The Digital Past

The Progressive Era, 1870 - 1920

HIST 390 - 001: Spring 2019

Instructor: Eric Gonzaba  ·  egonzaba@gmu.edu

General Course Information
Class Time:  Wednesday, 7:20 PM - 10:00 PM
Classroom:  Planetary Hall 120
Office Hours:  Wednesday, 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM & by appointment
Office:  Research Hall 456 /Robinson Hall B 369B

Required Texts
Please obtain a copy of the following book. All other readings are available online or through Blackboard.


Course Description
In this class, you will learn to do history using digital tools. The course—which satisfies the Mason Core IT requirement—teaches the fundamentals of information technology by applying them to practical problems in history. Throughout the semester, you will work individually and with classmates on a series of projects about American history during the Progressive Era. You will learn not only how to do research online but also how to put those sources in the context of other scholarly work. You will gather data, learn how to question it, analyze it, summarize it, and interpret it. You will create visualizations of datasets, including maps. You will learn how to present visual and textual sources online in web exhibits, and you will learn how to write and publish effectively online. Through learning by doing, you will gain both digital skills and the skills of a historian. This combination will be useful to you throughout your university career and in your future work.

In this course you will
• learn the history of the American Progressive Movement,
• create historical scholarship using digital tools and resources, and
• publish historical scholarship on the web.

You will also master the IT competencies from the Mason Core:
• 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.

Required Domain
At the first class meeting, all students will sign up for a year's hosting with Reclaim Hosting (usually a $30 purchase). You will sign up for a student plan with the coupon code reclaim4edu for a 10% discount. We will go over this at the first class, so no need to do this ahead of time.

Assignments
In this class, you will create a number of smaller projects on the history of the American Progressive Movement. Each of these projects will demonstrate a specific skill that you learned in class. At the end of the semester, you will combine them into a portfolio of materials. You will also write blog posts on various subjects. All assignments or blog posts assigned on a given week are due before the start of class on the following Wednesday.

Quizzes (30%). There will be ten (10) short quizzes on the McGerr book and supplemental readings. You may use notes you have taken on the reading if they are on paper. If you take notes electronically, print them out. No makeup quizzes will be allowed, but the lowest two quiz scores will be dropped.

Blog (30%). For each assignment, write a well-argued blog post of approximately three hundred (300) words, with correct prose, full sentences, and paragraphs with topic sentences. Respond to the questions in the prompt thoroughly, but do not simply enumerate your answers. These posts are mostly graded by completion. Thoughtful posts will receive full credit; others will receive no credit.

Skills assignments (30%). You will create twelve (12) projects over the course of the semester. Whenever possible, you will embed these in a page on your WordPress website as well as upload a link to them onto Blackboard’s assignment page. Due dates and further instructions are listed on the schedule. Assignments include: (1) metadata input; (2) build an online historical exhibit; (3) image comparison and analysis; (4) georeference a historical map; (5) edit a Wikipedia entry; (6) text mine; (7) map data; (8) create a timeline; (9) use audio in textual storytelling; (10) documentary storyboard; and (11) create a portfolio of your assignments for the course.

Documentary/video essay skills assignment (10%). This skills assignment will take the place of your midterm and final exams. Working with a preassigned group, you'll complete a short documentary on the Progressive Era and premiere the work in front of class.

Communication
This course utilizes Slack for almost all interpersonal communication outside class. Students will sign up to the course Slack group on the first day's sitting and an invitation to join the group will be sent via Blackboard. Questions regarding minor matters (help with assignments, software trouble etc.) should first be solicited to fellow students on Slack. Students may contact the instructor through Slack or at office hours. Email should only be used as a last resort.

Late Work
No unexcused late work will be accepted. You must request any extensions before assignments are due, and excused late work will receive a one letter grade penalty unless otherwise specified. No
work will be accepted after the last day of class unless specifically assigned. Note: No make-up quizzes will be given, be it an excused or unexcused absence.

