History 390: The Digital Past

Course Details:

History 390-02
Fall 2018
MW, 9:00-10:15 am
Sandbridge Hall 107

Instructor:

Amanda Regan
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Office Hours:
Robinson Hall 226A
MW 10:30-11:30 or by appointment

Welcome to History 390, The Digital Past. In this course you will learn to do history using digital tools. This course — which satisfies the university's IT requirement — teaches the fundamentals of information technology by applying them to practical historical problems. Although this is an upper division history course, no background in history is required. Throughout our semester, you will use the technologies and strategies we learn in class to explore the Progressive Era in the United States.

 The Progressive Era in the United States emerged in response to the policies and problems of the Gilded Age. Americans were faced with and increasing divide between the ultra wealthy elite and the rapidly expanding poor, battles between capital and labor, unsanitary food production, and increased levels of immigration. Dissatisfaction with the direction of the country led to the Progressive era which is named for the many "progressive" movements that the period spawned. The movements of the era represented very different ideas about the solutions to these problems and reformers were by no means united. However, the overarching theme for this period was "reform" and the diverse social movements provide ample opportunity to explore various themes using digital tools. In this course we will touch on themes in the progressive era such as the push for women's suffrage, immigrant culture and the backlash to increased immigration levels, working class leisure and reform efforts, labor strikes and working conditions, and reform efforts aimed at reshaping the American city. We'll discuss, read, and use digital tools to explore each of these themes.

Over the course of this semester, you will learn how to find, interpret, and analyze primary sources on the web as well as how to put them into context with secondary literature. We will create, manipulate, and interpret datasets. You will create visualizations and analyze documents using digital tools. You will also learn how to effectively present both visual and textual sources on the web as well as how to write and publish effectively on the web. This class prioritizes learning by doing, and most weeks we'll learn a tool and use it to analyze a historical problem.

In this course you will:

- learn the history of the Progressive Era.

- create historical scholarship using digital resources and tools, and
- publish on the web

This course also fulfills the University's IT requirements which has the following goals:

- Students will understand the principles of information storage, exchange, security, and privacy and be aware of related ethical issues.
- Students will become critical consumers of digital information; they will be capable of selecting and evaluating appropriate, relevant, and trustworthy sources of information.
- Students can use appropriate information and computing technologies to organize and analyze information and use it to guide decision-making.
- Students will be able to choose and apply appropriate algorithmic methods to solve a problem.

Course Policies

Communication

Students are welcome to come to my office hours or to arrange an appointment at any time during the semester. All other course communication will take place in our Slack group. If you have registered for the course, and have not received an invitation in your email, please add yourself to the group using your Mason e-mail address. All course announcements will be posted to the #Fall18-02 channel and you are responsible for checking this venue regularly. You may download the Slack app onto your electronic device or use the web based version. See this getting starting started guide for more information.

Required Purchases

You will need to sign up for Student plan with Reclaim Hosting ($30) in lieu of a textbook. We'll go over this in class, but please sign up for an account no later than June 6th. The wonderful folk at Reclaim have provided a discount code for students enrolled in this course. Use the coupon code reclaim4edu to get 20% off your purchase of a student plan.

All other readings will be available for free online.

Technology

You will need to bring a laptop or tablet to every class. You will need it to complete required in-class exercises. Because our class is 2 hours and 40 minutes long, please charge your computer beforehand and bring a charger to class with you.

Technology, while often wonderful, can also cause unexpected problems. I encourage all students to back up their work on an external hard drive or in a Dropbox account. Always

keep separate copies of your written assignments and other work. Computer failures are not an acceptable excuse for late assignments and will not constitute an emergency.

Late Work

All assignments must be turned in by the date and time they are due. Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a grad (e.g. from a B to a B-) after the deadline. An additional 1/3 of a grade will be deducted for each 24 hours that pass before the assignment is turned in.

Emergencies, of course, do arise. If you have a documented emergency please see me and we can discuss other arrangements.

Honor Code

Mason 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.

Please keep in mind that if you are copying and pasting text that you did not write yourself, you might be plagiarizing. If you are using copied text, whether pasted or retyped manually, you must be sure to accurately cite the information. Text is accurately cited when: 1) pasted text is surrounded by quotation marks or offset as a block quote and 2) the pasted text is attributed to its author and source and 3) the pasted text is cited in a footnote, endnote, or bibliography.

