

HIST 390: The Digital Past¹
Tuesday-Thursday 9:00-10:15am EST
Spring 2024
Horizon Hall Room 2017
Professor Laura Brannan Fretwell (she/her)

Contact:

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:15am-11:15am in Horizon Hall 3220*. If you cannot make these times, please reach out to schedule a separate time to meet over Zoom. (*Note Horizon Hall 3220 is the History Department's TA/Adjunct suite on the third floor of Horizon Hall. It can be tricky to find-you have to go through the kitchen- so please send me a direct message in Slack if you arrive and can't find me.)

Email: lbranna@gmu.edu or direct message in the class Slack. Please allow up to 24 hours for me to respond on weekdays or 48 hours on weekends. Send a follow up message if you do not hear from me within that window.

Course Description:

In this course, which satisfies the University's Information Technology and Computing (IT) requirement, students will learn how to use digital tools to study the past. This section will focus on urban histories of the modern-era in the United States and Western Europe with an emphasis on city planning and postwar issues of migration and citizenship. Students will learn the fundamentals of information technology and apply them to practical historical problems. Using a variety of digital tools for analysis and visualization, including Omeka, Tropy and various mapping technologies, students will learn how to engage with primary sources and put them into conversation with secondary sources to make historical arguments presented on the web. The course will foster collaboration skills through hosting international speakers (via Zoom in a hybrid format) and facilitate exchange between students through a series of small group digital history projects, helping students gain valuable skills of teamwork, historical thinking, and digital literacy.

This course fulfills the Mason Core IT requirement and meets the following learning outcomes:

1. Students will understand the principles of information storage, exchange, security, and privacy, and be aware of related ethical issues.

¹ This syllabus is indebted to the syllabi of Dr. Mills Kelly, Dr. Abby Mullen, Dr. Amanda Madden, Dr. Jessica Mack, and Dr. Greta Swain.

2. Students will become critical consumers of digital information they will be capable of selecting and evaluating appropriate, relevant, and trustworthy sources of information.
3. Students can use appropriate information and computing technologies to organize and analyze information and use it to guide decision making.
4. Students will be able to choose and apply appropriate algorithmic methods to solve a problem.

In addition to the above outcomes, this course will meet the following learning outcomes:

1. Students will work together collaboratively and learn the function, process, and types of challenges/benefits to working on collaborative digital history projects.
2. Students will also understand how to properly use digital tools and search in digital databases for historical research. They will form a foundation of how to critique systems of data and metadata.
3. Students will learn historical analysis and make arguments using primary and secondary sources. They will draw on the tools and methods to make argument-driven, multimedia historical essays.
4. Students will be introduced to the field of digital history and digital humanities. Students will also be introduced to the methods and challenges of the digital public historian.

We will have one section that consists of five joint sessions with students from the University of Luxembourg from the course Introduction to Spatial Studies and Digital Methods for the Humanities, which fulfills the European Culture and Society requirement. Eliane Schmid, MA, is the instructor of record and is a PhD student at the University of Luxembourg's Centre for Contemporary and Digital History. Eliane's PhD project, centering on the development of public parks and playgrounds during the Postwar period (1945-1973), combines history of public urban green spaces (PUGS) and GIS (Geographic Information Systems). We will have other international guest speakers join us, such as Dr. Tugce Karatas and Dr. Antia Lucchesi from the University of Luxembourg.

Course Policies:

General Policies

- The instructor reserves the right to modify the course schedule or assignments as the course progresses, and this syllabus may be updated online as necessary, and in response to the classes' needs. The online version of this syllabus is the only authoritative version:

<https://laurabrannanfretwell.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/DH-390-04-GMU-2024.pdf>.

- See the George Mason University catalog for general GMU course policies.

Communication

This course will primarily use a platform called Slack for class communication. While I welcome all questions on class projects and assignments, it is my hope that Slack will be a useful tool for students to communicate with and solicit advice from each other as well. For questions about assignments, the course schedule or resources, use the #general channel. To discuss technical problems and offer help and suggestions to each other, use the #tech-help channel. I expect most discussions to take place in these public channels. Questions about grades or problems of a personal nature should be addressed in a private email, or discussed with me during office hours.

It is also very important to note that I DON'T USE BLACKBOARD. Why is that, you might ask? I have two reasons. The first is that BB imposes a style of pedagogy on professors that makes sense to BB's software developers but not to me. Second, when you graduate from Mason, you will never, ever use BB again unless you become a teacher or someone who uses one of BB's point of sale systems. By contrast, you might just find yourself using Slack (or BitBucket, Trello, or any of the other similar platforms out there). The one thing Slack can't do that BB can is provide an online gradebook. If you want to know what your grade is at any point in the course, you can ask me and I'll tell you within 24 hours.