**University Schedule Dates**
- **February 5, 2019:** Last day to drop with no tuition penalty
- **February 12, 2019:** Final drop deadline
- **March 13, 2019:** No class (Spring Break holiday)

**Technology**
All students 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 nearly three hours long, please charge your computer beforehand and bring a charger to class with you. There is not enough outlets for all students to charge during class. Be sure to back up all work on an external hard drive or in a Dropbox/other cloud account. Computer failures are not an acceptable excuse for late assignments and will not constitute an emergency.

**Academic Integrity**
You are expected to know and follow George Mason’s policies on [academic integrity](#) and the [honor code](#). Plagiarism is not acceptable in any form. All sources used must be acknowledged in a note or bibliography entry, including paraphrased material. Any copied text (exact words) must be accurately cited and surrounded in quotation marks or offset in a block quote.

**Disability Services**
If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance, please consult George Mason’s [Disability Services](#) (SUB I, Suite 2500; (703) 993-2474) to determine the accommodations you need.

**Children Policy**
The university currently has no formal policy regarding children in the classroom. As such, this statement reflects my policy toward the children of students within this section of HIST 390. All exclusively breastfeeding babies are welcome in this class as often as is necessary. For older children and babies, it is understood that unforeseen disruptions in childcare often put parents in difficult positions having to miss class to stay with their children. While the HIST 390 classroom is not meant to be a long-term solution, occasionally bringing a child to class in order to cover gaps in child care is perfectly acceptable. All students are asked to help create a welcoming environment and be respectful to all others in regards this policy. Please reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns.

**Classroom Decorum**
Almost every class period will include a significant amount of discussion between professor and student and amongst students themselves. As such, students are expected to recognize the diversity of individual experiences and be respectful of these differences. Students will help create a learning environment that supports a diversity of thoughts and perspectives including along the lines of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexuality, class, disability, age, and religion. If something is said in class (by anyone) that makes you feel uncomfortable, please contact me. If you have a preferred name and/or set of pronouns that differs from those that appear in your official Mason record, please let me know.
Schedule

January 23, 2019   Week 1: Intro to Digital History and the Progressive Era

Reading due:
- McGerr, Preface (pg. xii-xvi)
- Miriam Posner, “How Did They Make That?,” August 29, 2013. Click through to all of the projects listed in this post.
- What is Slack?

In class:
- Discussion: What is digital history? What is the Progressive era? Why am I even here?
- Sign up for web hosting at Reclaim Hosting.
- Installing WordPress via Reclaim Hosting

Assignment due next week:
- Write a blog post reviewing one digital history project found listed on Slack. What topic, period, and place of history do they cover? What arguments or interpretations do they make? What is the audience for the site? What sources are they based on? Who created them, and who did what work? Who funded them? What technologies do they use? Include screenshots of important parts of the website. Be sure to cite the project according to the Chicago Manual of Style conventions.

January 30, 2019   Week 2: The Party’s Over / Finding and Using Sources

Reading due:
- McGerr, Chapter One- Signs of Friction
- California State University, Chico, Evaluating Information -- Applying the CRAAP Test
- Sam Wineburg, “Thinking Like a Historian,” Teaching with Primary Sources Quarterly 3, 1 (Winter 2010).

In class:
- Quiz 1 (open note)
- Discussion: Why and how were Americans divided at the end of the nineteenth century?
- Exploring Secondary Sources: the GMU library catalog, JSTOR, George Oberle, “U.S. History Sources 1820s-1880s”
- Exploring Primary Sources: DPLA, Proquest Historical Newspapers, Library of Congress Digital Collections, African American Newspapers, Chronicling America, Fulton History NY Newspapers
- Experiment with TinEye and Google Images

Assignment due next week:
- Sometime in the next week, visit the Fenwick Library and check out an academic book regarding some topic about the Progressive era (1870-1920). Write a short blog post
describing why you chose this book, its main contents (this may require you to skim the introduction) and include a full citation. Bring this book to class on February 6th.

