European city design of individual space and commercial property. Though the French mandate in Lebanon is viewed as a welcome partnership, the architectural redesign of the city and the government was one that altered the commonsense mobilizations of the Lebanese. "Eurocentrism not only colonizes lands and bodies, but colonizes how we understand the world, our sense of being" (Mendoza, 2020, p. 56). Mendoza moves on to argue that coloniality reduces diversity and destroys local knowledge. In terms of archiving, coloniality has flattened Lebanon through multiple mechanisms. The first is through the erasure of documentation and ways of living that necessitates colonial rule (El Shakry, 2015; Mendoza, 2020).

The aftermath of Lebanon's Civil War has maintained amnesia and segregation for fear of inciting new violence. This amnesia and segregation have enabled a colonial power structures and cultural hierarchies to remain in the country (and throughout the diaspora). Amnesia and continued colonization occur through the material artifacts that are and are not interacted with.

> As archives are, by their nature, sites of cultural, political, and economic power, it is no surprise here that the conception of archival oppression that I propose includes both cultural misrecognition (through symbolic annihilation) and the maldistribution of resources (through the chronic divestment in minoritized communities). Likewise, my conception of archival liberation includes both cultural recognition (through representational belonging, with the caveat that such recognition is self recognition from within minoritized communities) and a redistribution of resources (through material reparations). In this way, Fraser gives me the language to organize what I call the affective and materials aspects of archival liberation (Caswell, 2021, p. 34).

Caswell articulates that the historical amnesia subjected to Lebanon results in symbolic annihilation, divestment of community, and a lack of representational belonging – and she argues that liberation through archives can remedy eradication through colonial materialism. As a result of this multi-pronged erasure, residents are disconnected from their country and its history.

Assemblages

Assemblage rhetoric, which is built on activity theory, has the potential to explain the dynamic materiality of decolonial archives as developing new narratives of a colonized nation-state. In fact, DeLanda (2006), arguing about Deleuze's social ontology of assemblages states at the fourth level, assemblages create a singular entity: "that at the very top we do not get 'society

as a whole', that is, a vague, general entity or category, but simply another concrete, singular entity (an individual nation-state, for instance, part of a population of such territorial states)" (DeLanda, 2006, p. 252). Explaining Deleuze and Gautarri's territorialization and deterritorialization, DeLanda argues that assemblages create nation-states through two separate activity systems. The first activity system defines the "role" of the object and the second activity system defines the "borders" of the object's role (Delanda, 2006, p. 252; Deleuze and Gautarri, 1987, p. 88). Territorialization, and maintaining the same bordered activity system, maintains a status quo. For Deleuze, deterritorialization of assemblages has the opportunity to de-subjugate, or reprogram, the subjugated being. Archives have the opportunity to de-territorialize, and create new activity systems, cultural materiality, information, and storytelling.

With their activity systems, assemblages create symbolic meaning and indicate how narratives, material, ideas, and actions move across space and time (Alqub & Matar, 2025; Hamilakis, 2017; Kinkaid, 2020). Re-assembling symbolic material outside of their activity systems first forces a re-symbolizing of the materiality, prompting an unexpected dialogic across interaction (Brown, 2020; MacFarlane, 2011). It is from the deterritorialization of the materiality and the dialogic that follows that the cohesion of the nation-state narrative can begin. Participating in the praxis of archival science also participates in assemblage theories. Artifacts cannot be archived and preserved in isolation, but they involve a network of artifacts, events, and people, which ultimately develop an activity system for what is preserved. In this way, methodical preservation and cultural production of archives becomes an assemblage of the nation-state.

In order to assemble decolonial archives, then, it is not enough to present new narratives or re-present known narratives. The presentation must alter the activity system in such a way that the content is discussed, and discussed across new and critical narratives. In other words, the narratives cannot simply be removed from the home and into the public, but in their decoloniality, these narratives should also discuss populations continually left out of the histories, or events that have been glossed over. Participatory archives can also resurrect new activity in general, asking younger generations and the diaspora to contribute to learning heritage survival (languages, dances, food preservation), changing the cultural content from decontextualized anecdotes of hospitality to fuller understandings and embodied skills of the historic activity. I argue that assemblages in the Lebanon have been silenced along with conflict and history, but it is within these assemblages that post-war generations can recover their Lebanon. Just as important fighting erasure is, so too is holding space, and preserving, for the current, developing Lebanese culture. Assemblages are the building blocks of nation-states, and assembled artifacts hold the culture of the periphery.

Positionality

Across each aspect of the course, its content, and my students, I am an outsider. I am a monolingual white woman, born in the United States, indoctrinated by a midwestern public education. My public school education taught me of the merits of United States democracy and our reflexive shame in the Trail of Tears and slavery. As a child of the 90s, I grew up believing the country did bad things in its youth, but it had learned from its mistakes, and the rest of the world embodied a savagery that required American intervention and democracy to save it from

itself. As an outsider to my students' experiences, my pedagogical and analytical positionality must acknowledge that I am an insider to the very systemic forces guaranteeing erasure through colonization of multiple nations and apparatuses.