Technology

This is a class about using digital technology, and thus requires the use of a computer and other online tools. All assignments in this course will be submitted electronically. During class, please use your devices for course work and class communication only. Do not use your devices for texting, checking email, browsing social media or handling personal affairs. One of the goals of this course is to learn how to be respectful producers and consumers of digital content, and the way we utilize technology in the classroom is part of that.

Late Work

Due to the condensed nature of this class, we will be moving through materials and assignments at a rapid pace. It is therefore imperative that you keep on top of the readings and turn in assignments on time. In that vein, no unexcused late work will be

accepted. If extenuating circumstances arise, please let me know via email. Any alternate arrangements must be agreed upon by the instructor and student before an assignment is due.

Medical and Other Excuses: Every semester someone is forced to miss a due date for an assignment as the result of an illness or due to a personal or family emergency. This is especially true now due to Covid-19. If you are sick and are falling behind, just let me know and we'll work out a catch-up schedule. If you miss a required due date for an assignment, I'll eventually need some documentation – note from a doctor, etc. First, though, get well. Then worry about the documentation.

COVID Addendum: Students are asked to follow the GMU Safe Return to Campus guidelines and any university-wide changes to those policies over the semester. See www.gmu.edu/safe-return-campus for details. Please stay home if you are sick and test if you experience COVID-19 symptoms during the semester. **Do not attend class if you have a positive test result.** The university does not enforce a mask mandate but you are encouraged to maintain safe practices, including masking and social distancing especially if you are feeling minor medical symptoms such as a cold.

Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to follow the GMU Honor Code found here: oai.gmu.edu/full-honor-code-document/. Cheating and plagiarism, including but not limited to submitting work done by another student, copying or stealing ideas without proper citation or attribution, and using AI generated responses to complete assignments are all strictly forbidden and will result in a failing grade for the assignment or class.

George Mason University has an Honor Code, oai.gmu.edu/full-honor-code-document/, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Office for Academic Integrity.

Unless otherwise specified you should work on your own assignments. When you rely on someone else's work, you should give full credit in the proper form.

Plagiarism consists of presenting the writing, research, or analysis of others as one's own, and is not acceptable in any form. Any text, information, analysis, ideas, or opinions from someone else that are presented in your own work—whether paraphrased or copied verbatim—must be properly attributed to its author and source and cited in a footnote, endnote, or bibliography. Direct quotes must be inside quotation marks or offset as a block quote. Paraphrased text must have been substantially altered

in word choice, order, and sentence structure. When in doubt, please ask for guidance and clarification. Any instance of plagiarism will result in, at minimum, the student receiving a grade of 0 on the assignment, and the student will not be given the opportunity to redo the assignment.

Our in-class conduct and discussion will also be guided by the principles of academic integrity. In order to learn, we must be open to the views of people different from ourselves. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility toward others who have different ideas, perspectives, and traditions than your own. Please refrain from personal attacks or demeaning comments of any kind. See the George Mason University statement on diversity:

<https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/purpose-and-mission/mason-diversity-statement/>.

Non-Discrimination Policy:

George Mason University enforces a non-discrimination policy to provide “equal opportunity and an educational and work environment free from any discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, military status (including veteran status), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, pregnancy status or genetic information.” For more information see universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/non-discrimination-policy.

This class will cover some topics that include historical and contemporary forms of discrimination. In order to maintain an inclusive class setting, students are expected to treat these topics respectfully and acknowledge that fellow students in the class may have lived experiences impacted by these forms of discrimination.

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 <https://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

Other Services:

Student Support and Advocacy Center: 703-993-3686 <https://ssac.gmu.edu>

Counseling and Psychological Services Offices: 703-993-2380 www.caps.gmu.edu

Crisis Support: 703-993-2380 <https://caps.gmu.edu/crisis-consultation/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255

Mason Sexual and Intimate Partner Violence Crisis Line: 703-380-1434
 The Steve Fund (for students of color): Text STEVE to 741741
 Trans Lifeline (for the trans community): 877-565-8860
 The Trevor Project's TrevorLifeline (for LGBTQ+ students): 866-488-7386
 Veterans Crisis Line (for Veterans): 800-273-8255, Press 1
 Title IX Office: 703-993-8730 titleix@gmu.edu
diversity.gmu.edu/equity-access-services/title-ix
 GMU Police and Public Safety: 703-993-2810 <https://police.gmu.edu/>

Required Purchases/Reading: One of the things we will be focusing on for this course is open access software and resources. You do not need to buy a textbook for this course; all readings will be posted on Blackboard. You will need to purchase a Reclaim Hosting account here for use with many of your course assignments and set up your own domain name account, which is a total \$30: <https://reclaimhosting.com/>.

