

The Digital Past

HIST390, George Mason University, Fall 2023
Mondays & Wednesdays, 12:00-1:15 PM, Horizon Hall 2010
Professor Stephen Robertson - Email: srober30@gmu.edu

This course, which satisfies the [Mason Core IT requirement](#), prepares students to use and understand a wide variety of current and emerging digital technologies—everything from basic office software to more complex services such as databases and digital maps. It explores how technologies can augment the ability to produce, consume, process and communicate information, but also create challenges related to security, source reliability and automation. The course teaches the fundamentals of information technology within the context of a history course rather than as a set of abstract principles or discrete skills tied to particular software packages. No background in history is required. Students will develop an analysis of the history of a neighborhood in New York City using the *New York City Guide* published in 1939 as the core source.

LEARNING OUTCOMES	WEEKS	ASSESSMENTS
You will be able to understand the principles of information storage, exchange, security, and privacy and be aware of related ethical issues	1, 2, 3,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Digital Literacy Test
You will become critical consumers of digital information; capable of selecting and evaluating appropriate, relevant, and trustworthy sources of information	3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Digital Literacy TestCreate a text analysisAnalyze a podcastCreate a timelineCreate a mapProject
You will be able to use appropriate information and computing technologies to organize and analyze information and use it to guide decision-making	5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Create a text analysisAnalyze a podcastCreate a timelineCreate a mapProject
You will be able to choose and apply appropriate algorithmic methods to solve a problem	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Create a text analysis
You will be able to publish and communicate information on the web	5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Create a text analysisCreate a timelineCreate a mapProject

To achieve these learning outcomes we will use a combination of reading, writing, exploring, and experimenting with digital tools and materials. Learning by doing is a central part of this course. That is, in most classes you will engage in making or analyzing something using digital tools and media. Persistence and willingness to try many approaches will be a key to doing well in this course.

SCHEDULE

8/21: THE CHARACTER OF NYC
8/23: THE INTERNET

8/28: THE WEB
8/30: DIGITIZATION & COPYRIGHT

9/4: **LABOR DAY**
9/6: OMEKA S WORKSHOP

9/11: THE *New York City Guide* (1939)
9/13: DIGITAL LITERACY TEST

9/18: TEXT ANALYSIS
9/20: TEXT ANALYSIS WORKSHOP

9/25: NYC: Dutch City to English City
9/27: NYC: City of Capital

10/2: PODCASTS
10/4: PODCAST ANALYSIS WORKSHOP

10/9: **FALL BREAK**
10/10: NYC: Immigrant City
10/11: NYC: Cultural Capital

10/16: TIMELINES
10/18: TIMELINE WORKSHOP

10/23: NYC: Wealth & Poverty
10/25: NYC: Public Spaces & Commercial Amusements

10/30: MAPPING
11/1: MAPPING WORKSHOP

11/6: NYC: Getting Around
11/8: NYC: Skyscrapers & Skylines

11/13: FINDING INDIVIDUALS IN THE CITY
11/15: CENSUS ANALYSIS WORKSHOP

11/20: NYC: Depression & Public Works
11/23: **THANKSGIVING BREAK**

11/27: PROJECT WORKSHOP
11/29: PROJECT WORKSHOP

ASSIGNMENT	GRADE	DUE
Class Participation	10%	-
Digital Literacy Test	15%	9/13
Text analysis of <i>New York City Guide</i>	10%	9/29
Podcast analysis	10%	10/13
Timeline of <i>New York City Guide</i>	10%	10/27
Map of <i>New York City Guide</i>	10%	11/10
Census Analysis	10%	11/27
Project	25%	12/11

CLASS PARTICIPATION: Participate in workshops & discussions on August 30, September 20, October 4, October 18, November 1, November 15. November 27 & November 29.

DIGITAL LITERACY TEST: Annotate a diagram and provide short definitions of 17 key terms and concepts. The terms will be chosen from a set of options. A list of the terms that could appear in the test is provided. In-class; duration 70 minutes.

TEXT ANALYSIS: Use Voyant's Summary, Trends, Microsearch, Links, Topics tools to analyze the *New York City Guide* to identify the features of the 5 boroughs, the 5 parts of the Manhattan and the sections of the part of the city you are studying.

PODCAST ANALYSIS: Use Perusall to annotate an episode of the Bowery Boys podcast about the part of the city you are studying and then analyze the podcast using those annotations.

TIMELINE: Use TimelineJS to create a timeline using the information about the part of the city that you are studying in the *New York City Guide*.

MAP: Use kelper.gl & Omeka S to make a map using the information about the part of the city that you are studying in the *New York City Guide*.

CENSUS ANALYSIS: Create and visualize data from the 1930 & 1940 census schedules about the residents of one building in the part of the city that you are studying.

