DIGITAL TOOLS FOR HISTORIANS

Spring 2017

HIST 6450/7450

3 Credit hours

Instructor: Dr. Molly Taylor-Poleskey
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Office Hours: Thursdays, 9:30-11am & 1:30-2:20pm
Class Slack Channel: DT4H2017

Course Catalog Description: *Introduces the fields of digital history and humanities with a particular focus on how digital history can serve public historians. Explores the standards and methods of the field through the production of a collaborative digital history project.*

Course Objectives:

There are two learning objectives for this course: the first is theoretical and the second is applied. First, you will debate and develop a working definition of Digital History and familiarize yourself with the standards and practices of digital humanists. Second, you will work together with your classmates to produce a public-facing digital history project.

The first third of the course will be devoted to exploring what digital history is and what tools serve its purpose. This means that we will be reading and discussing how other digital historians define the field, critiquing digital history projects, and determining the pitfalls of digital history.

The rest of the class will be devoted to hands-on learning through group research projects. These projects will take advantage of the many local history resources of the Albert Gore Research Center, the Center for Popular Music, and the Center for Historic Preservation, as well as other local archives. Your objective is to choose a topic that carries importance for larger trends of history; research primary and secondary sources (as you would for a traditional history paper); discuss with your group and in class what kinds of questions and presentation you would like to make using digital tools; learn the technology or software tools that you need; and execute a substantive and refined digital project that will be available to the public.

Prerequisites:

Students enrolling at the 6000 or the 7000 level must have been admitted to the College of Graduate Studies and have the permission of the department. This course will meet graduation requirements for the graduate programs in the Department of History.

Semester structure:

PART 1: DH initiation

This phase consists of discussing readings and DH project examples. Students are expected to attend all classes having read the assigned material. Class participation includes actively participating in daily discussions and responding to class presentations. To that end, you will be expected to post your comments to our class Slack channel two hours before our class meetings.

PART 2: Final project

In week 6, every student will propose a project to the rest of the class. You will then decide which project you want to pursue for the final project and you will divide into groups of three to five students. For the following week, each group will create a **group compact** that must include a 1-2 paragraph project description, the tools you are considering using, and a schedule of milestones. These contracts may be revised in consultation with me as the semester goes on. From this point, each group will be expected to make a weekly status update to the class.

Assessment and Grading:

Masters students:

- Participation: 40%
  - 10% from the Slack discussion comments
  - 10 % from the practica
  - 20% in-class discussion
- Project proposal presentation: 10%
- Final project: 50% (average of an individual and group project grade)

PhD students:

- Participation: 30%
  - 10% from the Slack comments
  - 10 % from the practica
  - 10% in-class discussion
- Project review: 10%
- Project proposal presentation: 10%
- Final project: 50% (average of an individual and group project grade)

Assignments:

Participation: Involvement and particularly discussion in class is an important part of this course. Because we only meet once a week, attendance is mandatory and absences cannot be excused or made up. If you miss more than two classes, you are in danger of failing the class.

I expect you to behave respectfully at all times (in class and in your group). This means listening to every comment and responding politely even if you share a differing opinion. Every opinion is valid in this classroom and this is a safe place for questions and discussion.

Please devote your full attention in class to class (put away your phone!).

Practica: These are hands-on activities for exploring various digital practices and tools. The goal is to help prepare you for the implementation (2nd) phase of the semester.

Slack comments: Every week, I'll post a question of small writing assignment to our Slack channel. When you post your response, please take time to look and see what others have written as well. You are encouraged to respond to each other as well as to the root question.

Project review: (PhD candidates only): Choose a digital history project (most likely one that relates to your area of expertise). Analyze the work at both its historiographic and representational levels. Present your findings to the class and in a written review. Examples will be provided in class.

Project proposal: Prepare a one-page description of a possible digital history project, and distribute it to the class on Slack by noon the day before we meet. Our class will be spent discussing these proposals and forming collaborative teams.

Final Project: The final project is a collaboratively-developed digital history project. Both the form and the content of your project are open. We will cover some of the possible formats for these projects in the first weeks of the course. After the completion of the project, write a 300-600 word critique of your project that addresses both content and form.

Extra credit: There will be a few events this semester, which will offer extra credit opportunities. If you attend and write a 150-250-word reflection (posted to Slack), you can earn up to 2 extra credit points (over the whole semester). There is one on February 22 at the Al Gore Sr. Research Center (see below).

Schedule

Week 1 - January 19: Course introduction and setup

Week 2 - January 26: Introduction to DH

READINGS:

Cohen, Daniel J., and Roy Rosenzweig. “Introduction: Promises and Perils of Digital History.” In *Digital History | Promises and Perils of Digital History.* 2005. http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/introduction/.