Classroom Conduct

In order to learn, we must be open to the views of people different from ourselves. In this time we share together over the semester, please honor the uniqueness of your fellow classmates and appreciate the opportunity we have to learn from one another. Please respect each others' opinions and refrain from personal attacks or demeaning comments of any kind.

Disability Services

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 Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; http://ds.gmu.edu) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

Acknowledgments

Variations of this class are regularly taught by numerous faculty at George Mason. I am indebted to the work of those who have taught this class before me, including: Sharon Leon, Lincoln Mullen, Erin Bush, and Gretchen Burgess.

Course Requirements

Assignments

Assignment	Due Date	Grade Percentage
Quizzes	Throughout the semester.	5%
Participation	Throughout semester.	10%
Midterm	October 24th	20%
Blog Posts	Throughout the semester.	25%
Mini Skills Projects	Throughout the semester.	40% (8 @ 5% each)

Quizzes (5%):

This course will include readings related to both the history of the Progressive Era and to Digital History. You should come to class prepared to discuss the readings listed on the syllabus for that day. On any day I may give a short quiz on the readings. Quizzes cannot be made up and you must be present in class to take the quiz.

Participation (10%):

In general, most weeks we'll begin by covering some aspect of Progressive Era history on Monday before moving into exploring a digital tool. Because many of our classes will build on each other, attending class will be crucial to being successful in the course. Further, while class participation necessitates you attend class, it is not defined solely by attendance. I expect that students will come to class having done the readings beforehand. Students should be ready to discuss the readings, exchange ideas, and actively participate in class discussions. Grades will be determined by not just your presence in class but also by your contribution to class discussions and activities.

Midterm (20%)

There will be an in-class midterm on Wednesday October 24.

Blog Posts (25%):

Throughout the semester you will write a total of **6** blog posts. Each blog post will build on a topic discussed in class and they will often build on our in class tool tutorials. Blog posts will be due prior to the start of the following weeks class.

Your blog posts should be at least 350-500 words and should be written in a semi-formal scholarly style (complete thoughts, correct spelling, grammar and syntax.) Please use the Chicago style guide to cite any sources. Each blog post is worth a total of 3 points. A grading rubric can be found on the Blog Criteria page.

Mini Skills Projects (8 @ 5% each = 40%):

Throughout the course we will learn to use a series of digital tools and methodologies to ask and answer historical questions. The results of each small project will be embedded on your blog. The 9 projects are: (1) metadata in Omeka, (2) exhibits and digital storytelling in Omeka, (3) a database, (4) mapping, (5) text mining, (6) visualizations, (7) a timeline, (8) a reflection and portfolio of your work throughout the class. Further details for each are available on the course schedule.

Schedule

Week 1

Mon. Aug 27. Course Introduction.

After Class:

- Purchase a Student Plan ($30) from Reclaim Hosting
- Take the Student Technology Survey

Wed. Aug 29. Building a Web Presence.

Reading:

- Megan O'Neil, "Confronting the Myth of the 'Digital Native'," Chronicle of Higher Education, April 21, 2014.
- Miriam Posner, Stewart Varner, and Brian Coxall, "Creating Your Web Presence," ProfHacker, February 14, 2011.
- Ryan Cordell, "Creating and Maintaining a Professional Presence Online," ProfHacker, October 3, 2012.

After Class:

- Write a "Hello World" blog post that introduces yourself to the class. Discuss how you chose to set up your blog and your approach to building a digital identity for yourself. ***Due before the start of class on September 5th***
- Submit the URL to your blog via the assignment submission form.

Week 2

Mon. Sept 3. Labor Day - No Class.

Wed. Sept 5. What is Digital History?

Readings:

- Miram Posner, "How Did They Make That?," August 29, 2013. Click through to all the projects listed.
- Dan Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, "Introduction: Promises and Perils of Digital History" and "Getting Started," in Digital History, online edition (Center for History and New Media, 2005).

Week 3

Mon. Sept 10. Evaluating History Online.