- Create a frame-comparison image using Juxtapose using public domain images. Explain your choice of images in part two of your blog post and whether you think your frame comparison is effective (total word length for both parts need not exceed 300 words). At least one of your images should be from the Progressive era.
- Download Zotero and Zotero Connector on your computer.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

February 6, 2019  Week 3: The Power of the Middle Class / Wikipedia Editing

Reading due:
- McGerr, Chapter Two- The Radical Center
- Zotero Quick Start Guide
- Read and complete the Wikipedia Training for Students

In class:
- Quiz 2 (open note)
- Guest lecture: Dr. George Oberle, George Mason University Libraries
- Discussion: Why was the middle class so committed to social and political reform?

Assignment due next week:
- Edit one section (around a paragraph of 150-250 words) of an existing Wikipedia entry. Be sure to include proper citation and follow Wikipedia’s guidelines.
- In a short blog post, explain why you chose your Wikipedia topic, the sources you consulted, and any difficulties or concerns you had about this assignment.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

February 13, 2019  Week 4: Reshaping Personal Behavior / Building an Archive

Reading due:
- McGerr, Chapter Three- Transforming Americans
- Working with Dublin Core, Omeka Classic User Manual

In class:
- Quiz 3 (open note)
- Discussion: Why were Progressives obsessed with controlling individual behavior? How did they attempt to remake the working class?
- Download Omeka via Reclaim

Assignment due next week:
- Check back on your Wikipedia entry. Write a blog post describing whether your Wikipedia entry has been edited or altered in any way. Why do you think these revisions
(or lack of revisions) took place? Do you find Wikipedia effective in its role as an online encyclopedia? Why or why not?

- Using the primary sources that you gathered earlier and other sources that you have found, create an Omeka collection with at least six (6) Omeka items. Each item must be fully described in the metadata, though you likely will not use every Dublin Core field. Be sure to include a reference to the place you found the source in the appropriate field and be sure to include a number of tags for each item.

February 20, 2019  Week 5: Seeking Interclass Harmony / Spatial History

Reading due:
- McGerr, Chapter Four- Ending Class Conflict
- Richard White, “What is Spatial History?”

In class:
- Quiz 4 (open note)
- Discussion: Why did Progressives believe the conflict between labor and capital threatened middle-class prosperity?
- Explore Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States, Ben Schmidt’s Subway Maps, David Rumsey Map Collection
- Create an account at MapWarper
- Explore Social Explorer

Assignment due next week:
- Pick a map from the period of the long Progressive era (1870-1920) from the David Rumsey Map Collection. Georeference your historical map using MapWarper. Post a link to your georeferenced map onto the assignment section on Blackboard (be sure it's public on MapWarper).
- In a blog post, explain what you learned from the map and how georeferencing maps might be useful for understanding the Progressive era or historical questions in general. What did you make of Social Explorer? Be sure to include images of a maps you found compelling. Also, be sure to include citations and acknowledge any permissions that have been granted to use it.

February 27, 2019  Week 6: Confronting Corporations / Mapping

Reading due:
- McGerr, Chapter Five- Controlling Big Business
- Skim the Omeka Geolocation Plugin Documentation
- Megan Gambino, “Q & A with Nick Stanhope, Creator of Historypin,” Smithsonian.com, August 30, 2011

In class:
- Quiz 5 (open note)
- Discussion: Why did Progressives fear big business enterprises? Were they successful in curtailing them?
- Download Omeka Geolocation plugin
• Sign up for History Pin

Assignment due next week:
• Add geolocation data to at least four (4) items on your Omeka page. If your items do not contain geographic data, add new items that can be listed in a map. Include a screenshot and link of your Omeka map with your blog post.
• Add one pin to the History Pin collection for the class relating to the collection’s topic (you can find this on Slack). Do not repeat an item already added. Be sure to include proper metadata and embed this pin to your blog post.
• Write a short blog post describing your experience adding geolocation data to your Omeka items and your History Pin.