As an outsider to Lebanon, constructed until an imperial, colonial education apparatus, my background regarding Lebanese history is absent, but my indoctrination to governmentality is one of checks and balances and democratic republics. Even if I do not believe that the United States is a blame-less actor, I have still been constructed under this singular notion of governmentality and rule. In transnational FYC classes, my methods of bringing students to share their experiences and conclusions have rested on listening and not critiquing or questioning those conclusions. However, in this course, my ignorance has met students' decontextualized histories and learned silence, which makes amplifying new stories difficult.
Another complication of my positionality, and the positionality of the university, is that we are institutional colonizers, and part of the very entity contributing to the erasure of the Lebanese. At the time of offering the "Decolonizing the Archives" course, President Trump was arresting American campus protestors and threatening the funding of campuses that enabled protests against the genocide of Palestinians. The institution has processes that prohibit people from visiting the university and the archives without proper vetting. These acts, and AUB's compliance, left students voiceless and powerless to speak for their families, loved ones, and neighbors.

I maneuvered my positionality with three strategies: to present decolonial archives that are already existing, to present the fissures of the Lebanese preservation that are emerging, and to open my classroom for interdisciplinary experts of Lebanon and their attempts to preserve.
Pedagogy:

Acknowledging this positionality, my goal is not to assess *what or how* students choose to archive, but to show them options of archival processes through who is archiving and for what purposes. This method included a complicated mix of 1) the scientific process of archiving, 2) theories of decoloniality, assemblages, and public memory, 3) examples of global archives, and 4) archives within the institution. Through this pedagogy, students are also able to actualize how writing and rhetoric move beyond the technological act of writing and that "public memory is creation, maintenance, revision, and destruction of public memory is inherently a multimodal rhetorical process involving diverse constituencies in shared spaces" (Greer & Grobman, 2015). "Decolonizing the Archives" is a process that shows students that they have the potential to change cultural history and that writing and rhetoric can be mutual acts of meaning-making.

Scientific process of archiving

Colonial in nature with provenance (and you know, the whole colonizers stealing things and putting them in the museums)

Colonial in nature with choice and/or funding to present and/or suppress

Meta data and finding aids and the development of an activity system and ongoing authorial bias

Theories of decoloniality, assemblage, and public memory are utilized to show students that the Lebanese experience is not flat across each resident and the likely disidentification they experience is a result of the continued silence. We discuss Latin American decolonial theorists

such a Quijano, Mignolo, and Lugones to articulate two frames: the first is that there are global academic discourses that may connect to their affect and experiences, and second is the connecting of subjugation mechanisms of others may help student recall and be able to write to their subjugation and silence mechanisms. Decolonial methodologies help students recognize they are not just Lebanese teenagers, but they are also many individualities that are constructions of multiple forms of control. As they begin to consider these multitudes of themselves and of Lebanon, students also begin to read about assemblage theory. Assemblage theory is introduced to help students recognize and place where the "identity crisis" of Lebanon is cultivated and how to (re)consider the development of a new identity through the practices of archiving. Assemblage theory asks students to consider each aspect of Lebanon and being Lebanese, and how those assemblages create a whole ideology of nation-state. Through assemblage theory, students consider that silence has not only been harmful to the construction of recent history, but also on the development a national identity through the differentiated lived experiences. Instead, these lived experiences have stayed siloed in each others' homes and communities. Along with the siloed experiences, students have also relegated everyday Lebanese artifacts (sweets, cigarettes) and activities (education, gaming) to their designated spaces, as opposed to a collection that holds Lebanese identity and history, and it holds identity and history in manner but separated from, and connected to, trauma. The last theory the class tangles with is public memory. The goal is to show students that the country can move from institutionalized silenced and passed down postmemory to a public memory that allows the nation, the diaspora, and the world to remember the events and assemblages that make Lebanon. Furthermore, students recognize that as a public memory is developed, so is the nation-state.

The institutionalized silence of the country's history has prevented the development of memorials and archives from the many violent incursions and non-violent crises that have plagued post-Civil War Lebanon. While the absence of examples may engender creativity, for most students, the absence leaves them void of archival ideas beyond a museum depicting war and trauma. Arguably, when growing up in a system when the narrative of conflict is a recursive echo in the home, on the streets, and through the diaspora, it makes sense why these ideas are at the forefront of their mind, and why they need layered theories and examples of decolonial archives to begin to think of their own nation-state.

