

# The Seward Family in Peace and War

HIS 279/479 ★ Fall 2015 ★ T/R 9:40-10:55 ★ RR 362



## **Course Description:**

As a class in history and digital humanities, this course will give students hands-on experience with historical editing and its digital tools as well as with some of the tools used in website design and creation. Although we will be using the [Papers of William Henry Seward](#) (1801-1872), Governor of New York, US Senator, and Secretary of State under Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War and Andrew Johnson after it, this course is more of an introduction to the history of the family, gender, and the antebellum and Civil War eras in the United States.

This semester, we will look at the family's correspondence from the late 1830s and early 1840s, when Seward was Governor of New York, and when he and some family members were in Albany much of the time. Sometimes, the family lived with him in Albany and sometimes family members were corresponding from or to their home in Auburn. Topics include health and disease, death, the financial panic of 1837, socializing and politics, marital and sibling relationships, spirituality, and household economy. We will also visit the Seward House Museum in Auburn and the

Susan B. Anthony House in Rochester if we can arrange times that fit students' schedules.

The course will include discussion of assigned reading, technical instruction on documentary editing, transcription of original nineteenth-century manuscripts, annotation of historical manuscripts, and text encoding (TEI). This course is a pre-requisite for paid internships working on the Seward Family Archives Project, and a requirement for graduate student research fields in documentary editing and the history of the family.

It takes a village:

Professor Thomas P. Slaughter, 369B Rush Rhees Library and Digital Humanities Center, office hours in DHC Thursday 11:00-noon and by appointment.  
<mailto:thomas.slaughter@rochester.edu>

Camden Burd, TEI lab instructor, TEI and Technology Manager, Seward Family Archives Digital Humanities Project.  
Office hours: Monday 2:00 - 4:00 pm or by appointment  
Office: Digital Humanities Center (G122 Rush Rees Library)  
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Nathaniel Smith, Data Manager, Seward Family Archives Digital Humanities Project.  
<mailto:n.mith@rochester.edu>

Serenity Sutherland, Project Manager, Seward Family Archives Digital Humanities Project.  
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Kathryn Hughes, Assistant Project Manager, Seward Family Archives Digital Humanities Project.  
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Alison Reynolds, Seward Archival Intern, Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation.  
<mailto:areynolds@library.rochester.edu>

Joseph Easterly, Digital Humanities Librarian, Rush Rhees Library.  
<mailto:jeasterly@library.rochester.edu>

Joshua Romphf, Digital Humanities Center Programmer, Rush Rhees Library.  
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Nora Dimmock, Assistant Dean for IT, Research and Digital Scholarship, River Campus Libraries, Technical Director, Seward Family Archives Project.  
<mailto:ndimmock@library.rochester.edu>

James Kuhn, Joseph N. Lambert and Harold B. Schleifer Director of Rare Books and Special Collections.  
<mailto:jkuhn@library.rochester.edu>

**Evaluation:**

- 10% attendance, preparation, and participation in discussions of reading assignments. [2% of course grade deducted for each unexcused absence.]
- 10% attendance, preparation, and participation in computer labs. [2% of course grade deducted for each absence.] 3 absences will result in a failing grade for the course.
- 25% productivity and accuracy in transcriptions of manuscripts. (base = 40-50 pages transcribed and annotated; 40-50 pages markup).
- 25% completeness and accuracy in annotations of manuscripts. (base = 40-50 pages transcribed and annotated; 40-50 pages markup).
- 25% capstone project (10-12 pages).
- 5% newspaper assignment (2-3 pages).

The capstone paper will be a project within the Seward Papers that the student, Kate Hughes, Special Projects Manager, and Professor Slaughter agree upon during the first month of the semester. Each student must have a one-page project proposal emailed to Professor Slaughter as a Word (doc or docx) attachment before class on September 29, which we are glad to help you with; the proposal may be a transcription and annotation project in addition to what you are assigned for the class; several trips to the Highlands at Pittsford (a retirement community affiliated with UR) or working here with volunteers on transcription and annotation of their letters; a finding aid for one part of the collection; or a research paper on the relationship between two or more members of the family or some other topic. Those students taking the "W" version of the course will write a research paper of 20-25 pages in length through at least two drafts. The first draft of the capstone paper or written report on your project is due before class on December 1; the final draft is due on December 17.