After Class:

- **Assignment:** Write a blog post that reviews one of the Digital History projects listed below. You may wish to consult the Organization of American Historian's guidelines for reviewing digital history projects. *Due before the start of class September 17th. Submit a link to your blog post through the assignment submission form.*

Projects for Review:

- Mapping Early American Elections
- Digital Harlem
- Geography of the Post
- Wearing Gay History
- Histories of the National Mall
- Hurricane Digital Memory Bank
- Language of the State of the Union, Mapping the State of the Union, and The State of the Union in Context
- September 11th Digital Archive
- Mining the Dispatch
- Valley of the Shadow
- Visualizing Emancipation

Wed. Sept 12. Who were the Progressives?

Reading:

- The American Yawp, Chapter 20

Week 4

Mon. Sept 17. Copyright & Fair Use.

Reading:

- Cory Doctorow, "We'll Probably Never Free Mickey, But That's Beside the Point." Electronic Frontier Foundation (2016)

- Corynne McSherry, "Court Upholds Legality of Google Books: Tremendous Victory for Fair Use and the Public Interest," Electronic Frontier Foundation, November 14, 2013.
- Dan Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, "Owning the Past," in Digital History.
- George Mason Copyright Office, sections on copyright and fair use.

Wed. Sept 19. Working with Primary Sources in the Digital Age.

Readings:

- Sam Wineburg, "Thinking Like a Historian," Teaching with Primary Sources Quarterly 3, 1 (Winter 2010).
- Basics of Visual Literacy, University of Maryland
- **Assignment:** Find five (5) primary sources from at least 3 different collections. Write a blog post that cites the items (including the databases they came from) in Chicago format. Summarize each source and discuss what you learned by reading it. What did you learn about searching for and finding primary sources on the internet? *Due before the start of class September 24th.*

Week 5

Mon. Sept 24th. Secondary Sources & History of the Internet.

Reading:

- Caleb McDaniel, "How to Read for History"
- Roy Rosenzweig, "Can History Be Open Source: Wikipedia and the Future of the Past," Journal of American History 93, 1 (2006).

After Class:

- **Assignment:** Using the resources from class find a monograph and a journal article related to some aspect of the Progressive Era. In a blog post summarize the argument for each. Be sure to include citations for each in Chicago format. *Due before the start of class October 1st.*

Wed. Sept 25. The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire.

Reading: (in order)

- Rose Cohen, "My First Job"
- Clara Lemlich, "Life in the Shop"
- William Shepherd, Eyewitness at the Triangle

- Echoes from the Triangle Fire. Dr. Price Suggests Co-operation Between the Waist Makers' Union and the Board of Sanitary Control. *Ladies' Garment Worker*, September, 1911. p.6.
- Richard A. Greenwlad. "The Burning Building at 23 Washington Place": The Triangle Fire, Workers and Reformers in Progressive Era New York." New York History 83, no. 1 (2002): 55-91.

Week 6

Mon. Oct 1. Omeka Metadata.

Reading:

- Guide to Creating Omeka Exhibits, The Albert Greenfield Digital Center for The History of Women's Education.
- Miriam Posner, Up and Running with Omeka, The Programming Historian (2013).
- Explore Dublin Core, "Metadata Basics."
- Look at and familiarize yourself with the following exhibits:
    - The NAACP in Texas exhibit
    - The Athletics and Physical Education at Bryn Mawr College, 1885-1929 exhibit

After class:

- **Skill Assignment #1**: Using the primary sources that you gathered during last week create an Omeka collection of at least 5 primary sources. Each item should have complete metadata although not every Dublin Core field needs to be filled out. Be sure to include a reference to where you found the item and a rights statement if appropriate. ***Due before the start of class October 8th via the assignment submission form***

Wed. Oct 3. Omeka Exhibits.

Reading:

- Exhibit Builder Tutorial

After Class:

- **Skill Assignment #2:** Using the items you added to Omeka last class, build an exhibit that tells a coherent story about some aspect of Progressive Era history. Each exhibit should include 5 items with proper metadata and an image. Use prose to link these items together. Your exhibit should be between 400 and 750 words

and structured/organized in a way that is suitable to the content. All secondary sources used to contextualize the items should be cited using Chicago format. ***Due before the start of class October 10th***

Week 7

Mon. Oct 8. Reform & Legislation in Progressive Era America.

