

**History 390 - 003 - The Digital Past
Fall 2017**

Robinson Hall B208 (M 7:20-10:00)

Instructor: Andrea Odiorne

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Course Description:

The Digital Past will explore digital technology's influence on historical inquiry, research, presentation and dissemination. In addition to learning basic information technology concepts through 'learning by doing', students will learn to critically evaluate digital sources and reflect on how new technologies transform the societies that embrace them. Weekly readings and assignments will examine databases and digital storage, search and retrieval, mapping, data visualization, digital storytelling, copyright law, and computer security. Using the skills developed over the course of the semester, students will use digital tools to produce a final research project related to the course section's theme; Media, Journalism and Film.

Learning Outcomes:

Almost no area of academic, professional, or personal life is untouched by the information technology revolution. Success in college and beyond requires computer and information literacies that are flexible enough to change with a changing IT environment and adaptable to new problems and tasks. The purpose of the information technology requirement is to ensure that students achieve an essential understanding of information technology infrastructure encompassing systems and devices; learn to make the most of the Web and other network resources; protect their digital data and devices; take advantage of latest technologies; and become more sophisticated technology users and consumers.

1. Students will be able to use technology to locate, access, evaluate, and use information, and appropriately cite resources from digital/electronic media.
2. Students will understand the core IT concepts in a range of current and emerging technologies and learn to apply appropriate technologies to a range of tasks.
3. Students will understand many of the key ethical, legal and social issues related to information technology and how to interpret and comply with ethical principles, laws, regulations, and institutional policies.
4. Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate, create, and collaborate effectively using state-of-the-art information technologies in multiple modalities.
5. Students will understand the essential issues related to information security, how to take precautions and use techniques and tools to defend against computer crimes.

Upper Division History Courses:

This is not an introductory history course. As an upper division elective, the course requires that you demonstrate some significant analytical skills in the course of doing historical research. Furthermore, the course demands effective use of primary sources, the synthesis of existing historical scholarship, and the crafting of clear and convincing arguments about the past. The pool for our historical work this semester will be Media, Journalism and Film history. That topic will contain our work, but it will not constrain it. Students will be free to pursue a well-formed research question that reflects their individual interests during the course of the semester.

Honor Code:

GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When

you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

Learning Disabilities:

If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Services (SUB I Rm 4205) to determine the accommodations you needs, and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

Communications: Please email me at aodiorne@gmu.edu. Include your name and course name and course section in the subject or your email.

Assessment:

Participation (20%)

Course Blog (20%)

Midterm (10%)

Group Timeline Project (10%)

Digital History Project (40%)

Grading Scale:

A = 94-100

A- = 90-93

B+ = 87-89

B = 84-86

B- = 80-83

C+ = 77-79

C = 74-76

C- = 70-73

D+ = 67-69

D = 64-66

D- = 60-63

F = Below 60

Participation (15%): Part of the spirit of this course is learning by doing. This means that much of the class period is dedicated to hands-on activities as well as group discussion and collaboration. Thus, regular attendance is required. In addition to attending regularly, students are required to come to class having read the assigned materials. Furthermore, students are expected to actively participate in discussion and in-class activities. Please come to class with a wi-fi enabled device.

Course Blog (20%): Students will be responsible for regular posting on their course blog. Blog addresses will be shared with other students in the course. Blog post will either be targeted discussion posts or links to completed IT activities. Discussion posts should be at least 400 words. Blogging is an semi-formal writing format, therefore it is expected that students will follow the basic rules of grammar and punctuation. Partial posts receive partial credit. Late posts receive partial credit.

Midterm (10%): Students will complete a series of multiple choice questions and identifications for the midterm exam. The midterm will be based on course readings and in-class material.

Group Timeline Project (10%): Working in groups of 5 or 6, students will collaboratively create a historical timeline with Timeline JS. Students will use collaborative communication

tools and incorporate course skills to date. Directions for the timeline will be distributed at least two weeks before the due date.