Therefore, as I introduced archival methodology, I also introduced students to global archives enacting praxis. Global examples serve to both show students how praxis exists and how to rethink the Lebanese narrative outside of the extremes of exceptionalism and trauma. Examples serve to illustrate how decolonial archival praxis is a tool of preservation, but also a tool of progress. Black beauty, 9/11, rwandan genocide, vietnam war memorial. Each of these archives are participatory in nature, moving preservation mindset from priceless, exceptional treasures to be observed and not touched, to embracing experience and difference. One form of participatory archival work is the 9/11 archival memorial, which invites everyone worldwide to tell their story. Likewise, the Rwandan Genocide archive invites both victims, perpetrators, and family members to tell their stories. In class, we discuss how the dialogic is a form of education and healing for each of these preservation projects, but for two very different purposes. Another form of participatory archival work that the course considers is the cultural work of the Abuelas Projects. The Abuelas Projects invites the community to community centers to engage in the experiences of making Latin American food, understanding dances, and learning history. These

participatory archives ask attendees to learn-by-doing and then pass the traditions along. The participatory archives helped students recognize that trauma and food are not merely talking points about being Lebanese, but there are ways to engage with these artifacts to develop productive futures.

Woven with rhetorical and archival theory and global archival examples, the class was also entrenched in local work being done at the ground level. AUB is home to three archival spaces. Our library archives host most of the country's historical data, early scientific and health discoveries, and the university's history. Lebanon is considered the most progressive country in the region. That branding is associated with documented protests, movie and music stars, writers and thinkers, and influential leaders. The AUB library archives has the resources, manpower, and machinery (and air conditioning), to properly preserve and file content submitted to the unit. More importantly, AUB has the prestige for families and estates to *want* their histories preserved with the institution. The AUB library archives engage in traditional archival praxis, which students observed over the semester. The students also engaged with the Beirut Urban Lab which is an entity of the university's architecture department. Here, they witnessed how maps are products of colonizers, and how mapping during conflict can provide evidence wrongdoing and dictate progress. While at the Beirut Urban Lab, students saw how mapping during violent conflicts creates an archive of hostile action against those without voice; likewise, mapping against the French mandate exposes what is left of Ottoman era living and should be acknowledged. In this way, mapping has the potential to show real-time changes as well as historic uprooting. The Beirut Urban Lab also illustrated to students how digital creation mediate meaning-making not only through access, but also through how we engage in the geographic. The final university archive students visited was the Palestine Land Center. Here, students engaged with oral histories, original maps, and the global network of archives. Where the Beirut Urban Lab showed students how real-time preservation acts revolutionary rhetoric for today's violence, the Palestine Land Center illustrates how historic documents and narratives provide arsenal for the longevity of the nation-state. These three archival entities show students how archives can exist across multiple forms and for the use of the future, not simply looking backwards.

This pedagogy was developed to ask students to push against the very structures that have decontextualized them from their history and made them feel powerless to the next domestic or foreign conflict.

Methods

In the final week of the course, students were required to submit a "cumulative reflection" of the course[1]. The prompt is in the appendix. An open coding scheme will be utilized in Spring semester.

Findings

Students submitted final cumulative reflections Dec 3rd. The coding analysis will be conducted through Spring and Summer semesters. Inshallah.

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[1] This study received approval from my institution's IRB. Its IRB number is SBS-2025-0274.

Discussion

Conclusion

These are all incoherent ramblings

Regardless of where we are positioned globally, as teacher-scholars of Composition and Rhetoric in the American university, it is our job to amplify the histories and practices of those we serve. My classroom tells one story of how and why that can be done. Different from most of my colleagues, each one of my students is fighting erasure in one form or another.

Decolonial archival pedagogies insist students begin critical inquiry of authorship and representation in ways that can develop a critical, productive public memory for the development of a nation-state narrative. Within this development of public memory and narrative building, future generations and the diaspora are able to create and participate in this narrative, providing a sense of belonging that currently does not tangibly exist.

However, Stateside Composition and Rhetoric programs have the opportunity uncover hidden histories, discuss public memory, and renegotiate dominant methodologies to re-narrative their communities. **How do we get from US archival pedagogy to what I've done? How are they connected and necessary?**

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Appendix

Cumulative Reflection Prompt

With responses to each of these questions, I expect you to utilize examples from class, quotes from texts, and a forward-thinking goal of cultural preservation. Along with class examples, provide examples of possible archives. I expect specificity and references.

1. How did this class make you re-think or help you extend your understandings of archives?
2. I don't expect you to have my desire to archive your generation and your desires, but I do hope that you are able to see how important it is. What would be lost if your generation of Lebanese failed to be archived? How has considering assemblages as nation-building reconsidered what can be archived? How have assemblages reconsidered what Lebanese culture *is?*
3. What role does language play in decolonizing archives? What role does language play in the cultural preservation/production of Lebanon? How would imagine an archive to work with language(s) to preserve/capture the language practice within the country?
4. By way of the course title, we discussed colonizers a lot. How have colonizing factions taken ownership of archives and cultures? Discuss this in both colonizing practice and in archival practice.
5. I tried to show you a variety of archival mediums: language, artifact, and digital, as well as a range of practices: institutional, participatory, and dynamic. In what ways can the development of diverse archives change both the past and the future of Lebanon?
6. In what ways can decolonial archives recover and disseminate public memory? (Re)Build the nation-state? Be part of both resistance and progress? (Re)Create what existed? Develop equity - or at least a republic in line with local values?