Assignments and Assessments:

Participation: This includes 1) attendance and active participation in class discussions and exercises (10%), 2) posting in Slack #reading channel 3 times over the course of the semester (5%), and 3) completion of digital tasks before, during, and after class (5%). I understand not everyone is comfortable speaking up during class, so if you feel that way, let me know and we can devise a plan of participating in other informal ways such as attending office hours or posting more in the #reading channel. 5% of the participation grade is posting 3 times in slack (a minimum of 5 sentences) before 3 class periods about the **readings**. You can describe what you learned from the assigned texts and/or use the texts to answer the question posed for each day in the syllabus. You must post that day by 8am. The **digital tasks** are designed to help you either set up, try out, and practice a new technology that builds towards developing a particular digital skill, and will only be graded based on completion. **Attendance** is mandatory for every class session, with the exceptions of two unexcused absences. Family, life, and medical emergencies are excused, but if these occur often, I will let you know if I require documentation. Please contact me in advance via email if you must be absent. Because the class is so hands-on and practical, you are expected to catch up on the content learned during the class session you missed and expected to catch up on the digital tasks required before the class on your own time. (20%)

WordPress: You will be expected to establish a domain via ReclaimHosting and execute a few technical tasks such as install a WordPress website and post a number of short blog posts. You must post these updates in the beginning of the semester in the #WordPress Slack channel. Blog posts should be written with the same attention to

detail (spelling, syntax, punctuation) that you would use in a paper, but can be more casual in tone and approach (10% Total).

Digital History Assignments: You will publish two digital history assignments as blog posts, one due February 22 and the second due April 11. I will circulate technical details about those assignments closer to the due dates. (25% Total)

Omeka S group project with University of Luxembourg students: This is included in class time built around working together in a hybrid format zooming in with students, but will also require tasks both before and after class as well as attending all class sessions. This is all based on completion but includes completing a small project in Omeka S with University of Luxembourg students and writing one blog post about your experience and what you learned about Omeka S by April 2nd by 9am (2-3 paragraphs). (15% total)

Final Project Research Project: More details will be provided later in the semester, but you will research and conduct a written project about a specific historical place or event using Omeka S. (30% Total - 5% proposal due April 16, 25% final product due May 1 at 11:59 EST).

Important Dates

January 23 – Last day to add classes

January 30 – Last day to drop classes without penalty

February 22 – First Digital History Assignment due by midnight (post link in Slack)

April 11 – Second Digital History Assignment due by midnight (post link in Slack)

April 16 - Final Project Proposal due by midnight (post link in Slack)

April 25 - Last day of class.

May 1 – Final project due May 1 at 11:59PM EST. Projects submitted after this deadline without a documented medical (or similarly severe) excuse will suffer a substantial grade penalty. No exceptions.

Section 1: Introduction to Digital History and Historical Research on the Web

Week 1: Introduction to Digital History

Tuesday January 16 - Class Canceled due to University Delay from Inclement Weather

Thursday January 18 - Class Introduction; What is Digital History?

Task before class: Fill out class GoogleForm Survey -
<https://forms.gle/X3HDXJBmTHkqENzn9>

Task before class: Set up Slack account at thedigitalpast2024.slack.com and introduce yourself in #general channel. Here is a link of how to join a workspace -
<https://slack.com/help/articles/212675257-Join-a-Slack-workspace>.

Read: Jason Heppler's blog post "Defining Digital Humanities"
<https://jasonheppler.org/2013/01/08/defining-digital-humanities/>

Visit: <https://whatisdigitalhumanities.com/> and select a definition that you find interesting and be ready to share in class why that definition appealed to you.

Week 2: How the Internet Works and its Ethics

Tuesday January 23 - How does the internet work? How is it structured?

Read: CERN, A Short History of the Web

<https://home.cern/science/computing/birth-web/short-history-web>

Watch: "[Hypertext Pioneers](#)"

Task before class: Go to <https://www.reclaimhosting.com/>, buy your domain (\$30 student plan). Watch this video from Professor Abigail Mullen on how to set up your site on Reclaim Hosting and WordPress site-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWkEuyoZuwk>. Post the link to your wordpress website in the #WordPress Slack channel.

In-class: Walk through backend of WordPress and how to create a blog post.

Thursday January 25 - Search Engines: How do they work and what are its ethics?

Watch: Cathy O'Neill, The Truth About Algorithms,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=heQzqX35c9A>

Read: Safiya Umoja Noble, Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism, Introduction (pp. 1-14),

<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.mutex.gmu.edu/lib/gmu/reader.action?docID=4834260&ppg=20>

Task before class: Choose a theme for your WordPress site. Publish a draft blog post introducing yourself and post it in the #WordPress Slack channel before class.

In-class exercise: Google searches

Week 3: Historical Research: Between the Analog and the Digital

Tuesday January 30 - Analog History: What is a primary source and secondary source?