Students are also responsible for transcribing and annotating approximately 40-50 pages of manuscript letters on the schedule included in the syllabus, and for the markup (TEI) of 40-50 pages. The final revisions of all transcriptions, annotations, and marked-up letters must be submitted not later than before class on December 10.

Additionally, students will complete a two-page paper that situates the letters they have transcribed in a broader historical context by conducting research in the New York State Historic Newspaper database [<http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org>]. See description of this assignment below: due before class on October 15.

**Books:** The required reading for the course includes: [\*available for purchase in bookstore]

Charles Dickens, *American Notes* (London, 1842).  
[<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/loc.ark:/13960/t9j39427m>]

Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (London, 1832).  
[<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/pst.000005408375>]

\*Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America* (NY, 1989).

Jessica, M. Lepler, *The Many Panics of 1837: People, Politics, and the Creation of a Transatlantic Financial Crisis*. Cambridge, UK, 2013, chapter 5.

Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago, 1962, 1987), Part 1.

Erika Janik, *Marketplace of the Marvelous: The Strange Origins of Modern Medicine* (Boston, 2013), [Chapter 2](#) and [Chapter 4](#).

John S. C. Abbot, *The Mother at Home; Or, The Principles of Maternal Duty* (London, 1834).

\**Theory of the Spencerian System of Practical Penmanship in Nine Easy Lessons* (1874; 1985).

Ruth Goodman, *How to be a Victorian: A Dawn-to-Dusk Guide to Victorian Life*. (NY, 2014), chapters 1 and 2.

Syllabus:

September 1: Introduction; discussion of transcription and annotation. Who the family was; what we are doing; why we are doing it; penmanship practice.

September 3: Meet in Seward Room, RBSC; registration and introduction to use of manuscripts. Introduction to website, tools, transcription; small groups work on one paper letter. Discuss *Theory of Spencerian Penmanship*, 1-28; Discussion of letters: Swards on Christmas morning.

September 8: Discuss Abbott, chapter 1; *Theory of Spencerian Penmanship*, 28-42; and Trollope, chapters 1-8. \*First two letters (approximately 8 pages) due (in Box).

September 10: \*First two letters returned (in Box). Discuss Trollope, chapters 9-16; *Theory of Spencerian Penmanship*, 43-52.

September 15: Discuss Abbott, chapter 2; Jane Hunter, "Inscribing the Self in the Heart of the Family: Diaries and Girlhood in Late-Victorian

America," *American Quarterly* 44 (1992): 51-81; and Trollope, chapters 17-24. \*Revised first two letters due (in Box).

September 17: \*Eight letters, approximately 32 pages (transcribed and annotated) due (in Box). NO CLASS MEETING. Field Trip September 18: Seward House.

September 22: Discuss Trollope, chapters 25-34; Abbott, chapter 3; Goodman, chapter 1. Discuss capstone projects.

September 24: \*Letters from September 15 returned to you (in Box). Discuss Dickens, Part 1, chapters 1-4.

September 29: Discuss Goodman, chapter 2. \*One-page capstone project proposal due to Professor Slaughter before class as attachment to email.

October 1: Discuss Dickens, Part 1, chapters 5-8. Discuss newspaper assignment.

October 6: Fall Break, no class.

October 8: \*Revised letters from September 17th due (in Box). Discuss Abbott, chapter 4; Discuss Dickens, Part 2, chapters 1-5.

October 13: Discuss Abbott, chapter 5; Discuss Dickens, Part 2, chapters 6-10.

October 15: \*First ten letters returned to you (in Box). Complete people list clean-up assignment (RR Training Room). Newspaper assignment due before class as email attachment to Professor Slaughter.