Digital History Project (40%): This project will be the major showcase for your learning this semester. While we'll determine together the scope, depth, and character of the work, you will use digital tools and methods to ask and answer authentic historical questions. The course sub-topic is Media, Journalism and Film History.

Project Proposal Due October 30:(30%)
Presentation: (5%)
Penultimate Draft/Prototype: (10%)
Peer Review: (5%)
Final Project Due: December 13, 2016 (50%)

Each digital history project should contain the following items:

- 1) A thirty second Vimeo streaming video introduction.
- 2) Two or more maps, graphs, charts, or other visualizations that tell a story with data about your topic.
- 3) Two analyses of texts related to your topic using computational tools.
- 4) Three or more primary sources and three or more secondary sources.*
- 5) 1,500-2,500 words of well-crafted prose that offers an original argument to answer to your question. *All use of reference material should be fully documented using the Chicago Manual of Style for footnotes.

Important Dates

September 4: Labor Day - NO CLASS
September 5: Last day to drop without tuition penalty
September 29: Final Drop Deadline
October 9: Columbus Day - NO CLASS (Class meets Tuesday October 10th)
October 23: MIDTERM EXAM
October 27: Last Day to Withdraw
October 30: Project Proposals Due
December 18: Final Projects Due

Tentative Course Schedule

*Readings and assignments subject to change. Please refer to Blackboard regularly for the most recent course schedule outline and specific assignment directions.

8/28 - Course Introduction

In-Class: Sign up for Wordpress.com
Sign up for a feed reader and subscribe to your classmates blog.

9/4 - Labor Day: NO CLASS

9/11 - Origins of Computing and the Modern Digital Landscape

Read: Cohen & Rosenzweig, *Digital History*, Introduction, "Promises and Perils of Digital History"; and Vannevar Bush, "As We May Think," *The Atlantic* (July 1945).

Watch: *Lo and Behold* directed by Werner Herzog

Read: *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brain* by Nicolas Carr (Prologue, Chapter 1-5)

Blog Post - Bio, Reflection on Readings

9/18 - Web Technologies

Read: *The Shallows* (Chapter 5-10, Epilogue)

Read: *Digital History*, Chapter 2, "Getting Started: The Basic Technologies Behind the Web"

Blog Post #2 - Reading Reflection

9/25 - Digitization, Searching and Finding

Read: *Digital History*, Chapter 3, "Becoming Digital"

Blog Post #3 - Scavenger hunt

10/2 - Digital and Analog Sources

Read: Errol Morris, series on a Crimean War photograph: "Which Came First?" Parts 1, 2, 3;
also: Morris on *Photoshop*, *history*, and "*Photography as a Weapon*"

Watch: Jon Udell, *Heavy Metal Umlaut*

Read: "Evaluating Websites"

Listen to

Blog Post #4 - Website analysis: credibility

10/9 (*Class Meets on Tuesday 10/10) Copyright, Ethics and Social Issues in the Digital Age

Read: *Digital History*, Chapter 7, "Owning the Past?"

Blog Post #5 - Website analysis: ethics and legality

10/16 - Information and Security

Read: Mat Honan, "How Apple and Amazon Security Flaws Led to My Epic Hacking" and "How I got my Digital Life Back"

Read: [Basic Computer Security](#)

Read: [Passwords Under Assault](#)

Blog Post #6 - Personal Security Practices

10/23 - Digital Storytelling

***MIDTERM EXAM**

10/30 - Introduction to Programming/Tools and Services

Blog Post #7

***Project Proposals Due**

11/6 - Text Analysis and Data Visualizations

Blog Post #8

11/13 - Maps and Spatial Analysis

*** Group Timeline Project Due**

11/20 - Record Keeping and Preservation

11/27 - Digital Research

12/4 - Review and Wrap-Up

12/11 - Reading Day: NO CLASS

12/18 - FINAL PROJECTS DUE