Read: Ian Milligan, "Introduction" and "Libraries and Databases" in *The Transformation of Historical Research in the Digital Age*, pgs. 1-29 (stop at the end of section 2.7)

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/elements/transformation-of-historical-research-in-the-digital-age/30DFBEAA3B753370946B7A98045CFEF4>

Watch: Watch: Using the Library Catalog,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldyWYA-qH_I

Task before class: Continue work on your WordPress website by customizing the theme and adding to your first blog post (100-150 words introducing yourself and either describing what you hope to gain from this class and/or what you have already gained from class. For example, what kinds of issues, questions, ideas, and skills you have begun to ask from the first few class meetings). Post a link of the final published blog post in the #word-press channel by class.

Task before class: Download Zotero (<https://www.zotero.org/download/>). Bonus points if you also download the Install Browser Connector!

Thursday February 1 - How do we find sources online? What are the implications to using search engines?

Read: Ian Milligan, "Archives and Access" in *The Transformation of Historical Research in the Digital Age*, pgs. 29-44, (stop at the end of section 3.3)

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/elements/transformation-of-historical-research-in-the-digital-age/30DFBEAA3B753370946B7A98045CFEF4>

Watch: Using the Library's Journal Databases,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzsU_SVGKv4

Task before class: Try searching for a journal article in the Library's database that sounds interesting to you, and post the URL in slack.

In-Class exercise: Saving Zotero articles

Week 4: Using Technology to Manage Digital Sources and Historical Data

Tuesday February 6 - How does digital technology help historical research?

Read: Tropy Documentation. What is Tropy? <https://docs.tropy.org/>, Tropy Basics
<https://docs.tropy.org/before-you-begin/before-you-begin>

Watch: Getting Started in Tropy, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqTkI49JUDA>

Task before class: Download Tropy, <https://tropy.org/>.

In-Class exercise: Walk through Tropy, Introduction to Metadata

Thursday February 8 - What are some of the ethical issues involved in using and managing data? What about historical data?

Read: Hannes Grasseger & Michael Krogerus, "The Data that Turned the World Upside Down: How Cambridge Analytica used your facebook data...."

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/mg9vvn/how-our-likes-helped-trump-win>

Read: Tropy Documentation "Who Owns the Rights to the Archival Materials I Use?" <https://docs.tropy.org/before-you-begin/rights>

Task before class: Search and then submit a screenshot of two primary sources you found online, upload them to Tropy, and fill out at least four fields of metadata for each source.

Week 5: Artificial Intelligence and ChatGPT

Tuesday February 13: ChatGPT: How can you use ChatGPT responsibly and critically in your work and research?

Read: What is ChatGPT and How Does it Work,

<https://www.dummies.com/article/technology/information-technology/ai/general-ai/what-is-chatgpt-298910/>

Task before class: Create a ChatGPT account and ask ChatGPT what it is. Be prepared to share results in class: <https://chat.openai.com/auth/login>

In-class Guest Lecture: Eliane Schmid Using ChatGPT for Your Research

Thursday February 15: Artificial Intelligence: What are the pros and cons to Artificial Intelligence technologies?

Read: "From Punch Cards to ChatGPT,"

<https://towardsdatascience.com/from-punch-cards-to-chatgpt-42c2a09ac01a>

Read: "We Asked A.I. to Create the Joker. It Generated a Copyrighted Image,"

https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/01/25/business/ai-image-generators-openai-microsoft-midjourney-copyright.html?unlocked_article_code=1.U00.M-PJ.3b3kyP3ETK5Z&smid=url-share

Task before class: Take the AI Faces Test (may need to sign into GMU access account or view in "incognito mode") -

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/01/19/technology/artificial-intelligence-image-generators-faces-quiz.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare>

Week 6: Digital Public History: Open Source

Tuesday February 20: What is digital public history? How can digital tools be used to engage more public audiences with history?

Read: "A Guide to Creating a Digital Public History Project," (read all main heading sections: Project Rationale, Technical Infrastructure, Content Development, User Experience, Outreach and Publicity, Challenges, and Measuring Success)

<https://mallhistory.org/Guide/index.html>

Read: "What is Open Source?"

<https://opensource.com/resources/what-open-source>

Task before class: Review two digital public history websites and be prepared to share what you liked/didn't like about them in class. I will share some examples ahead of class.

Section 2: Omeka S and Spatial History with University of Luxembourg students (*hybrid format - we still meet in person but Zoom in with Luxembourg students*)

Thursday February 22: Intro to University of Luxembourg students; Making Data out of Historical information and Omeka S

Task after class: Log into the Omeka S class website

*First Digital History Assignment due by midnight

Week 7: Metadata and Omeka S

Tuesday February 27: What is metadata?

Watch: What is metadata and why does it matter?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZWg0CIQkYQ>

Task before class: log into Omeka S and change your username (with GMU affiliation). Also, review 2 Omeka S websites and be ready to share them in class:

<https://omeka.org/s/directory/>.

Thursday February 29: Guest Speaker Tugce Karatas: Making Data out of Sources

Read: Preserving your data

<https://programminghistorian.org/en/lessons/preserving-your-research-data>

Task before class: Upload an item into Omeka S with 4 properties of metadata (will provide you with source in GoogleSheets here).

