History in the Digital Age: Summer Session 2015
EQB 205, 05:30PM 08:40PM Tuesdays

This course explores the current and potential impact of digital media on the theory and practice of history. A central thesis behind this syllabus is that digital history is itself an increasingly public endeavor, and as such it makes sense to approach digital history as something very much in sync and in dialog with public history. We will explore a range of new media history resources, including practical work on project management and design. We will read a range of works on designing, interpreting and understanding digital media. Beyond course readings we will also critically engage a range of digital tools and resources.

Course Goals
After the course students will be able to:

1. Thoughtfully and purposefully engage in dialog about history on the public web with a range of stakeholders in digital history: historians, archivists, museum professionals, educators, and amateurs, etc.
2. Discover, evaluate, and implement digital tools and resources to support emerging and traditional forms of historical scholarship, public projects, and teaching.
3. Understand and articulate the key issues in collecting, preserving and interpreting digital and digitized primary sources from the perspective of a historian.

Overview of Assignments

Blogging (40% of grade) You must post at least 12 times to the course blog. Each of your posts should be between 400-800 words. These should include:
- 6 Reading response/or digital tool or resource posts (blog about an issue from the readings due Thursday of each week)
- 5 Assignment posts: There are four assignments you are required to complete over the term. After completing each one, you need to put up a post about what you did. These should include an intro/description of what you did and a short reflection/comment on what you learned and how it connects to course readings
- Commenting: at least 12 substantive comments on other student's blogs over the course of the term.
- 1 Reflection post: During the last week of class you need to post a reflection on the course. This should synthesize some of the course readings and suggest what you're take aways from the course are.

Course Assignments (30%)
- There are five assignments you must complete over the course of the term. These include, 1) creating your blog 2) setting up an Omeka collection with at least 10 items 3) creating an exhibit in Omeka using those items 4) contributing to creating a Wikipedia page & 5) Creating a HistoryPin tour. In each case you need to complete the required tasks for the assignment and then post a link to your work and reflect on the work in a blog post on your course blog.

In Class Participation (30% of grade)
- Come to class prepared to discuss the readings and the online resources.
- Class attendance and active participation in class discussions. Notify me in advance if you are going to miss class, missing more than two class sessions will significantly impact your class participation grade.

Assignment Details

Read Strategically

Throughout all of our readings here you are going to need to read strategically. You need to get what you need out of the book or article, this often does not require readying every word in an article or a book. On how to read for graduate seminars see, for example, Miriam Sweeney's or Larry Cebula's blog posts. The same is true for digital projects you are going to show and tell, you need to figure out enough of it to talk about it and think about it's implications but there is no expectation for you to master the given tool or digital resource.

Course Blogging

We are not simply going to learn about digital public history in this course, we are also going to do digital public history. That means we need to engage with the public web. To this end, a significant amount of our course communication is going to happen on public blogs you will each set up.

On the first day of class I will show you how to set up/use a wordpress blog. You are expected to post at least 12 times to your course blog. You need to put up a post for each of your assignments and you need to post weekly pieces reacting to/engaging with the readings and resources we explore as a class.

These are blog posts, and as such they should not be written like term papers. Part of the goal of this assignment is to become familiar with the genre and format of thoughtful blogging. You need to get in, say something interesting, synthesize some thoughts and get out. Ideally briefly summarizing/explaining/showing what the readings or tools say or do, commenting on them or otherwise offering some new insights you think you can add, and then ending with an invitation to discussion. You should think of your posts as mixing the features of a well-composed academic book review and the well conceived blog post. Read this for a sense of the features of an academic book review. For notes on how to write blog posts see this post. Posts for a given week must be on the web at least four days before class (yes, if you want you can post it at 11:59 PM on that day).

Do not assume your reader has detailed knowledge of the things you are writing about. One of the goals of the blog is to invite interested third parties into a conversation with our course. If we are doing this right you can expect comments and dialog with historians, humanists, librarians, archivists, curators, and bloggers who are not participating in the course as students but who are participating in the public conversation we initiate through the blog.

Your identity and the blog

As part of a public history course it is important that these are actually public blogs. So, the first considerations is going to be personal identity. While this is a practical matter it is also, very directly, part of the subject matter of the course. I would encourage you to blog with your real name, it is a good idea for you to start building a web presence for yourself. It has even been suggested that in the emerging interdisciplinary field of digital humanities you can either "be online or be irrelevant." With that said, many people have good reasons not to use their real names on the web. With that in mind, if you are uncomfortable with sharing your name publicly, you should feel free to use a pseudonym or a handle. If there is a reason that you do not want to share your work on the web please send me an email or meet with me after class. I feel that this public dialog is an important course goal, but I will of course understand and accommodate

anyone that needs a different arrangement. If at the end of the course you would like to continue blogging I will be happy to show you how we can pull all your posts out and into a new blog of your own. We will talk about this identity decision on the first class day.

