Lesson Overview

Assignment Sequence
The Documenting Student Activism unit sequence uses special collections materials to introduce the basics of primary and secondary source research, ethnographic research, and scholarly writing in the social sciences. The unit begins with an in-class exercise and feeder assignment based on a selection of archival materials from Wilson Special Collections Library that reveal campus activism throughout different periods of UNC’s history. It continues with a second feeder assignment where you will contextualize these primary sources by developing an annotated bibliography with related primary and secondary sources. Finally, the sequence concludes with a unit project where you will apply what you have learned by writing an ethnography paper that incorporates the primary and secondary sources from your bibliography, as well as an original social sciences research method like surveys or interviews.

Expectations for Unit Project
All of your work in this assignment sequence will build toward the final project, a short ethnography paper that synthesizes primary and secondary sources, as well as original social sciences research. Your paper should investigate an event in UNC’s campus history and consider how that event connects with the present day campus culture and debates, as well as broader historical patterns of campus activism.

Learning Objectives
By working on the feeder assignments and unit project, you will develop the following skills:
- locate primary and secondary sources using the library website, catalog, and finding aids;
- analyze and synthesize primary and secondary source materials;
- think critically about these sources and develop your own interpretation of campus history;
- identify historical patterns and connect those patterns with contemporary campus culture; and
- connect social science and archival research methods.