GMU Spring Break March 4-10: Enjoy time off!

Week 8: Introduction to Spatial History and Mapping

Tuesday March 12: What is Spatial History?

Read: Richard White, "What is Spatial History,"

<https://web.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/media/images/publication/what%20is%20spatial%20history%20pub%20020110.pdf>

Task before class: Bring a photo of an outdoor public place that you would like to know more historical information about. This can be a current or historical photo but make sure it is a place accessible to the public - such as an outdoor park, neighborhood, a specific street, the outside of a public building (such as a city hall, library, museum), monument, memorial, etc. We will upload it together in class.

Thursday March 14: All-virtual session with University of Luxembourg students. Will email you the Zoom link beforehand.

No reading

Week 9: Omeka S Group Project

Meet with your group for two hours virtually during the week and take a screenshot of your virtual meeting to later include in your post-project reflection blog post.

Tuesday March 19: Class Canceled

Thursday March 21: Class Canceled

Week 10: Spatial History and Gender; Wrap Up Omeka S

Tuesday March 26: (regular meeting in person)- How do different notions of gender and sexuality shape people's experiences of space? What are different ways to digitally represent space?

Read: The Social Construction of Space and Gender (Martina Löw)

Read: Women and urban public space: Research, design and policy issues (K.A. Franck and L. Paxson, PDF attachment in Slack)

Thursday March 28: All-virtual session with University of Luxembourg students to wrap up project in last 30 minutes.

No reading

Task after class: Write a blog post (2-3 paragraphs) about your experience collaborating with University of Luxembourg students and what you learned by using Omeka S. Discuss the challenges and benefits to both the technology and international format. Be sure to include the screenshot of your group's virtual meeting in the post. (due April 2nd at 9am).

Section 3: Wrap Up Digital Public History and Visualizations

Week 11: Wrap up Spatial History and Introduce Narrative Digital History

Tuesday April 2: Podcasts: What are the pros and cons to the method of podcasting for digital history?

Listen: *The Green Tunnel* podcast episodes "Becoming a National Park" <https://www.r2studios.org/show/the-green-tunnel/becoming-a-national-park/> and "Iconic Location: Priest Mountain Shelter"

<https://www.r2studios.org/show/the-green-tunnel/Priest-Mountain-Shelter/>

Omeka S blog post due by 9am.

Thursday April 4: No Class - work on your Second Digital History Assignment (due April 11) and start to think about your final project (proposal due April 16)

Digital task (for extra credit): Submit screenshot in #omekas slack channel of a test timeline from your Luxembourg group project's site (I suggest adding a new page with "your name + timeline test").

Week 12: Computational History and Visualizations

Tuesday April 9: How can you think about history in numbers? What are different ways to visualize historical arguments?

Read: Abby Mullen, "How to Read a Visualization" (PDF in Blackboard)

Watch: David McCandless, The Beauty of Data Visualization,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Zg-C8AAIGg>

In-class exercise with GoogleSheets

Thursday April 11: No Class - Second Digital History Assignment due by midnight (post link in Slack)

*Continue to think about your final project and draft your proposal (due by April 16)

Week 13: Visualizations/Text Analysis

Tuesday April 16: Visualizations Part II

Read: John Theibault, "Visualizations and Historical Arguments," Writing History in the Digital Age,

<https://writinghistory.trincoll.edu/evidence/theibault-2012-spring/>

Task before class: Submit a screenshot in Slack of a test chart/graph you made in GoogleSheets.

*Final Project Proposal Due

*Beginning of last 3 readings to post in #readings channel for participation grade!

Thursday April 18: Text Analysis

Read: Read "Using Voyant: Text Analysis meets Historical Research"

<https://dhlurker.wordpress.com/2015/08/09/using-voyant-text-analysis-meets-historical-research/>

Read "Topic Modeling Martha Ballard's Diary"

<http://www.cameronblevins.org/posts/topic-modeling-martha-ballards-diary/>

Week 14: Wrap Up Week: Work on Final Project & Final Class Discussion

Tuesday April 23: Check in about Final Project

No reading but be ready to share final project updates and report any technical help needed for project

Thursday April 25: Last Day of Class Wrap Up

Listen: "The United States vs. the iPhone," The Daily Podcast, New York Times,

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-united-states-vs-the-iphone/id1200361736?i=1000650472732>

Read: "Finding the intersection of technology and public history"

<https://ncph.org/history-at-work/finding-the-intersection-of-technology-and-public-history/>

Task before class: Write a one paragraph blog in WordPress about what digital history means to you. Also include one main thing you learned this semester. Post the link in the #general Slack.

Week 15: Final Project Due

Tuesday April 30 - Reading Day so no class meeting. But I will be at Horizon Hall 2017 during class and office hours if you need in person consultation about your final.