PROJECT: Expand your Timeline, Map or Census analysis by adding additional information.

Required textbooks:

There are no textbooks or required purchases for this course. All the readings are online.

Software:

This course uses Blackboard as the learning management system. You will need a browser and operating system that are listed compatible or certified with the Blackboard version available on the myMason Portal. See supported browsers and operating systems. Log in to myMason to access your registered courses.

COURSE ACTIVITIES & READINGS

Resource: Check the Digital Literacy Glossary for definitions of any terms unfamiliar to you: <https://drstephenrobertson.com/glossary/>.

Lecture PowerPoint Slides: The PowerPoint slides used in the lectures will be posted in the lecture folder after each class.

Additional Readings, Podcasts, Video: Additional material on the lecture topics can be found in the lecture folder. This is *not* required reading; it is optional content for students interested in learning more about those topics.

Laptops: You will need laptops for in-class activities in the workshops.

ASSIGNMENTS

Class Participation (10%)

- Participate in the in-class workshops on August 30, September 20, October 4, October 18, November 1, November 15. November 27 & November 29
- This assignment is graded Pass/Fail: if you attend the workshop you will receive 100% of the grade assigned to that workshop.
- The workshops are a tutorial on the software used in each assignment and an opportunity to begin the tasks that make up the assignment. Each assignment is due ten days* after the workshop.

Digital Literacy Test (15%) - In-class, September 13

- Duration 70 minutes
- Complete 10 labels on a diagram of the Internet (15 points)
- Provide short definitions of 17 digital terms & concepts (85 points)
- Topics
 - The Internet (*define 2 terms from 6 options*)
 - The Web (*define 3 terms from 6 options*)
 - Digital Preservation (*define 3 terms from 6 options*)
 - Digitization (*define 3 terms from 6 options*)
 - Copyright (*define 3 terms from 6 options*)
 - Omeka S (*define 3 terms from 6 options*)
- A list of all the terms & concepts that could appear in the test is available on Blackboard.

Text Analysis (10%) - Workshop: September 19 – Assignment due: September 29

A) Use Voyant's Summary, Trends, Microsearch, Links, and Topics tools to analyze the *New York City Guide* to identify frequent words, distinctive words and words that appear together (topics) that suggest the features of different parts of the city.

1. Compare the five Boroughs:
 1. What are the distinctive features and characteristics of Manhattan based on the frequent words, distinctive words and topic models?
 2. What do the five boroughs have in common based on the frequent words, distinctive words and topic models?
2. Compare the five parts of Manhattan:
 1. What are the distinctive features and characteristics of the section of the city that you are studying based on the frequent words, distinctive words and topic models?
 2. What do the five sections have in common based on the frequent words, distinctive words and topic models?
3. Compare the sections of your part of the city:
 1. What are the distinctive features and characteristics of each section based on the frequent words, distinctive words and topic models?
 2. What do the sections have in common based on the frequent words, distinctive words and topic models?

B) Create a page in your Omeka S site and add a block containing your analysis

- Include at least three visualizations supporting your analysis in your page using the embed option in Voyant.

C) Submit the url for the page containing your analysis in Blackboard by clicking on the link at the top of the instructions.

Podcast Analysis (10%) - Workshop: October 2 – Assignment due: October 13

A) Choose ONE of the Bowery Boys podcast episodes on the part of the city that you are studying from the folder for that part in Perusall. Listen to the entire episode and add at least **4** annotations that identify and assess **each** of these **6** elements of a podcast (*i.e. at least 24 annotations in total*). Include the hashtag for appropriate element in your annotation:

1. Sources incorporated - #sources (What type of source? Is the source put in context? Is the source assessed critically?)
2. Sources cited or not cited - #citation (What information is provided on a source? Where should there be a source and why?)
3. Visual information: descriptions are used of what a person, place or event looks like - #visual (How detailed and effective is the description? Where should there be descriptions?)
4. Audio recordings: interviews, recordings, music (What audio? Is the audio put in context - #audio Is the audio assessed critically? Does the audio add to the story?)
5. Structure: role or contribution of hosts, divisions into segments - #structure (Who speaks? What role does the speaker play in the story? How does the story start and end? On what basis is the story divided into segments?)
6. Style of hosts: energy, bond with audience - #style (What are the key features of the host's style? What content energizes the host? How and on what basis does the host establish a bond with the audience?)

B) Write a 500-word analysis based on your annotations, including examples (by referring to the time in the recording at which an example occurs).

- How is the podcast different from a textual version of the story? Does it have a "a level of intimacy that is different from a written work or text?"
- How effective is the podcast in engaging its audience? What are the strengths and weaknesses?
- How effective is the podcast in presenting historical content?

