

HIS 711: Introduction to Digital Public History Practices

Spring 2013

Tuesdays 6:30-9:20 pm | MHRA 1204 | [Class Google Drive](#)

Instructor: Dr. Pam Lach

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Credits: 3 hours

Prerequisites: Restricted to HIS graduate students. Other graduate students may register with permission from instructor.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course blends a traditional seminar in the theory and issues of digital public history with hands-on training in its tools and practices. Students will explore the possibilities and challenges of doing public history in digital spaces, applying what they learn to their own self-designed digital public history projects.

Each student will identify a digital collection of materials around which they will build an online project. In developing a digital public history project, students will define their target audience(s); establish a set of outcomes; identify and adopt a delivery platform; determine an organizational system; create content, including narrative and interpretative text; and devise a set of criteria for evaluating the project's impact. Students will develop detailed work plans to ensure timely and successful completion of their projects.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the semester, students will:

1. Demonstrate a mastery of major digital public history issues
2. Apply digital computational skills to utilize and evaluate the effectiveness of a range of open-source tools used in digital public history work
3. Design and complete an original digital public history project
4. Formulate assessment criteria for their projects
5. Evaluate their own performance

TEACHING METHODS

Class time will be divided between 1) traditional graduate seminar discussions based on assigned readings and 2) hands-on workshops in a range of open-source tools and approaches to creating digital projects. Some meeting time will be devoted to individual project development, though the bulk of students' project-based work will occur outside of regular class times. Students will review each others' milestone reports as a way of understanding better the project life cycle.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Students will be evaluated based on their performance in the following areas:

1. Classroom discussion and participation: 25% (learning outcome #1)
2. Tool assessment: 15% (learning outcome #2)
3. Digital public history project: 50% (learning outcomes #3, 4)
4. Self-assessment: 10% (learning outcome #5)

Note: there is no final exam in this class.

Classroom discussion and participation (25%)

Students will be expected to be engaged in and contribute to a discussion of assigned readings. Each student will be responsible for leading classroom discussion at least once during the semester.

Tool assessment (15%) – due by April 2

We will spend much of class time exploring a range of tools that public historians may use for digital projects. Each student will complete an assessment of one open-source tool (the tool does not have to be one used in class), including a discussion of its functions and limits, possible use cases, and an evaluation of a published project created with that tool (if any). Students may turn this in at any time up to April 2. The purpose of the assessment is to assist students in choosing a tool for their own project. Students will circulate their assessments among their classmates so that everyone has a wider range of assessments upon which they can draw in the future. Students are discouraged from reviewing the same tools.

Digital public history project (50%)

Each student (or pairs of students) will complete his/her own digital project over the course of the semester. This will include completing the following milestones:

- Project Proposal – due January 29
- Work Plan (5%) – due February 5
- Outcomes and Audiences/Personas Write-up (5%) – due February 19
- Progress Report (5%) – due March 5
- Impact Statement (Evaluation Criteria) (5%) – due April 9
- In-class project presentation (5%) – due April 23
- Launched Digital Project (20%) – due April 30 at 6:30
- Critical Feedback (5%) – due throughout the semester; final write-up of each project due May 7

Final projects will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Usability and design: ease of navigability and level of interactivity
2. Aesthetics: appropriate to the projected audience and outcomes
3. Content:
 - a. Organization and presentation of content
 - b. Descriptiveness of objects
 - c. Narrative and analysis

Note: Additional criteria may be added to this list as agreed upon by the entire class.

Reflection and Self-assessment (10%) – due May 7 at 7pm

Each student will reflect on the process of creating a digital project. Students will be asked to address what did and did not work, and what they might do differently when creating another digital project in the future. The self-assessment will also include an evaluation of the completed project's success and possible problems (overall effectiveness) as measured by the criteria established in the project's impact statement.

Submitting and Sharing Work

With the exception of your personal reflection/self-assessment, all work will be submitted through our shared folder on Google Drive. This will allow us to learn from one another, as well as provide each other with constructive feedback. Students are encouraged to comment directly in each other's documents.

When uploading to/ creating documents in GD, please adhere to the following **naming convention**:

Name_AssignmentName. If you are working with a partner, it would be Name1_Name2_Assignment. For example: Smith_Bailey_WorkPlan. **We will use Blackboard for grades and instructor feedback.**

Staying on Track

Creating a digital project is an iterative process, which often includes false starts and dead-ends. Students may be asked to revise and resubmit project milestones to help them through this process.

