

## ENGL UA 180: Writing New York (Spring 2018)

Prof. Thomas Augst

**Archive discovery exercise:** Identify an archival object in the Downtown Collection that helps to situate Patti Smith within a larger context of artistic exploration and self-creation from the 1950s to the 1980s.

Visit the website for [The Fales Library's Downtown Collection](#), and surf around the finding aids. You are expected to identify an archival object in the collection that you think would be a valuable addition to the documentary. You are encouraged to ‘drill down’ to the scale of analysis most useful for your interests [a manuscript page? A particular letter? A page or two from a journal? Etc.], grounding it in detailed observations about the artifact itself. Depending on your particular object, you will want to consider some of the following questions:

- Provenance: how did this object get to where you found it?
- What are the various containers, ranging from physical [file, collection, institution etc.] and virtual [catalogue record, bibliographies, etc.] in which it is now located?
- Are there digital surrogates of the object available?
- What are its most significant textual features and physical attributes?
- Genre: what kind of artifact is this, and what differentiates it from others of its kind?
- Context: social, intellectual, aesthetic, personal, etc.
- How does this artifact help you explore questions or issues of interest to you in this course? About forms of writing, the politics of identity, transformations of the self, etc.

Your goal will be to turn a object from the Downtown Collection into a threshold for an interesting story. The particular object itself matters less than the quality of attention and imagination we bring to any reading and writing about art, music, literature, and history. This requires careful description of and reflection about the artifact, developing an inventory of things one might say about the artifact, and situating the artifact thematically in relation to critical, historical, and creative content.