

HISTORY 493B/693B: DIGITAL HISTORY

HERTER HALL RM 207 – TUESDAYS 2:30 – 5:00 PM

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:

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OVERVIEW:

This course on digital history examines both the theoretical and practical impact of new media and technology on history, especially in the field of Public History. We will examine how digital media has influenced (and is still influencing) how we research, write, present and teach history. We will draw on theoretical readings as well as analyze the potential benefits and drawbacks of online resources, such as websites, wikis, and podcasts. A major component of the course will be a semester-long project that will require each student to develop a proposal for a digital historical resource and construct a home page for it. The semester project is an opportunity to experiment with new technologies and to overcome any anxieties students might have regarding the use of new media. There is both an undergraduate and graduate section of this course. Please note where there are different requirements. If you have questions, please let me know.

GOALS:

From this class you should gain a better understanding of the digital tools to which historians now have access. I don't see myself as a "digital evangelist" – someone who thinks that digital technology is the only way to do something. Instead, I see myself as a "digital realist" – someone who will try to use digital technology where it will make a positive difference. When we are done with this course I hope that all of you are more comfortable working with digital tools and new media projects and that you are familiar with the big trends currently evolving in the field of digital history and digital humanities in general. Each of you will also bring something to the classroom – your own experience working with new media and I hope that you are willing to share your experience and knowledge with others as we work through this topic.

EXPECTATIONS:

To succeed in this class you will need to keep up with the reading, participate actively in class discussions, and complete your extended project. If at any time you are having difficulties with the material or the assignments, or just need to talk, please do not hesitate to come see me during office hours or make an appointment for another time to meet.

Attendance: I expect you to be here. You will do yourself a great disservice by not attending class – you will miss material and interpretations from that day's presentation as well as the opportunity to ask questions and otherwise interact with your classmates – an important part of the learning process. There are occasionally good reasons to miss class (religious holidays, medical mishaps, family emergencies, athletic & musical contests); if you miss something, please contact me to make arrangements.

- Three absences: the highest grade you may receive is a B
- Four absences: the highest grade you may receive is a C
- Five absences: the highest grade you may receive is a D
- Six absences: you will automatically receive an F

GRADING AND REQUIRED WORK:

Presentation I and Project Proposal	20%
Presentation II	15%
Final Project	40%
Participation (including blog posts)	25%

Things to keep in mind:

- Please retain a second copy of papers until your graded paper is returned.
- Please hold all graded assignments until you receive your final grade.
- Letter grade equivalencies: A=92.5-100; A-=89.5-92.4; B+=87.5-89.4; B=82.5-88.4; B-=79.5-82.4; C+=77.5-79.4; C=72.5-78.4; C-=69.5-72.4; D+=67.5-69.4; D=62.5-68.4; D-=59.5-62.4; F=below 59.5.

Please Note: All course requirements must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the class. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty are grounds for failing this course.

Graduate Students: Each of you will be assigned at least three class periods during which you will be responsible for leading our discussion.

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty:

What is Plagiarism? According to the UMASS Academic Regulations (2008-2009) Plagiarism is defined as “knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own work in any academic exercise. This includes submitting without citation, in whole or in part, prewritten term papers of another or the research of another, including but not limited to commercial vendors who sell or distribute such materials.” For more info please see page 7 of the regulations at <http://www.umass.edu/registrar/media/academicregs.pdf>

Honesty: You may not engage in any form of academic dishonesty. This includes, but is not limited to, cheating on exams, helping another person cheat, or plagiarizing on written assignments. This also includes fabricating excuses for absences from class and signing in for another student. If you are caught cheating at any point during the semester, you will fail the entire course and I report you to the Academic Honesty Board.

Writing Center:

The university offers a special resource for students who want some additional assistance with writing and research. The Writing Center is located in the northwest corner of the W.E.B. DuBois Library's Learning Commons. For more information, please visit the WC Website: <http://www.umass.edu/writingcenter>. The web site also offers information about the Center, such as current hours of operation and what to bring with you for your first consultation.

Web Design Workshops:

The Office of Information and Technology (OIT) at the University offers a series of workshops that are open to students and might be of interest for those seeking to further develop their skills in the area of new media. You can find more information about the workshops being offered here: <http://www.oit.umass.edu/workshops/index.html>.

Assignments:

Besides the readings that are outlined in the syllabus for our weekly discussions, students will be expected to make weekly postings to their own blogs, comment on other students' blogs, and work on a semester project: a proposal for a digital resource and construct a home page for it. All blog postings should be completed by the Sunday of each week and comments should be completed by Monday. Each week, one graduate student will be in charge of leading the class discussion on the readings assigned for that week and also providing a brief summary of recent class blog postings and comments since our last meeting.

Undergraduate Students: I would like to see blog posts of between 350 and 450 words. You should comment on three other blog postings each week.

Graduate Students: I expect you to write longer posts (450 words or more) and to comment on at least three other graduate student posts as well as two posts by the undergrad students.