Robertson, Stephen. “The Differences between Digital Humanities and Digital History.” In *Debates in the Digital Humanities*. University of Minnesota Press, 2016. http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/12.

Shapiro, Lisa. “‘This Is Why We Fight’: Defining the Values of the Digital Humanities.” In *Debates in the Digital Humanities*. University of Minnesota Press, 2016. http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/13.

PRACTICUM 1: Set up your Slack account and post your reading comments to #discussion channel. Complete the class Google survey (found in #general in Slack). Find a website devoted to digital history or the digital humanities and evaluate what its purpose is, what its affiliations are, how it can be useful to digital historians.

Week 3 - February 2: Online Exhibits

GUEST: Dr. Susan Knowles

READINGS:

http://www.civilwarshades.org/

Brennan, Sheila. “Public, First.” In *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, 2016. http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/83.

Cohen, Daniel J., and Roy Rosenzweig. “Designing for the History Web.” In *Digital History | Promises and Perils of Digital History*. http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/designing/.

Hurley, A. “Chasing the Frontiers of Digital Technology: Public History Meets the Digital Divide.” *The Public Historian* 38, no. 1 (February 1, 2016): 69–88.

Lester, Peter. “Is the Virtual Exhibition the Natural Successor to the Physical? 1.” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 27, no. 1 (April 2006): 85–101. [Available online through Walker Library]

PRACTICUM 2: Create a 1-document exhibit on Omeka. See Slack for guided tutorial to Omeka.

Week 4 - February 9: Spatial History
GUEST: Dr. Nicholas Bauch

READINGS:

Bauch, Nicholas. *Enchanting the Desert.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016. http://www.enchantingthedesert.com/home/.

Robertson, Stephen. “Putting Harlem on the Map (Robertson).” *Writing History in the Digital Age*, March 19, 2012. http://writinghistory.trincoll.edu/evidence/robertson-2012-spring/.

White, Richard. “Spatial History Project.” *Spatial History Lab*, 2010. https://web.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/pub.php?id=29.

PRACTICUM 3: Creating New Vector Layers in QGIS 2.0

Week 5 - February 16: Network graphing
Guest: TBA

Readings:

Comsa, Maria Teodora, Melanie Conroy, Dan Edelstein, Chloe Summers Edmondson, and Claude Willan. “The French Enlightenment Network.” *The Journal of Modern History* 88, no. 3 (August 31, 2016): 495–534. doi:10.1086/687927.

Jenkins, Nicholas. *Kindred Britain*. http://kindred.stanford.edu/#/story/half/half/none///erasmus.

So, Richard Jean, and Hoyt Long. “Network Analysis and the Sociology of Modernism.” *Boundary 2*, no. 2 (2013): 147.

Winterer,Caroline. “If Ben Franklin Had Facebook.” 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5CWsJ811V4.

Weingart, Scott. “Demystifying Networks.” *The Scottbot Irregular*, December 14, 2011. http://www.scottbot.net/HIAL/?p=6279.

PRACTICUM 4: Network tutorial

EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY: February 22, 11:30-1pm.
Brown bag lunch at the Al Gore Sr. Research Center conference room “An Introduction to Demographic and Econometric Data for Historians” by Dr. Louis Kyriakoudes

Week 6 - February 23: Preserving and locating “data”
Guest: Ken Middleton and Nicole Coleman (Breve)

Readings:

http://usnewsmap.com/

Preserving your Research Data

Gibbs, Frederick W. “New Forms of History: Critiquing Data and Its Representations.” *The American Historian*, 2016. http://tah.oah.org/february-2016/new-forms-of-history-critiquing-data-and-its-representations/.

Rosenzweig, Roy. “Scarcity or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era.” *The American Historical Review* 108, no. 3 (2003): 735–62. doi:10.1086/529596.

PRACTICUM 5: Managing Data

Week 7 - March 2: Data visualization
Guest: TBD

Readings:

http://www.fallen.io/ww2/

Drucker, Johanna. “Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display” 5, no. 1 (2011). http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/5/1/000091/000091.html.

Theibault, John. “Visualizations and Historical Arguments.” *Writing History in the Digital Age*, 2011. http://writinghistory.trincoll.edu/evidence/visualizations-and-historical-arguments-theibault/.

PRACTICUM 6: Visualization tool overview

Week 8 - March 9: Spring break!

Week 9 - March 16: Project pitches and group formation

Week 10 - March 23: Group project defense and completion schedule

Week 11 - March 30: Open lab (M T-P out of town)

Week 12 - April 6: Open lab

Week 13 - April 13: Open lab

Week 14 - April 20: Open lab

Week 15 - April 27 Study day: No class (final project symposium?)

May 1: **Deadline** for Final Project Critiques (PhD students only). Upload by 11:59pm to D2L.