It is each student's responsibility to communicate any problems they encounter to me as soon as possible. Whether it's missing a deadline, or having a project completely derail mid-course, an intervention is only possible if I know what's going on. It's much better to talk through problems early than wait until the end, when it's too late to make adjustments. Remember, the purpose of this course is for each student to emerge with an actual project he/she can include in a professional portfolio. We can learn a lot from our failures, but I would like each of you to have something to show for your successes, too.

If you feel that you can't meet a deadline, notify me in advance of the deadline to work out a solution that is manageable but also fair to the rest of the class. Late work submitted without prior instructor approval will be deducted 1/3 of a letter grade per day late.

Grading Scale

B+ = 87-89	A = 93-100	A- = 90-92
C+ = 77-79	B = 83-86	B- = 80-82
	C = 73-76	
	F = 72 and below	

ATTENDANCE POLICY

While there is no official grade for attendance, your participation grade is dependent on regular attendance (you can't participate if you're not here!). Students with more than **two absences** without a written Dean's or medical excuse will have their discussion/participation grade dropped one letter grade (10 points). Students are expected to notify the instructor of absences ahead of the weekly meeting time.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

All students have a responsibility to uphold the standards of "*Honesty, Trust, Fairness, Respect, and Responsibility*" detailed in the Academic Integrity Policy. Instances of cheating, plagiarism, misuse of academic resources, falsification of information, and facilitating of academic dishonesty are treated with utmost seriousness by the history department and dealt with severely by the University administration. The full policy appears in the *Student Calendar/Handbook* and at <http://sa.uncg.edu/dean/academic-integrity/>. Per university policy, you will be asked to sign a copy of the Academic Integrity Pledge for each major assignment in this class.

CLASSROOM POLICIES

Students are expected to come to every class on time, prepared to discuss the assigned reading, with the reading materials in hand (or on their computer). Since we will be devoting much of our class time to exploring different tools, students are expected to bring their laptops (not all tools will work on iPads) to each class meeting. **Please be courteous and thoughtful about your classroom computer practices so that you are not a distraction to anyone else.** Online shopping, writing emails, and IM-ing, etc. will not be tolerated; tweeting/social media is permissible only when **directly** related to class discussions.

For those who have them, smart phones and tablets may be used in class for the purpose of reviewing mobile history projects and apps. Please remember to turn ringers off, and texting is **never** permitted.

The classroom is a safe space where we can all explore new issues and learn from one another. Please treat your colleagues with professional respect.

SPECIAL NEEDS

If you require accommodations for special learning needs, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Disability Services, located within the Elliot University Center (334-5770)—and please let me know!

REQUIRED BOOKS

Adair, Bill, et al. *Letting Go? Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World*. Philadelphia: Pew Center for Arts and Heritage, 2011.

Additional readings will be available online, either linked directly in the syllabus or in our GD folder.

OTHER RESOURCES

There are many blogs, podcasts, and project websites dedicated to digital public history, including:

- The Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University:
[publications](#) and [podcasts](#)
- [Cleveland State's Center for Public History & Digital Humanities](#)
- J. Doughtery and K. Nawrotzki, eds., [*Writing History in the Digital Age*](#) (regularly updated born-digital publication)
- Additional blogs are linked from <http://hnn.us/blogs/entries/9665.html#digital>
- UNC-CH's Carolina Digital Humanities Initiative maintains a list of [DH resources](#). There are several categories of resources, including projects, tools, blogs, and journals.

This is not intended to be a comprehensive list; students are encouraged to contribute additional blogs and projects to classroom discussions.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Tuesday, Jan. 15: Introduction to Digital Public History

Reading: “[Every tool is a weapon: Why the digital humanities movement needs public history](#)”

In-class workshop: Introduction to Content Management Systems; WordPress, Part I

Tuesday, Jan. 22: Blurring Boundaries: History versus Public History in a Digital Age

Reading: *Letting Go?*: “Introduction” (pp. 10-15), “Participatory Design and the Future of Museums” (pp. 17-33); Dan Cohen, “[The Future of Preserving the Past](#)” (2005)

In-class workshop: David Gwynn, Intro to Digital Collections at UNC-G (6:30-7:30) (tentative)

In-class workshop: WordPress, Part II - Plugins

Tuesday, Jan. 29: The Project Lifecycle

Due: Project Proposal

Reading: NYPL, “[Planning Digital Projects for Historical Collections](#)”