For information on setting up a blog at UMass, visit: <http://blogs.umass.edu>

For information on setting up webspace at UMass, visit: <http://people.umass.edu>

READINGS:

Many of the readings for this course are available online. Others will be added during the semester (such as relevant blog posts, or articles about emerging technologies). As such, please check back frequently to the online course syllabus and subscribe to the course calendar on Google (I will "share" the calendar with everyone in the course).

In addition, we will be reading the following books, which are available for purchase at Amherst Books in downtown Amherst (or online at <http://www.amherstbooks.com>).

Books: Please purchase the following books (available at Amherst Books)

- Daniel J. Cohen & Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* (978-0812219234) (Note: This is also available online <http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/>)
- Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (978-0262632553)
- Robin Williams and John Tollett, *The Non-Designers Web Book* (3rd Edition) (978-0321303370)

Software:

Most of the software you will need to use for this course is either Web-based or freely available for download. However, if you would like to create your own Website from the ground up, you will need to either purchase a copy of Adobe Dreamweaver or locate a computer lab on campus where you will have access to this software. Check with the University Bookstore - there is a student version of the software that can be purchased at a considerable discount. For those who work in areas of oral history or documentary film, there are two multimedia computer labs available for you to use in the DuBois Library.

Texts: You will find all of the non-book texts for this course on the internet

- Dan Cohen, et. al. "Interchange on Digital History," *Journal of American History*, Sept. 2008, pp. 452-491.
- Paula Petrick, "Top Ten Mistakes in Academic Web Design," <http://chnm.gmu.edu/essays-on-history-new-media/essays/?essayid=3>
- NINCH Guide: <http://www.nyu.edu/its/humanities/ninchguide/>
- NEH Digital Humanities Startup Guidelines:

<http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/digitalhumanitiesstartup.html#howto>

- Dan Cohen, "The Future of Preserving the Past"
http://www.dancohen.org/publications/#future_of_preserving_the_past
- Virginia Tech Tragedy Archive: <http://www.april16archive.org/>
- Digital Archive of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita: <http://www.hurricanearchive.org/>
- September 11, 2001 Archive: <http://911digitalarchive.org/>
- Flickr.Com: <http://www.flickr.com/commons> (and <http://www.flickr.com> in general)
- GNU General Public License: <http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/gpl.html>
- Creative Commons: <http://creativecommons.org/>
- John Willinsky, "Copyright," chapter from *The Access Principle: The Case for Open Access to Research and Scholarship* (Cambridge, MA: MIT 2005) - <http://mitpress.mit.edu/0262232421>.
- Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture*, chapter ten "Property" (<http://free-culture.org/freeculture/>).
- Roy Rosenzweig, "Scarcity or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era"
<http://chnm.gmu.edu/resources/essays/scarcity.php>
- Patrick Leary, "Googling the Victorians" in: *Journal of Victorian Culture* (Spring 2005) p. 72-86 (available through the e-journal portal at the DuBois Library.
- Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, "No Computer Left Behind" in: *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Feb. 24, 2006 (available at: <http://chnm.gmu.edu/resources/essays/essay.php?id=38>)
- American Council of Learned Societies' Cyberinfrastructure Report:
<http://www.acls.org/cyberinfrastructure/OurCulturalCommonwealth.pdf>
- Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen
<http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/devices/choice.html>
- HistoryWired: A Few of Our Favorite Things <http://historywired.si.edu/index.html>
- The History Channel <<http://www.historychannel.com/>
- Bon Appetit! Julia Child's Kitchen
<http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/juliachild/default.asp>
- Raid on Deerfield: The Many Stories of 1704 (www.1704.deerfield.history.museum)
- Steve Dietz, "Telling Stories: Procedural Authorship and Extracting Meaning from Museum Databases" <http://www.archimuse.com/mw99/papers/dietz/dietz.html>

CLASS SCHEDULE:

This is the intended schedule for this course, though I reserve the right to make adjustments, if necessary, as the semester progresses. It is important on discussion days that you complete all of the reading in advance.

Day	Date	Subject	Preparation
Tue	Jan 19	Digitizing the Past - An Introduction to Digital History	<p>You should consider purchasing Adobe Dreamweaver or locate a computer lab on campus where you will have access to this program throughout the semester. Set up a blog at UMass using WordPress. Also make sure you have secured a web space through OIT.</p> <p>Complete web scavenger hunt</p> <p>Blog Assignment: As one of your first posts, you should reflect on your web scavenger hunt assignment - write about what you found, where you found it, any problems you ran into.</p> <p>Be sure to "tag" your entry with "Scavenger Hunt". Begin building your blog out - add links of interest and also a "blog roll" that includes the students in the course as well as any other cool blogs you come across that cover history and new media.</p>
Tue	Jan 26	New Media and the	1. Cohen & Rosenzweig, <i>Digital History</i> , Introduction, Ch. 1