Reading:

- Excerpt from McGerr, Michael E. *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870 - 1920.* 2005.
- Jacob Riis, How the Other Half Lives
- Upton Sinclair, The Jungle, Chapter 10

Wed. Oct 10. Creating Timelines with Timeline JS.

Before Class:

- Sign up for a Google account if you don't already have one.

After Class:

- **Skill Assignment #3**: Over the course of this semester make a timeline that chronicles important developments in the Progressive Era. You should have roughly 20 events including major labor strikes, social movements, and legislative accomplishments. Events can be drawn from class lectures, readings, and research but each event's entry must include an accurate date, a several sentence description, links to more information where relevant, and an image if possible. This assignment, unlike most skills assignments, is **due December 17th by 10am.**

Week 8

Mon. Oct 15. The Suffrage Movement.

Reading:

- Excerpt from "Power and Politics: Women in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920" in DuBois, Ellen Carol, and Lynn Dumenil. *Through Women's Eyes: An American History with Documents.* 2nd ed, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009.

Wed. Oct 17. Databases: Part I.

Before Class:

- Sign up for AirTable

Reading:

- "Spreadsheet Thinking vs Database Thinking"
- Mark Merry, "Designing Databases for Historical Research," especially part D.
- Lev Manovich, "Database as a Genre of New Media," AI & Society 14 (2000)

Week 9

Mon. Oct 22. Databases: Part II.

Reading:

- Airtable, Setting Up Field Types
- Airtable, A Beginners Guide to many-to-many relationships
- Airtable, Linking Between Tables

After Class:

- **Skill Assignment #4**: Work with a group of no more than 4 people to create a database model in Airtable.
  - Decide on a scheme for the database, i.e. what tables will hold which fields. Enter a few items to make sure the model fits the data.
  - Once you've finalized your model, each person should contribute at least 20 records (rows) to the database. Be sure to mark each persons contribution in a column.
  - Each member of the group should write a blog post that describes the database model you came up with in class. Explain the decisions you made to normalize the data. What did you learn about databases? How can databases be useful for historical research? What did you learn about the campaign for Suffrage by making this database? How could a database such as the one you built help you analyze a historical question?
    - Your blog should be between 500 and 750 words and written in a scholarly format. Please create a shareable link to your database and submit *both* that link as well as the link to your blog through the assignment submission form.
- ***Due before the start of class October 29th.***

Wed. Oct 24. Midterm.

Week 10

Mon. Oct 29. Segregation & Urbanization.

Reading:

- Excerpt from McGerr, Michael E. *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870 - 1920.* 2005.

Wed. Oct 31. Spatial History & Map Warper.

Reading:

- Richard White, "What is Spatial History?"
- Edward L. Ayers & Scott Nesbit, "Seeing Emancipation: Scale and Freedom in the American South," Journal of the Civil War Era, Vol 1 No 1 (2011): 3-24.
    - Explore: Visualizing Emancipation
- Lincoln Mullen, "Data Maps,"

Week 11

Mon. Nov. 5. Jim Crow & Segregation

Reading:

- Mark S. Foster, "In the Face of 'Jim Crow': Prosperous Blacks and Vacations, Travel and Outdoor Leisure, 1890-1945", *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 84, no. 2, Apr. 1999, pp. 130–49. Crossref, doi:$10.^{2307}/_{2649043}$.

Wed. Nov 7. Mapping with Keppler.gl

Reading:

- Keppler.gl User Guide
- Familiarize yourself with *The Negro Motorist Green-Book*](https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/dc858e50-83d3-0132-2266-58d385a7b928/book#page/1/mode/2up)

After Class:

- **Skill Assignment #5**:
  - o Download the *Green Guide* and pick a city that has at least twenty services.
  - o Create a dataset in a google spreadsheet or excel document. Your dataset should include all relevant information about the service as well as the address.
  - o Use a geocoder (like this one) to get the longitude and latitude for the service and add that to the spreadsheet.
  - o Create a map that visualizes your data in Keppler.gl. When you are finished be sure to take a screenshot of it.
  - o Write a blog post that discusses your map. Where are the services in your city located? Are they clustered together or spread out? If they are clustered, why do you think that is? What can you learn from this map and from spatial history in general? How does it help historians ask and answer questions? Include the screenshot of your map in your blog post.
  - o ***Due before the start of class on November 12th.***