Wednesday May 1st at 11:59 EST - Final Project Due

Appendix A: Primary and Secondary Source Blog Assignment, DH390-04

This assignment asks you to put to use the techniques you've learned about searching GMU's Library catalog and databases in order to start finding sources about a historical topic you are interested in (Note it should be a *historical* topic—study of a person, event, or subject from the past—not a contemporary topic).

For Thursday, February 22:

- Write a blog post that includes the information requested in the assignment details. See example below. Post it to your website as a blog post.
- Submit the URL of your post via Slack by midnight of Thursday February 22.

Assignment details

1. Using GMU's [library catalog](#), [databases](#), JSTOR, and other online resources, find primary and secondary sources about a historical topic of interest. Remember that a historical topic means a specific event, person, or problem that occurred in the past. Some non-GMU databases you can use to find primary sources include: Library of Congress' [Chronicling America](#) (newspapers), Library of Congress' [Print and Photographs Catalog](#), and the [Digital Public Library of America](#). Overall, make sure to find:
 - Two secondary sources (one book, one journal article)
 - Three primary sources (from at least two different collections)
2. For each item include:
 - The correct citation information according to the [Chicago Manual of Style](#). See [here](#) how Zotero can help you with correct citations if you are interested.
 - 2-4 sentence summary of each source and its argument. (For secondary sources books and articles, you can find this out by reading the introduction, abstract, and/or conclusion. For primary sources, explain what the source is about and what one might learn from the source in relation to the historical topic under study.)
 - i. For primary sources only, use Tropy to track the sources' metadata, including the archive and database (collection) name. In the blog post, ensure there is some way I can read and see the source in your Tropy workspace either by exporting a PDF of your sources and attaching it at the end of your blog post with a caption or submit screenshots of each item in Tropy (with captions) throughout the blog post.
3. In a final reflection section, explain in 300 words or less: What did you learn from reading these sources? What did you learn about looking for sources and the reliability of sources found online?

4. Bonus points if you include secondary sources in your Zotero library. You can include a link in your blog post to your public Zotero library (follow directions for "[Making Your Library Public](#)"). Extra bonus points if use both Zotero and Tropy for all sources.

Example Post

Topic: Women in America During the Revolution

Source #1

Zagarri, Rosemarie. *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic*. Early American Studies. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc, 2011.

2-4 sentence summary of book and its argument.

...

Source #5 (from America's Historical Imprints)

Goldthwait, Martha, 1764-1839. "For Sale, at Miss Goldthwait's Shop, No. 18, Cornhill, a Beautiful Assortment of Brocades ...," *Early American Imprints*, Series 1, no. 45771 (1782).

https://wrlc-gm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GML/19u1omk/cdi_gale_digitalcollections_CB0127197194.

Tropy PDF exported of sources or screenshot of primary source in Tropy (including caption)

Summary of primary source explaining what the source is about and what one might learn from the source in regard to women in early America.

Reflection:

Final paragraph of 300 words or less reflecting on what you learned from these sources and from searching for them online.

Bonus Section (If Applicable):

Zotero Library Link: <https://www.zotero.org/myname>

Appendix B: Omeka S Group Project, in collaboration with George Mason University and University of Luxembourg, Spring 2024

Assignment purpose and evaluation

This group project allows students to work together collaboratively and learn the function, process, and types of challenges and benefits of working on digital history projects with people living in different countries. Students will collaborate with each other through meeting virtually for 2 hours during the week of March 18th with an additional 30 minutes to wrap up on March 28th, and by working together in Omeka S, an open-source digital platform built for collaboration.

This assignment is evaluated based on completion, including the creation of an Omeka S page (see details below), participating in all group meetings, and reflecting on the process (GMU students will write a blog post by April 2nd while UniLux students will present about their experience in class on March 28th).

Assignment details

By Thursday, March 28th:

- In collaboration with your assigned group, create a page in Omeka S that explores a historical topic related to the images of an outdoor public space that you uploaded using the “Spatial History Project” resource template. You can either create a page about one specific location and its development over time (which may require you to add more items to the site), or select a theme that connects several of the images already added (i.e. gender and space, public spaces in Europe, national parks in the United States, different park designs over time, etc.).
- The page should include a minimum of 1 item uploaded per person (with appropriate metadata fields) and at least two elements, otherwise known as page blocks: one HTML box with text describing your project and one image-based block. The different options for adding [page blocks](#) appear when you edit a new page and include examples such as [HTML](#), [item showcase](#), [browse preview](#), or utilize the [mapping and timeline](#) modules.
 - Consider audience, user navigation, and visual appeal when planning the design of the page. Creating a draft page plan in a shared GoogleDoc would be a helpful starting point to share ideas about how to best develop content and organize information.
 - Let us know if you have questions in the #omekas slack channel. If in doubt, consult the Omeka S [user manual](#), especially the [editing pages](#) section.