		World Wide Web	2. Lev Manovich, The Language of New Media Blog Assignment: Close reading of 3 historical websites - write an entry analyzing the good, the bad, and the ugly - find one example for each category (tag as "Website Analysis").
Tue	Feb 2	Digital History Tools, Part I: Websites	1. Cohen & Rosenzweig, Digital History, Ch. 2, 4, Appendix 2. Williams and Tollett, chapters 5-15. 3. Petrick, "Top Ten Mistakes in Academic Web Design" Blog Assignment: Locate and write website reviews (2-3 paragraphs) of two public history websites of particular interest to your area of study (tag as "Website Review").
Tue	Feb 9	Digital History Tools, Part II: Wikis, RSS, Podcasts, Videos, Soundbites, and Maps	Class will take the form of a lab - bring a laptop if possible. 1. Listen to one episode of Digital Campus or another historical/educational podcast from a podcast directory such as Odeo. We will also work on building out your own blogs - add content to your blog and be prepared to present to others what you did. Blog Assignment: Examine the "discussion" and "history" tabs of three Wikipedia entries (tag as "wikipedia").
Tue	Feb 16	NO CLASS	MONDAY CLASSES MEET TODAY
Tue	Feb 23	Digitizing the Past	1. Cohen & Rosenzweig, Digital History, Ch. 3 2. NINCH Guide, Chs. V-VIII. Blog Assignment: Find examples from Google Books, the Open Content Alliance, and other libraries and archives. Write a blog entry that analyzes the benefits and drawbacks of such digital content (tag as "digitizing the past").
Tue	Mar 2	Finding and Cultivating an Audience	1. Cohen & Rosenzweig, Digital History, Ch. 5 Students present outlines of their semester project. [For reference on how to write a formal grant proposal, look at the Digital Humanities Start-up Grants Outline.] Blog Assignment: Write a brief summary of your project proposal and comment on other students' proposals.
Tue	Mar 9	Born Digital	1. Cohen & Rosenzweig, Digital History, Ch. 6 2. Cohen, "The Future of Preserving the Past" 3. Visit these sites: April 16 Archive, Hurricane Digital Memory Bank, September 11 Digital Archive, Flickr (and Flickr Commons). When viewing these sites, think in particular about issues of copyright, fair use, and preservation. Blog Assignment: Reflect on the websites visited and how historians need to think about content that is "born digital" (tag as "born digital").
Tue	Mar 16	NO CLASS	SPRING BREAK
Tue	Mar 23	Copyrights and wrongs	1. Cohen & Rosenzweig, Digital History, Ch. 7 2. Licenses: GNU GPL, Creative Commons 3. John Willinsky, "Copyright," chapter from The Access Principle: The Case for Open Access to Research and Scholarship (Cambridge, MA: MIT 2005) .

			<p>4. Lawrence Lessig, Free Culture, chapter ten ("property"), which is available for free download at (http://free-culture.org/freecontent/).</p> <p>Blog Assignment: Reflect on the issues of copyright dealt with in the assigned readings. What are some of the potential pitfalls that you see for historians working with digital media? What new challenges are there for institutions, such as museums and archives? (tag as "copyrights").</p>
Tue	Mar 30	Digital Preservation	<p>1. Cohen & Rosenzweig, Digital History, Ch. 8 2. NINCH Guide, Ch. XIV 3. Roy Rosenzweig, "Scarcity or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era"</p> <p>Blog Assignment: Reflect on the controversies and (potential) problems of digital preservation (tag as "digital preservation").</p>
Tue	Apr 6	Digital Scholarship	<p>1. Patrick Leary, "Googling the Victorians" 2. Cohen & Rosenzweig, "No Computer Left Behind" 3. Peter Norvig, "Theorizing from Data" 4. American Council of Learned Societies' cyberinfrastructure report</p> <p>Blog Assignment: Reflect on how digital tools have altered the way in which historians conduct research. Think about your own area of specialization and outline how digital technology will most likely influence how you will conduct research in the future (tag as "Digital Scholarship").</p>
Tue	Apr 13	Popular and Public History Online	<p>1. Steve Dietz, "Telling Stories: Procedural Authorship and Extracting Meaning from Museum Databases" http://www.archimuse.com/mw99/papers/dietz/dietz.html</p> <p>2. Visit and closely examine the following sites (tentative list, subject to change):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen (http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/devices/choice.html) • HistoryWired: A Few of Our Favorite Things (http://historywired.si.edu/index.html) • The History Channel (http://www.historychannel.com/) [This is obviously too extensive to examine in full, but spend enough time to get a full sense of the site.] • Bon Appetit! Julia Child's Kitchen (http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/juliachild/default.asp) • Raid on Deerfield: The Many Stories of 1704 (http://www.1704.deerfield.history.museum) • Remembering Pearl Harbor (http://plasma.nationalgeographic.com/pearlharbor/) <p>Blog Assignment: write about one of the following questions: 1. Which of these sites most effectively conveys the past to a</p>

			<p>"general" audience? (And why?)</p> <p>2. Which of these sites makes the most effective use of new media? (And how?)</p> <p>3. Which of these sites has a design and interface that most effectively communicates its message and serves its audience?</p> <p>4. Which of these sites has an interpretation of the past that either: a. best reflects current scholarship or b. challenges its audiences?</p>
Tue	Apr 20	TBA	
Tue	Apr 27	Presentations	
Tue	May 4	Presentations	