Week 12

Mon. Nov 12. Women & the City

Reading:

- Maureen A. Flanagan, "Gender and Urban Political Reform: The City Club and the Woman's City Club of Chicago in the Progressive Era" in *The American Historical Review*

Wed. Nov 14. Text Mining

Reading:

- Ted Underwood, "Where to Start with Text Mining," The Stone and the Shell, August 14, 2012.
- Ted Underwood, "Seven Ways Humanists are Using Computers to Understand Text," The Stone and the Shell, June 4, 2015.
- Dan Cohen, "Searching for the Victorians," October 4, 2010.
- Explore: Cameron Blevins, "Topic Modeling Martha Ballard's Diary"
- Experiment with:
  - o Google Books Ngram Viewer
  - o Bookworm

After Class:

- **Skill Assignment #6:** Use Voyant to explore one of the sample corpuses provided. Write a blog post that discusses what you learned about text analysis and include screenshots of visualizations from Voyant. Using **both** distant and close reading, what can we learn about women's approach to reform in the Progressive Era using these documents? You might consider what elements of Flanagan's article you see in the corpus and what themes or trends might garner further analysis. Include specific examples in your blog post. ***Due before the start of class November 26th.***

Week 13

Mon. Nov 19. No class.

Wed. Nov 21. Thanksgiving break - no class.

Week 14

Mon. Nov 26. Immigration.

Reading:

- Excerpts from Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy Since 1882* (pdf)

Wed. Nov 28. Visualizations.

Reading:

- John Theibault, "Visualizations and Historical Arguments," in Writing History in the Digital Age, edited by Kristen Nawrotzki and Jack Dougherty (University of Michigan Press, 2013).
- Explore the visualizations created by Mike Bostock.

Before Class:

- Sign up for Plot.ly

After Class:

- **Skill Assignment #7:** Using the datasets provided create at least 2 visualizations. Be sure to include captions, labels, and titles for each visualization. Embed both in a

blog post and discuss: What did you learn from your visualization? What does it tell you about Immigration in the Progressive Era? What kind of literacy is required to engage with your visualization? ***Due before the start of class December 3rd.***

Week 15

Mon. Dec 3. Security and Sustainability.

Reading:

- Dan Goodin, "Why passwords have never been weaker," Ars Technica, August 20, 2012.
- Mat Honan, "How Apple and Amazon Security Flaws Led to My Epic Hacking," Wired, August 6, 2012.
- Mat Honan, "How I Resurrected My Digital Life After an Epic Hacking," Wired, August 17, 2012.
- Jennifer Howard, "Born Digital, Projects Need Attention to Survive," Chronicle of Higher Education, January 6, 2014.
- Dan Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, "Preserving Digital History," in Digital History (2006).

After Class:

- **Assignment:** Choose one of the two following topics and write a blog post:
  - Topic 1: How sustainable is the digital work that you have don't in this course? What would it take to sustain the assignments you have completed? Which assignments can you export from the web services where you created them?
  - Topic 2: How secure is your digital life? Who has access to your information? What kinds of things might hackers, corporations, political parties, or states be able to figure out about you from that information? What is the significance of government surveillance? What can you do to improve your digital security?
  - ***Due December 17th by 10am.***

Wed. Dec 5. Algorithms and Ethics.

Reading:

- Kieran Healy, "Using Metadata to Find Paul Revere," June 9, 2013.
- Safiya Noble, "A Society, Searching" excerpt from *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism.*

Week 16

Mon. Dec 17th. Final Assignments Due by 10am.

- No Final Exam.
- **Skill Assignment #8:** Use your website for the course to create a portfolio of all your work in this class.
    - Your portfolio should be a page on your website that links to all of the assignments and blog posts you have completed for this class.
    - Include images of the assignments where appropriate and be sure to make the site attractive.
    - With each skill assignment include a short discussion about how the assignment contributed to your understanding of the Progressive Era and Digital History. The text on this page should be between 500 and 700 words.
    - Your portfolio is due **December 17th by 10am.**