Assignment schedule

- Week #1: Meet briefly as a group during the hybrid/all-virtual class on Thursday March 14th, where you introduce yourself and begin to discuss ideas for the project.

Communicate in Slack to agree on a two hour meeting time during the next week of March 18th. One group member will need to set up and send out a Zoom or Webex link.

- Week #2: (For this week, all GMU and UniLu class sessions are canceled). Meet as a group virtually for two hours during the week of March 18th. Be sure to take a screenshot of the group's virtual meeting to share with us in your post-project reflections!
- Week #3: The group will meet virtually for 30 minutes during class on Thursday March 28th to wrap up and finalize the project.
- Week #3/4: Post-project reflections and/or presentations will occur separately within each institution in person. Specifically:
 - GMU students will submit a blog post discussing the challenges and benefits to using Omeka S and collaborating internationally by Tuesday April 2nd. Please include the screenshot of your group's virtual meeting in the post.
 - UniLu will present their group project and experience on Thursday March 28th.

Appendix C: Digital History Project Review Assignment, DH 390-04

In the “Spatial History” section of the course, we have discussed the concept of spatial history and how space can be represented digitally in different ways. The goal of the assignment is to allow you to reflect on these discussions and to continue to develop skills in being a critical consumer of digital information and analyzing primary and secondary sources. Practicing these skills will help you make argument-driven, multimedia historical essays of your own in the future.

For Thursday, April 11th:

- Write a review of a digital history project that incorporates spatial history from one of the websites listed below. If you want to review a website not included on the list, you must email me a request by Monday April 9th at midnight.
- You will be evaluated by fulfilling the assignment details. Post it to your website as a blog post. Submit the URL of your post to Slack in #assignments channel by 11:59 EST of Thursday April 11.

Assignment details

1. Write an essay (700-1,000 words) that evaluates one of the listed digital history projects related to spatial history.
2. Summarize *and* analyze different aspects of the site. Address the following four areas of evaluation:
 - a. Content: describe what the project is, who made it, what sources and data they use, and their means of presenting that data.
 - b. User experience and audience: Does the site design and structure make it easy for a user to navigate through the site?
 - i. Audience: Is the project directed at a clear audience? How well does the project address the needs of that audience?
 - c. Spatial History: Examine how the site engages with our class discussions of spatial history (think beyond maps). Discuss how the website represents different experiences of space. What sort of identities does the site capture or not capture in terms of gender, race, sexuality, and/or a combination thereof? How does it show that maps are not neutral? (Bonus points if you cite an assigned class reading substantially here).
 - d. Contribution: Describe the historical contribution the website makes- does it tell us anything new or different about a historical topic? What are the ways that the website does something that could not be done in other media?

- i. Strengths/Weaknesses: What do you see as the most successful component to the site? What are the major weaknesses?
3. You can select one of the following websites:

Artists in Paris,

<https://www.artistsinparis.org/#@264311.0516644725.6249933.044492344&z=13.00&y=1726&g=s.hp.p.gp.l.slp.e.o>

Digital Harlem, <http://digitalharlem.org/>

Enchanting the Desert, <http://enchantingthedesert.com/home/>

Geography of the Post, <https://cameronblevins.org/gotp/>

Minett Stories, <https://minett-stories.lu/en/stories/voronoj>

Mapping Inequality, <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/>

Mapping the University, <https://mappingtheuniversity.rchnm.org/>

Mapping the Gay Guides, <https://www.mappingthegayguides.org/>

Mapping Women's Suffrage 1911,
<https://www.mappingwomenssuffrage.org.uk/about-the-project>

New Orleans Historical, <https://neworleanshistorical.org/>

Photogrammar, <https://www.photogrammar.org/maps>

The Spread of U.S. Slavery, <https://lincolnmullen.com/projects/slavery/>

Proposal due in Blackboard by 11:59 EST, Tuesday April 16

The major goals of the course was to teach you how to be a critical consumer of information technology, especially in researching and finding trustworthy sources of information and using algorithmic methods to organize and analyze information to guide decision making. You also learned about historical analysis and how to make arguments using primary and secondary sources. This final project will allow you to use what you've learned to create a final product.

For this project, you will create an exhibit in Omeka S that showcases your own research and analysis about a historical topic. You should clearly communicate that your project adds something new or different to historians' typical understanding of that historical topic. Note a *historical* topic is a study of a person, event, or subject from the past—NOT a contemporary topic, which is a topic relevant only in our present moment. For example, if you want to study a person, they should no longer be living.

All the claims you make in this exhibit should be supported with properly attributed evidence. You can use parenthetical in-text citation (Last name of author, page number). Use [Chicago](#) style format for the bibliography on the last page.