Keep the conversation going

Posting is not the end of the assignment. After posting you need to foster the discussion you are initiating. When people comment you need to give substantive responses. Try to engage everyone who comments in some fashion and try to use the comments to sustain a conversation you began at the end of your post. Do not hesitate to ask if you would like help with this process or want any advice about how to keep the conversation going.

Commenting is also an assignment

Beyond posting you are expected to contribute substantive comments to a minimum of 12 of your peers' posts. Your comments should extend and contribute to the conversation. Good comments are an important genre unto themselves. Profhacker's guidelines for comments for a sense of the kind of comment ecosystem we are trying to produce. Along with that, see this piece on how to write a great blog comment for some suggestions on the format for comments. Comment early so that others have a chance to read them.

The course blogs are the required reading we write ourselves

Beyond posting and commenting everyone needs to read everything on the blog before class each week. This is the part of the course readings that we write ourselves and in all honesty this is the most important springboard for our in-class discussions. The blogs extend the function of classroom and it is essential that everyone follow and participate in it.

Class One: 5/19 (5/21) **Defining Digital History**
Class Two: 5/26 (5/28) **Digital Archives**
Class Three: 6/2 (6/4) **Online Exhibits**
Class Four: 6/9 (6/11) **The Participatory Web**
Class Five 6/16 (6/18) **Mobile Media**
Class Six: 6/23 (6/25) **Games and Learning**

1. Gee. (2007). What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy.
2. Brown. (2006). Communicating Design: Developing Web Site Documentation for Design and Planning. Note: Be sure you buy the 2006 edition. The 2010 edition is structurally a completely different book and the way the 2006 version is put together as steps in a process is part of the whole point of reading it.
3. Rinehart & Ippolito. (2014). Re-collection: Art, New Media, and Social Memory

1. Defining digital history & public history (week One):
This week is largely about defining digital history and its relationship to public history and the digital humanities. It's also about what the stakes in all this are. Across all of the readings consider both the arguments and the genre of writing they are being presented in. Format and genre are critical components of our work this semester and the differences between blogging, books and articles are as much on the table for discussion as the points in these pieces.

PhillaPlace is an example of the kind of projects folks are creating in digital public history and Wordle is here as a kind of toy for starting to think about visualizing texts and the possibility of visualization as a mode of public history communication.

Readings:
1. Cohen & Rosenzweig, *Digital History*, Introduction, Ch. 1
2. Robertson, 'The Differences Between Digital History and Digital Humanities',
3. Spiro, Getting Started in the Digital Humanities
4. Onion, Snapshots of History: Wildly popular accounts like @HistoryInPics are bad for history, bad for Twitter, and bad for you.
5. Guldi & Armitage, *The History Manifesto* Introduction (p. 1-14) and on chapter 4 big questions big data (p. 88-117)

Sites & Tools:
a) PhilaPlace
b) HistoryPin
c) Wordle:.it can work well with speeches

Assignment One: Create your course blog on Wordpress.com. Chose a title, create an about page and pick a theme. This is where you will post all of our course work for the term. Once you have created your course blog email a link to the instructor (trevor.johnowens@gmail.com) so that it can be shared with the class.

2. What are digital archives and what do they have to do with the public (week two):
Public historians and other humanists have been exuberant about the possibility of providing broad public access to primary source documents and the contents of archives. In this context, the use of the term "digital archive" has become a bit fraught. This week we figure out what different folks mean by the term in different situations and explore some exemplars of different notions of digital archives and their potential as modes of public history work.

Readings:
1. Owens, What do you mean by archive
2. McGann, The Rationale of HyperText
3. Theimer, Archives in Context and As Context and A Distinction worth Exploring: "Archives" and "Digital Historical Representations"
4. Bailey, Disrespect des Fonds: Rethinking Arrangement and Description in Born-Digital Archives
5. Schmidt & Ardam, On Excess: Susan Sontag's Born-Digital Archive
6. Phillips, Close Reading, Distant Reading: Should Archival Appraisal Adjust?

Example Digital Archives and Tools:
a) Omeka
b) September 11th Digital Archive,
c) Bracero Archive
d) The Shelley-Godwin Archive
e) Rossetti Archive

Assignment Two: Sign up for Omeka.net and create an online collection that includes an online collection of a series of digitized images. Come up with a topic or theme and either digitize some images for it, or draw from already digitized online collections of materials.