C) Create a page in your Omeka S site and add a block containing your analysis, including the title, date and url of the episode you analyzed

D) Submit the url for the page containing your analysis in Blackboard by clicking on the link at the top of the instructions.

Timeline (10%) - Workshop: October 16 – Assignment due: October 27

A) Create a TimelineJS template

B) Enter events in the specified section of the part of the city that you are studying that are mentioned in the NYC Guide

- Sections: Lower Manhattan – Lower West Side; Middle West – Chelsea; Middle & Upper East – 5th Avenue & Upper 5th Avenue
- Most of those dates will be general – a year or a span of years, dates for the construction of buildings, or dates for organizations or individuals associated with locations.
- Quote the information on the event in the Text column and put the source of your information, a page number for the NYC Guide.

C) Enter events from the period before 1939 in the part of the city that you are studying from the *Encyclopedia of NYC*

- Refer to the entry on the sections of the part of the city you are studying.
- Refer to the entries on locations mentioned in the *New York City Guide*.
- Quote the information on the event in the Text column put the source of your information, a page number for the Encyclopedia.

D) Create a page in Omeka S and embed your timeline

E) Write a 500-word analysis and add it to a block in your Omeka S page:

- What dates and time periods saw the most events? Are those dates when an area is being developed or when it is changing?

F) Submit the url for the page containing your analysis in Blackboard by clicking on the link at the top of the instructions.

Map (10%) - Workshop: October 30 – Assignment due: November 10

A) Create a spreadsheet with these columns (I recommend that you use Google Sheets not Excel as it has less features and is easier to use and you can easily share it with me if you need help):

- Street Number
- Street Name
- Address estimated
- Location Name

- Location Description
- Location Type
- Source (Text)
- Source (Map)
- Latitude & Longitude

B) In each row, enter the information on a location mentioned or included in a map in the *NYC Guide* for the specified section of the part of the city that you are studying:

- Sections: Lower Manhattan – Lower West Side; Middle West – Chelsea; Middle & Upper East – 5th Avenue & Upper 5th Avenue
 - Street Number & Name: Sometimes this can be found in the text of the NYC Guide, but in most cases the text described location in more general terms. Google the location name; it may still exist or there may be information on the address of locations that have been renamed or demolished. If you cannot find an address that way, use Google Maps to estimate the address based on where the location appears in the map in the NYC Guide
 - Address estimated: Y or N
 - Location Name: Use the name given in the NYC Guide
 - Location Description: Use the description given in the NYC Guide or leave blank if the location is not described.
 - Location Type: Theater; Church; Hospital; Government building; School etc [We will develop a list of types in the workshop]
 - Source (Text): Page(s) of the NYC Guide where the location was mentioned.
 - Source (Map): Page(s) of the map in the NYC Guide in which the location was included.
 - Latitude & Longitude: Use Google Maps to find the Latitude and Longitude for the location. If you have the address, search for it, right click, copy latitude and longitude. The coordinates must be in decimal form – eg 40.8107412, -73.945568. If you do not have the address, drop a pin in the map at where you estimate the location was and right click to get the coordinates.

C) Download / Save your spreadsheet as a .csv file

D) Upload the spreadsheet to kepler.gl and create a map

- Color code the types of locations
- Customize the information that appears in the pop-up
- Export the html page and send it to Professor Robertson.
 - He will correct the bug in the code so your map appears when you open the html file, send the corrected file back to you and then upload the file so the map is accessible online and send you a url for the online map
- Create a page in your Omeka S site and embed your kepler.gl map

E) Upload the spreadsheet to your Omeka S site using the CSV import module and create 3 maps

- Create a page in your Omeka site

- Add a Map block with a map displaying all your locations
- Add at least two more map blocks each with a map based on metadata – eg locations on a particular street, locations of a particular type

D) Write a 500-word analysis

- Compare the maps in the NYC Guide, kepler.gl map, and the Omeka map – what features are distinctive to each? How do digital maps use features of the web
- How are locations concentrated and dispersed on your map? Where is the ‘heart’ of your section of the city?

E) Add a block to your Omeka S page containing your analysis

D) Submit the url for the page containing your analysis in Blackboard by clicking on the link at the top of the instructions.

Census Analysis (10%) - *Workshop: November 15 – Assignment due: November 27*

A) Create a free account on FamilySearch and find the Census Schedule for the building in your area that you are analyzing from 1930

B) Create a spreadsheet with these columns:

- Dwelling #
- First Name
- Last Name
- Relation to Head of Household
- Sex
- Age
- Birthplace
- Marital Status
- Race
- Year of Immigration to US
- Occupation
- Industry

C) Transcribe the information about the residents into the spreadsheets

- Some of the information appears in the transcribed text at the bottom of the page in FamilySearch, but some of the columns in the schedule do not appear there

D) Create charts to show the patterns in the information about residents

E) Find the Census Schedule for the building in your area that you are analyzing from 1940

F) Create a second spreadsheet, transcribe the information from the 1940 census schedule, and create charts to show the patterns in the information

G) Write a 500-word analysis comparing the residents in 1930 and 1940

- What kind of people lived in your building? Did the characteristics of those people change between 1930 and 1940?
 - Identify the residents who were in the building in 1930 and those who are new: how much change? Are the new residents different from the residents who remained, and from those who they replaced?
- What do the changes in the building suggest about what is happening in the area in which the building was located? Refer to your timeline.

Project (25%) - Workshops: November 27 & 29 – Assignment due: December 11

A) Choose either your timeline or map or census assignment and expand it by adding more information

- If you choose to expand your timeline, add events from the other sections in the *NYC Guide* for the part of the city you are studying listed below and related entries from the *Encyclopedia of New York City*
 - Lower Manhattan – *Greenwich Village, Lower East Side, Chinatown*
 - Middle West – *Times Square, Hell's Kitchen, Garment District (not Times Square Theaters)*
 - Middle & Upper East – *Murray Hill, Upper Madison Ave, Yorkville*
- If you choose to expand the map, add locations from the other sections in the *NYC Guide* for the part of the city you are studying listed below
 - Lower Manhattan – *Greenwich Village, Lower East Side, Chinatown*
 - Middle West – *Times Square, Hell's Kitchen, Garment District (not Times Square Theaters)*
 - Middle & Upper East – *Murray Hill, Upper Madison Ave, Yorkville*
- If you choose to expand your Census Analysis, add the residents of the building you analyzed from the census schedules for 1910, 1920 and 1950.

B) Create a new page in Omeka S for the expanded project and add the timeline or maps or charts

C) Write a 500-word analysis that compares the section of the city that you analyzed in your original assignment with the sections that you analyzed for the final project, *or* the residents in 1910, 1920 and 1950 with those in 1930 and 1940.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Grading Scale

A+	99-100	4.00
A	93-98	4.00
A-	90-92	3.67
B+	87-89	3.33
B	83-86	3.00
B-	80-82	2.67
C+	77-79	2.33
C	73-76	2.00
C-	70-72	1.67
D	60-69	1.00
F	60 and below	0.00

Important Dates

- Last day to add classes—all individualized sections — forms due AUGUST 28, 2023
- Last day to drop with no tuition penalty — SEPTEMBER 5, 2023
- Final Drop Deadline (50% tuition penalty) — SEPTEMBER 12, 2023
- Unrestricted Withdrawal period (100% tuition, W grade) — SEPTEMBER 13-SEPTEMBER 26, 2023

Academic Integrity

All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code: “not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, and/or lie in matters related to academic work.” If you are uncertain what that policy covers, see the information provided by the Office of Academic Integrity. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review.

If you are copying and pasting text that someone else wrote, you might be plagiarizing. Pasted or manually retyped text is not plagiarized only when all of the following three conditions are true: 1) the pasted text is surrounded by quotation marks or set off as a block quote, and 2) the pasted text is attributed in your text to its author and its source (e.g., “As Jane Smith writes on her blog . . .”), and 3) the

pasted text is cited in a footnote, endnote, and/or a bibliography (e.g., "Smith, Jane. Smith Stuff. Blog. Available <http://smithstuff.wordpress.com>. Accessed August 1, 2012.")

Disability Accommodations

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me.

- Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500.
Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

Diversity Policy

George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty, and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services, and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth. The Mason Diversity Statement can be found at <http://ctfe.gmu.edu/professional-development/mason-diversity-statement/>.

Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, and Interpersonal Violence

George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment that is free from discrimination and a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage students who believe that they have been sexually harassed, assaulted or subjected to sexual misconduct to seek assistance and support. University Policy 1202: Sexual Harassment and Misconduct speaks to the specifics of Mason's process, the resources, and the options available to students.

As a faculty member and designated "Responsible Employee," I am required to report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per university policy 1412. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact the Student Support and Advocacy Center (703-380-1434) or Counseling and Psychological Services (703-993-2380). You may also seek assistance from Mason's Title IX Coordinator (703-993-8730; titleix@gmu.edu)

Student Privacy

Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See Mason Live (<http://masonlive.gmu.edu>) for more information.

All course materials posted to Blackboard or other course site are private to this class; by federal law, any materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class.

Student Services

- Writing Center < <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu> > (703-993-1200)
- Ask A Librarian < <http://library.gmu.edu/ask> >
- Counseling and Psychological Services < <http://caps.gmu.edu> > (703-993-2380)