In-class workshop: Omeka, Part I

Tuesday, Feb. 5: Engaging Audiences Online

Due: Project Work Plan

Reading: *Letting Go?*: “Where Are the Best Stories? Where Is My Story?—Participation and Curation in a New Media Age” (pp 34-43), “Whose Questions, Whose Conversations?” (pp. 68-79), “The ‘Dialogic Museum’ Revisited: A Collaborative Reflection” (pp. 80-95); The Unquiet Librarian (blog post), “[Crowdsourcing and Curating Collective Memory, Legends, and Local History with Facebook Groups](#);” Explore a crowd-sourcing project (e.g., [NYPL Menu Transcription Project](#), [Civil War Diary Transcription](#), [War Department Records Transcription](#) along with the [project blog](#), or one of your own choice).

In-class workshop: Omeka, Part II – Plugins and Neatline

Tuesday, Feb. 12: Usability

Reading: Bill Buxton, “[Experience Design vs. Interface Design](#)” (2005); Steve Krug, *Don’t Make Me Think*, Chapters 2-5 (pp. 21-49); Wodtke and Guvella, *Information Architecture: Blueprints for the Web*, 2d. ed. (2009), Chapter 1 (pp. 1-19)

In-class workshop: Personas and other UX activities

Tuesday, Feb. 19: Expert versus User Authority

Due: Outcomes and Audiences

Reading: *Letting Go?*: “From A Shared Authority to the Digital Kitchen, and Back” (pp. 124-137), “Public Curation: From Trend to Research-Based Practice” (pp. 194-205); Erin Scime, “[The Content Strategist as Digital Curator](#);” Roy Rosenzweig, “[Can History be Open Source? Wikipedia and the Future of the Past](#)”

In-class workshop: Viewshare

Tuesday, Feb. 26: Historical Evidence as Data

Reading: *Letting Go?*: “Get Real! The Role of Objects in the Digital Age” (pp. 56-67); David Arnold, “Digital Artefacts: Possibilities and Purpose” reprinted in *The Virtual Representation of the Past*, eds. Mark Greengrass and Lorna Hughes

In-class workshop: Timeline Tools

Tuesday, March 5: All Things Data (Data, Metadata & Databases) **Due: Progress Report**

Reading: [Data Modeling 101](#); “[An Introduction to Metadata](#)”; [The Dublin Core Metadata Initiative](#)

In-class workshop: Google Tools

Tuesday, March 12: Spring Break

Tuesday, March 19: Spatial History

Reading: R. White, “[What is Spatial History?](#)” Working Paper, Stanford Spatial History Lab (2010); Ian Gregory, “Using Geographical Information Systems to Explore Space and Time in the Humanities” in *The Virtual Representation of the Past*, eds. Mark Greengrass and Lorna Hughes; Michael Goodchild, “Combining Space and Time: New Potential for Temporal GIS” in *Placing History: How Maps, Spatial Data, and GIS Are Changing Historical Scholarship*, ed. Anne Kelly Knowles

In-class workshop: Mapping Tools

Tuesday, March 26: Mobile History

Reading: Assess a mobile history project of your choosing

In-class workshop: Skype with Anne Mitchell Whisnant (tentative). Anne will share her experiences as the Scholarly Advisor for “[Driving Through Time: The Digital Blue Ridge Parkway.](#)”

Tuesday, April 2: Evaluation and Impact

Due: Tool Assessment

Reading: “[Tenure, Promotion and the Publicly Engaged Academic Historian](#)” (2010); review other discussion of evaluating DH work at [CDHI Resources Page](#).

In-class workshop: Project Updates

Tuesday, April 9: Funding

Due: Impact Statement

Reading: Familiarize yourself with the guidelines and previous winners of one category of digital project grant, either from NEH (Digital Preservation or Digital Startup Grant), IMLS, or a statewide humanities council (such as NCHC)

In-class workshop: Donovan McKnight, NC Humanities Council (tentative)

In-class workshop: Writing and submitting a grant application

Tuesday, April 16: No class; work on individual projects

Students are encouraged to check in with Instructor this week

Tuesday, April 23: Project Showcase

Due: In-class presentation

Students will share their projects with the class; everyone will have an additional week to incorporate suggestions, revise, and clean their projects

Tuesday, April 30 at 6:30 pm

Due: Final project (launched)

Tuesday, May 7 at 7 pm

(scheduled exam period)

Due: Self-assessment; Critical feedback of each project