3. Digital exhibition, hypermedia narrative (week 10, April 2nd):

What does it mean to collect and exhibit/present/interpret digital objects? This week we explore this issue across new media art, source code and digitized materials.

Readings

1. Ippolito & Reinheart. *Re-collection: Art, New Media, and Social Memory* (focus on the chapter on social memory and on their suggestions at the end.)
2. Brennan, "Getting to the Stuff: Digital Cultural Heritage Collections, Absence, and Memory,"
3. Espenschied, Big Data, Little Narration
4. Sherret, Conversations with Collections
5. Lubar, Museum Bots: An Appreciation
6. Chan & Cope Collecting the present: digital code and collections
7. Owens, A Draft Style Guide for Digital Collection Hypertexts

Assignment Three: Add an exhibit to the Omeka collection you created last week. Try to create some kind of thematic framework for the site.

4. The Web: Participatory? Collaborative? Exploitive? (Week 4):
In public history we work to connect audiences and publics with the past. In this vein, the participatory and collaborative rhetoric that surrounds the web fits many of the values of public historians like a glove. This weeks readings explore issues around crowdsourcing and public participation in history on the web. This includes both the potential to connect with the missions and values of cultural heritage institutions and opens questions about what constitutes participation and what becomes exploitive.

Watch in Class: The Machine is Us/ing Us

Readings:
1. Rosenzweig, Can History be Open Source? Wikipedia and the Future of the Past
2. Ford, Why Wasn't I Consulted: The Web as A Customer Service Medium
3. Causer & Wallace, "Building a Volunteer Community; Results and Findings from *Transcribe Bentham*,"
4. Edson, Dark Matter: The dark matter of the Internet is open, social, peer-to-peer and read/write—and it's the future of museums

Assignment Four: Attempt to contribute to or to create a Wikipedia page on a historical topic. To do this, create a Wikipedia account, review topics you might contribute to or create, and follow some of the online guidance on how to go about contributing.

5. Mobile media, place & mapping in public history (week 5)
Increasingly, the screens people are turning their attention to are in their hands and their pockets. In this vein, there is tremendous potential for mobile media and mobile media has a direct and clear connection to place and location. There are projects like the Museum from Mainstreet app and the Will to Adorn app that try to enable participatory collecting, projects like Histories of the National Mall that work to situate events in historic sites. This week we look at these, and related projects, and read *Mobile Interface Theory: Embodied Space and Locative Media* to add a theoretical layer/framework for thinking about this work. We haven't talked about maps and place in general yet either, so we will also consider the "spatial turn" as one of the ongoing developments and areas of interest in digital history scholarship.

Readings:
1. Tebeau, Listening to the City: Oral History and Place in the Digital Era

2. Guldi, "What is the Spatial Turn?" and the Spatial Turn in History
3. Leon, Brennan, Lester Mobile For Museums
4. Durington & Collins, New App City
5. Russick, A Place For Everything Museum Collections, Technology, and the Power of Place

Practicums:
a) Mall History
b) ARIS Games
c) HistoryPin
d) Museum from Mainstreet App
e) Will to Adorn App

Assignment Five: Find some set of historical images and create and pin them in HistoryPin. Consider creating a tour, or use the repeats function to try and get a current picture of the historical place. If you need help finding historical photos, do some searches in the Library of Congress for photos.

6. Playing the Past: Videogames, Interactivity & Action (week 13, April 23rd):
Videogames have rapidly become potent media for communicating ideas about the past. Historians, librarians and archivists have begun creating games and a range of interactive transmedia modes of communicating about the past. At the same time, many very successful commercial games, like Sid Mier's *Civilization*, *SimCity* or *Assassin's Creed* have invited a generation of players to enact or replay models of the past. In this session we will spend half of the class discussing Gee's book, which will help us unpack a range of ways to think about games and learning and how to read games and the other half discussing how ideas are represented and enacted in games that are specifically about the past.

Readings:
1. Gee, *What Videogames Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*
2. Mir & Owens, Modeling Indigenous Peoples: Unpacking Ideology in Sid Meier's Colonization
3. WNET, Mission America Online Games about American History (this is a grant proposal, you should also read the NEH Digital Programs for the Public grant guidelines for context)

Practicums:
a) Playing and reading Argument Wars :
b) Playing and reading 1066 :
c) Playing and reading Jamestown Adventure :
d) Playing and reading Cotton Millionaire: