

Alice Dunbar-Nelson: Reading from Inside the Archive

Legacy & Heritage Workshops

“Reading from Inside the Archive” is a unique opportunity offering an exploration of Alice Dunbar-Nelson’s life and work through her published writing and literary archive. Questions throughout center on how public persona and personal experience intersect and the degree to which this dynamic is reflected in the trace records of content creation. The class includes the following four workshops: I. New Materialism and Interpretation—a session on Dunbar-Nelson’s published and typescript poetry; II. The “Dunbar-Nelson” Speaker—an elocution-themed session; III. Family Scrapbook—session covering the archival nature of scrapbooking practices; IV. Art of Letter Writing—a session that draws upon Dunbar-Nelson’s correspondence in unpacking letter writing as a practice and discussing the various issues that come up in the contents of a letter.

Session One

Thursday, January 14, 2020, 6:30-8:30 pm

New Materialism & Interpretation

This workshop focuses on the interplay between unpublished and published versions of Dunbar-Nelson’s poetry and how those differences affect interpretation.

Part 1. Introduction and silent poetry reading

Part 2. Follow-up and poetry analysis

Readings

Dunbar-Nelson, Moore (Dunbar-Nelson), Alice. “Amid the Roses.” [*Violets: and Other Tales*](#). Boston, Monthly Review, 1895.

Dunbar-Nelson, Alice. “I am an American” [in exhibit]

Dunbar-Nelson, Alice. “Sonnets.” *The Crisis*. Vol. 18, No. 4. August 1919.

Session Two

Thursday, February 11, 6:30-8:30 pm

The Dunbar-Nelson “Speaker”

Using published references and poetry reading exercises from Dunbar-Nelson’s *Speaker and Entertainer*, this workshop reintroduces participants to African American traditions in oratory and elocution.

Part 1. Introduction and discussion

Part 2. Individual readings

Readings

Dunbar-Nelson, Alice. [“The Boys of Howard”](#). Speaking While Female: Women’s Speech Bank.

Dunbar-Nelson, Alice. [The Dunbar Speaker and Entertainer: Containing the Best Prose and Poetic Selections by and about the Negro race](#). Naperville, Ill., J. L. Nichols & Company, 1920.

Session Three

Thursday, March 11, 6:30-8:30 pm

The Family Scrapbook

For this session, the Dunbar-Nelson family scrapbooks are a point of entry into her biography and cultural background, as we examine the value of scrapbooks in their ability to perform both the archival function of keeping a record and the narrative function of telling a story.

Part 1. Scrapbook viewing and analysis

Part 2. Scrapbook narrative reading

Readings

Alice Dunbar-Nelson Papers [Mss0113]

[Scrapbook No. 1](#)

Scrapbook No. 2

Session Four

Thursday, April 8, 2020, 6:30-8:30 pm

Art of Letter Writing

The theme of this session covers the history of modern letter writing and what it means today; issues that come up in a group analysis of a sampling of Dunbar-Nelson's letters will be identified as potential discussion topics, showing the intellectual value of this form of historical evidence.

Part 1. Letter writing as a lost art

Part 2. Group discussion on themes and issues

Readings

Alice Dunbar-Nelson Papers [Mss0113]

Letters from Paul L. Dunbar dated April 17, 1895

Letter from Charles R. Douglass dated Oct 12, 1901

Letter from Daniel A. P. Murray dated May 29, 1907

Letter from Edwina Kruse May 7, 1908