You need to send me (via email) a final project proposal by midnight on April 16th. This proposal can be brief, but must contain the following elements:

1. Your selected historical topic.
2. A brief outline or idea of how you plan to organize the entire project and an idea of what argument you hope to make about that topic.
3. Your proposed visualization(s) for the project.
4. At least one online database you plan to use to look for primary sources, and at least one specific secondary source (book or article) you plan to use to help you answer your questions and make your argument. This list should use the [Chicago citation](#) style.
5. If it is a group project, state who the 2-3 members are. You must include a breakdown of the labor each member plans to take on. (You are not tied to this division of labor but it will be a useful starting point for your group).

I will provide feedback about your proposal and then you can go ahead with working on the project. We will check in together in class on Tuesday April 23rd. Be prepared to informally share what your project is and a report on its status.

By 11:59 EST Wednesday May 1st each project should include:

1. **One website in Omeka S, with at least 3 pages that showcases your research project.** 1 welcome/landing page that can include your name, title, and introduction paragraph, at least 1 page that includes the content/main argument section with corresponding visualizations and images, and 1 final page that includes both a methods section (paragraph describing why you made the choices you did in terms of finding

trustworthy sources of information and creating the specific visualization) and bibliography (should be in Chicago format). I will create a site for everyone and assign them as manager of that site, even though you will have editor level privileges for the class installation. If you form a group, let me know and I will change the settings accordingly.

Within that Omeka S site, each person should add:

2. **4-6 primary source items that contribute to your argument**, such as newspaper articles, photographs, memoirs, books published/written during the period under study, artwork, videos, songs, etc. Each item should have properly filled out metadata that relates to their citational information (rights is a required field!). (You can use sources you have already used for past assignments, but if so, scale them up slightly. For example, add another metadata field or add a caption to the item image on the page). You do not have to include all items on your site's pages, but if you would like to, an easy block to add is "item showcase."
3. **At least one visualization with explanatory text about how it helps your project's argument.** It must be a visualization you make, not a visualization you find elsewhere and use. Examples include either using the mapping block, timeline exhibit block, and/or embedding a graph/chart from Google Sheets in the HTML block as source code. If you choose the mapping block, you must substantially modify the visualization in one way (such as changing the zoom-level for the map or editing the marker icon). Describe why you made that specific visualization in the way you did in the methods section of the last page.
4. **One technical advanced level of your Omeka site that adjusts the design** in an attempt to account for easier user experience such as changing/modifying the theme setting, adding item breaks, section headings, and/or adding an item showcase/browse preview section on one of the pages. Describe this part in the methods section.
5. Your site should include enough text that a visitor can make sense of the argument you are making, the content you are presenting (and why), and how the work you have done contributes a new understanding of the topic. So, there is no hard minimum word count but at least 500 words describing your argument and analysis of the sources on the main content page should suffice. The written portion will be graded so make sure to write clearly, spell check, and have topic sentences at the start of each paragraph.

Note: If this is a group project, the group's total work will be one Omeka S website, and each person is responsible for one exhibit within the site. So, the website should have 4-6 items per person, 1 visualization per person, and 1 technical Omeka adjustment for design per person. All group members will then contribute to the introductory text and final page with methods and bibliography. Each group member must also fill out a separate participation evaluation form.

An IMPORTANT tip is to draft and SAVE your text on a separate Word Doc/Google Doc locally saved on your device elsewhere. Omeka S will not recover any deleted page so it is important to always have a copy saved elsewhere!

You should all submit the URL link via Blackboard to your Omeka S page before/by the deadline of May 1st at 11:59 EST.

This project will require troubleshooting technical issues, which happens to everyone involved in DH work! If you have a problem, first consult the [Omeka S user manual guide](#), check the resources section in this document (below), then try Googling, then ask for help in the #tech-help channel. I recommend starting on this early and to utilize the days built in the schedule to start working out the conceptual and technical issues that will arise. Class is canceled Thursday April 4 and Thursday April 11 for you to focus on drafting the proposal and wrapping up other assignments. And Tuesday April 23rd and the reading day of April 30th are both dedicated times that I will be available to help you troubleshoot in person.

Resources

The following resources will be helpful in getting started or for troubleshooting:

1. For finding primary and secondary sources: GMU's [library catalog](#), GMU's [databases](#), Library of Congress' [Chronicling America](#), Library of Congress' [Print and Photographs Catalog](#), and the [Digital Public Library of America](#).
2. For technical parts in Omeka S:
 - a. This is a useful quick [resource guide](#) about how to create an item set, add pages, edit pages, etc. There is also documentation about [editing pages](#) created by the developers of Omeka, including information about adding [page blocks](#). For different kinds of page blocks, there is [HTML](#), [item showcase](#), [browse preview](#), and the [mapping and timeline](#) modules.
 - b. Creating a draft page plan is a smart way to develop content and organize information. Here is an example of a [draft design page](#) that RRCHNM historians used to create the final product page "[Artist Feature: Ernie Barnes](#)" in a beta site for the HCAC project.