March 6, 2019     Week 7: American Apartheid / Text Mining

Reading due:
• McGerr, Chapter Six- *The Shield of Segregation*
• Ben Zimmer, “*Bigger, Better Google Ngrams: Brace Yourself for the Power of Grammar,*” *the Atlantic*, October 18, 2012
• Sarah Zhang, “*The Pitfalls of Using Google Ngram to Study Language,*” *Wired*, October 12, 2015

In class:
• Quiz 6 (open note)
• Discussion: Was racial segregation a contradiction to Progressivism?
• Explore Google Books *Ngram Viewer, Voyant*, Lincoln Mullen's *America's Public Bible*, Brigham Young University's *Time Corups*

Assignment due March 20, 2019:
• Create on Google Books ngram visualization about a historical topic (related to the Progressive era or a topic of your choice) and embed it into your blog post.
• Using the text datasets provided to you (State of the Union addressees), use Voyant to do a basic text mining assessment of a corpus. Take screenshots of relevant visualizations that you will discuss in your blog post
• Write a blog post your experience using text analysis tools. What did you learn from this distant reading of texts? What does this approach reveal that other methods do not? Are there limitations to text mining?

March 13, 2019     Week 8: No Class

Happy Spring Break!
March 20, 2019  Week 9: Modernism, Movies, and Migration / Building an Exhibit

Reading due:
• McGerr, Chapter Seven- *The Promise of Liberation*
• Explore *Goin’ North* by West Chester University's HIS 601 and HON 452 (2014)
• Skim *Omeka Exhibit Builder documentation*

In class:
• Quiz 7 (open note)
• Discussion: How did new technology help “liberate” Americans at the turn of the twentieth century?
• Explore: *Mill Girls in the Nineteenth Century*

Assignment due next week:
• Create a coherent Omeka exhibit that tells a story about some aspect of the Progressive Era. The exhibit should include a minimum of five items, each with metadata and in most cases with images. Link these items together with prose in at least three separate exhibit pages. Your exhibit should look aesthetically attractive and, if possible, utilize other media like embedded YouTube videos or your Juxtapose slider. Each item used should include proper captions. Remember, you are practicing not just the technology behind Omeka, but the craft of writing for the web.
• Write a short blog post addressing some of your thoughts on building an online historical exhibit. What issues did you encounter? In what ways did you make your exhibit stand out? This blog post need not exceed 150 words.

March 27, 2019  Week 10: Amusing the Millions / Timelines

Reading due:
• McGerr, Chapter Eight- *The Pursuit of Pleasure*

In class:
• Quiz 8 (open note)
• Discussion: Did America become a pleasure obsessed society during the Progressive Era? How did leisure change understandings of race, sex, and sexuality?
• *Timeline.js*. (Make sure you have a Google account before coming to class.)

Assignment due next week:
• Using Timeline.js, create timeline of events involving some aspect of the Progressive era. The timeline should include at least 10 events. Each event should include an accurate date, several sentences of description, links to more information when appropriate, and an image if possible.
- Embed your timeline into a blog post. Describe any challenges or issues that arose during the creation of your blog post. What topic in the Progressive era did you choose and why? This blog post need not exceed 150 words.

April 3, 2019  Week 11: Over There / Audio and Storytelling

Reading due:
- McGerr, Chapter Nine- *The Price of Victory*
- David Hendy, “10 Sounds That Changed The Course Of History,” *Huffington Post The Blog*, December 6, 2017

In class:
- Quiz 9 (open note)
- Discussion: Did Wilsonianism and the First World War kill the Progressive Movement?
- Explore *The Roaring Twenties*, the *Virtual St. Paul's Cathedral Project*, the *Museum of Endangered Sounds*, and the *International Dialects of English Archive*
- *Soundcite*

Assignment due next week:
- Write a brief 200-250 word statement on one topic of the Progressive era utilizing at least two (2) instances of inline audio with *Soundcite*. Be sure to include proper citations, including for all audio you used.
- Embed this text into a blog post. Along with your *Soundcite* text, write a personal reflection blog post. Provide your thoughts about some of the audio projects we explored in class and your *Soundcite* assignment. What role does audio play in helping understand the past? Do you find *Soundcite*’s inline audio capabilities distracting or helpful for a reader? Why?