October 20: Discuss Abbott, chapters 6, 7, and 8; Discuss Lepler, chapter 5.

October 22: \*Final revisions of first ten letters (40 pages) due (TEI-ready file). Discuss Janik, chapter 2.

October 27: Bagel or Donut Palooza ["an all out crazy party; partying at one place with a ton of people, like there is no tomorrow." [urbandictionary.com](http://urbandictionary.com)] Discuss Janik, chapter 4.

October 29: Discuss Historic New York Newspapers. Discuss Rosenberg, Part 1.

November 3: Introduction to XML markup in TEI (RR Training Room). Use this lull in class assignments to work on capstone projects.

November 5: Discuss Lystra, Introduction and chapter 1. Three marked-up XML letters due (in Box).

November 7: Encoding in oXygen (RR Training Room). One marked-up XML

letter due (in Box). Continue to work on capstone projects.

November 12: Encoding in oXygen (RR Training Room). Discuss XML letter drafts from November 7th.

November 17: XML letter drafts (3) from November 14 returned (in Box). NO CLASS MEETING. Field Trip: November 21, Susan B. Anthony House.

November 19: Discuss Lystra, chapters 2 and 3. Submit *all* revised XML letter drafts (inbox of TS file on Seward Server). Oversized letter transcription returned (in Box).

November 24: NO CLASS. You can use this time to work on the capstone project. Professor Slaughter and Kate Hughes will be available by appointment if you would like to discuss your project with him or her.

November 26: Thanksgiving, no class.

December 1: \*First draft of capstone project due before class; encoding in oXygen (RR Training Room).

December 3: Discuss Lystra, chapters 4 and 5. Three marked-up XML letters due (in Box).

December 8: Encoding in oXygen (RR Training Room).

December 10: Discuss Lystra chapters 6, 7, and 8. All XML letters returned to students (outbox of TA file on Seward Server). \*Final version of all transcribed, annotated, and marked-up letters due before class, including the oversized letter (in Box).

\*December 17: Final draft of capstone project and all work for the semester due by 9:00 A.M.

\*Newspaper assignment: due 10/15/2015. [Send as email attachment to Professor Slaughter before class; we'll discuss them in class.]

Using the New York State Historic Newspaper database [<http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/>], research a person or persons, place, event, or any other content you find interesting in the letters you have transcribed thus far. Check at least one local (Auburn or Albany) and one NYC newspaper. (No, you can't do a story that is not reported at all in the newspapers.) This is an exercise designed to acquaint you with the process of putting different primary sources in dialogue. By incorporating the newspapers as an additional source, you will be able to provide a broader historical context for the letters. For example, how, if at all, does a newspaper local to the story you have chosen to explore report it differently than a newspaper published at some

distance from the letter-writer or event? Is a local newspaper more or less likely to cover the story; does it do so in more, less, or different detail?

Consider the ways in which newspaper descriptions of the event, place, etc. that you have chosen confirm, enhance, or complicate the descriptions you have encountered in the letters. Why might the perspective of the letter-writer differ or align with that of editors or journalists or the public in general (at least as it is presented in the papers)?

It is also possible to look for absences in your source base. For example, local newspapers might have increased coverage of an event that is close to the Swards, a controversy surrounding a leading community figure for example, which is not mentioned in the letters. What can this tell us about the Swards or the newspapers? What about the reverse, public topics that appear with some frequency in the letters, but are not covered much in the papers? Are the newspapers referenced in the letters; if so, as source or foil?

In a two or three-page response paper, report the findings of your research. The above questions are only meant to serve as guides. Do not feel compelled to address all of them or, and this is important, let them limit your curiosity. Feel free to let your own questions define your approach to these two source bases. The letters and newspapers, after all, are rich and varied in content. As historians, the aim here is twofold: to produce a short response that critically considers the relationship between different primary sources; and to observe the larger historical context in which your letters are embedded.