April 10, 2019  Week 12: Political and Social Sagging / Gaming

Reading due:
- McGerr, *Conclusion* (pg. 315-319)

In class:
- Quiz 10 (open note)
- Discussion: Why did McGerr call the modern era (in the year 2003) “a politically disappointing time?” Did Progressives embrace later reform movements?
- *Oregon Trail (1974)*
- *Jamestown Online Adventure*
- *iCivics*

Assignment due next week:
• Write a blog post reflecting your thoughts on the McCall and Pepple readings and some of the games we briefly played in class. Browse Playing History’s list of games and write a short review of one game of your choice. Do you find it an effective educational game? Provide relevant screenshots and captions. Note: MANY of the games on the Playing History list are dead links and are not available. You might also try the Internet Archive for potential educational history games. I’m open to games not on either list.

April 17, 2019  Week 13: Creating a Historical Video Essay or Documentary

Reading due:
• Kathleen McDonough, “Constructing a Historical Documentary: A Director’s Tale,” Perspectives on History, December 1, 2003
• Jose S. Rose, "How Documentary Film Became Entertainment," Medium, February 28, 2018
• Video Essays, Excelsior Online Writing Lab

In class:
• Guest lecturer: Sara Colini, National Women’s History Museum
• Explore short history film examples: The Progressive Era: Crash Course US History #27, Women Before the American Revolution by Professor Rosemarie Zagarri, and Jennifer Carey’s Benedict Arnold
• Explore video editors: iMovie, Shortcut, VSDC Free Video Editor, VideoPad Video Editor

Assignment due April 24, 2019:
• Write a blog post describing your progress thus far in the video essay. What topic have you chosen and what sources are you consulting? What software are you using? What issues have arose?

Assignment due May 1, 2019:
• In a group with four to five students, create a short 3.5-5 minute historical documentary or video essay using video footage, images, and audio collected from throughout the semester. Your documentary should be on a subject related to the Progressive era, broadly defined (do not do an overview of the entire Progressive movement). Runtime should be between 3.5-5 minutes, not including your citations or end credits. The documentary must include a Chicago Manual of Style formatted bibliography at the very end in the form of the credits. All documentaries must make a historical argument, and all students in each group should speak at least once in the documentary.

April 24, 2019  Week 14: Documentary Workshopping

Reading due:
• Storyboard (Wikipedia)

In class:
• Spend this class period working on the video essay with your team. By the end of the class period, you should have a draft of a storyboard and, if possible, a script to upload onto Blackboard. Your storyboard is allowed (and is likely) to differ from the final finished documentary. Upload this storyboard (either the digital version or a picture of your handwritten storyboard) onto Blackboard by 10:30 PM tomorrow night (April 25, 2019.)
• You may wish, though are not required, to use the Storyboard Template for Creating a Digital Documentary by Baltimore County Public Schools.

Assignment due next week:
• In form provided on Blackboard, please briefly list contributions of you and each of your team members to the documentary. Submission may remain anonymous. Turn this form in before your documentary premiere on May 1.
• No blog post required this week

May 1, 2019    Week 15: Documentary Premiere Fest
Reading due:
• None. Read some fiction for pleasure.

In class:
• Presentations of 3.5-5 minute video essays and documentaries. Light refreshments will be provided.
• Turn in team contribution assessments.

Assignment due May 8, 2019 at 11:59 PM:
• Portfolio assignment: Create a page on your website which links to all of the assignments and blog posts you have created for this course. Include images of the assignments as the link where appropriate. Make it attractive. You should write prose describing what each assignment contributed to understanding the history of the Progressives, and you should tie the assignments together with prose about the Progressive era. The total length of the text on this page should be about 250 words (max 500 words).

Syllabus Credits
Much of this syllabus and schedule was greatly influenced and borrowed from previous digital history courses taught at Mason and elsewhere. I'm especially indebted to assignment ideas, readings, course structure, and teaching from such awesome people like Sharon Leon, Sheila Brennan, Lincoln Mullen, Stephen Robertson, Jacqueline Beatty, Amanda Regan, Erin Bush, Jannelle Legg, Alyssa Fahringer, and Spencer Roberts.