

# DIGITAL HISTORY ~ SPRING 2014



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UNCG HIS/IAR 631  
ANNE E. PARSONS  
OFFICE: MHRA, #2112

TUESDAYS, 6:30-5:20, MHRA 1206  
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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Digital technologies infuse a vast array of historical practices, including virtual exhibits, online collections, and audio/visual components in museum spaces. In particular, museums and historic institutions have begun to use technology in their halls on widespread basis, whether moving image presentations, audio tours, computer games or mobile applications. Historic institutions have also poured their efforts and resources into putting their collections online and building their audience base through social media, and both individuals and organizations have created an array of virtual exhibits that put historic knowledge directly onto the web.

During the semester, students will explore these technologies and will discuss the core question of the class, "How do multimedia tools shape the telling of history?" The class will critically engage with the possibilities opened up by these methods such as multimodal learning practices, digital preservation, and the mass accessibility of historical knowledge. At the same time, students will also look at the significant challenges posed by these new technologies, such as limits to participation, the complexities of online collections and the struggle of institutions to incorporate multimedia into their strategic planning. In order to build these skills and understandings, students will read texts about the experiences of museums with digital projects while also creating a digital project of their own with the WordPress platform.

## Learning Objectives – Core Concepts

The Digital History class will foster understanding about the following core concepts:

- the ways that contemporary museums are using digital technologies (audio, video, computer gaming, social media, mobile applications) and how those new tools have changed the landscape of museums and the related opportunities and challenges,

- an understanding of the skills, resources and infrastructure involved in the creation of digital projects and the issues surrounding these projects, including copyright laws, accessibility and the problems of digitized primary sources, and,
- an understanding of the ways that digital tools alter the presentation of history and the ability to assess the appropriateness of digital methods in research, public history projects and reaching audiences.

### **Learning Objectives – Core Skills**

This class will train you in skills that public historians use in the profession and in digital practices, including:

- writing concisely, clearly and creatively,
- speaking publicly and teaching in a way that engages and activates your audience,
- a knowledge and/or exposure to multi-media tools including WordPress, video recording, iMovie, OCR, Viewshare, Omeka, mapping tools, Zotero, Creative Commons, scanning and Photoshop,
- knowing how to identify appropriate digital programs and learn the new technology, when appropriate.

### **EXPERIENCES, PROJECTS & EVALUATION**

To build these skills, you will engage in the experiences and projects listed below. You must hand in each assignment on-time and I will deduct a third of a grade for each 24 hours past the deadline. Unless you have a specific accommodation from the [Office of Accessibility Resources and Services](#), I will only grant extensions in advance of the due date. That said, contact me if you sense that you will not meet the deadline. I will post the grades to Blackboard, and if you see a discrepancy, please contact me immediately.

**Grade Scale:** A 93-100 / A- 90-92 / B+ 87-89 / B 83-86 / B- 80-82 / C+ 77-79 / C 73-76 / F 72 and below.

### **Class Participation – 15%**

Participation makes up a central part of this course, as you will grapple with the texts and learn various multimedia tools in the classroom. Attendance is mandatory and if you have any conflicts because of religious holidays, family emergencies or health issues, please contact me as soon as possible and no later than the day of class to request an excused absence and arrange for making up that work.

### **In-Class Presentation of Digital Tool/Toolset – 15% – Chosen By Students**

Students will choose one digital tool/toolset, and will research it, assess its use in the public history field and present it to the group in a way that promotes student learning, particularly through interactives and practice examples when appropriate. Students will also provide the class with a one-page summary sheet for future use.

### **8-10 Page Paper on Digital History and Museums– 20% – Due: March 18**

Students will write papers answering the question of how digital technologies have shaped the telling of history in museum settings and discussing the implications of these new tools for the field.

### **Web Project – Total 50%**

#### **Project Proposal – 10% – Due February 11**

The project proposal will include the purpose of the website, a rough structure, and the intended audience.

#### **Rough Draft of Website – 15% – Due April 1**

Submit a rough draft of the website, along with a 2-4 page statement of the intended purpose, audience, social media outreach plan and evaluation criteria.

#### **Presentation of Project – 5% – On April 15 or April 22**

Students will present their projects on April 15 or 22.

#### **Final Web Project – 20% – Due May 3**

Submit the final web project, along with a 3-4 page summary of the outreach conducted to publicize the project and a self-evaluation of the project design and impact.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro greatly values integrity in the work of its students. You must appropriately cite any information that you use from your sources and you must submit work that you yourself have written or created. Copying the work of others and passing it off as your own (known as plagiarizing) is taken very seriously and will be handled by the university administration. You can read more about the policy at: [academicintegrity.uncg.edu](http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu), and per university policy, you will sign a copy of the Academic Integrity Pledge for each major assignment.

## ACCESSIBILITY & RESOURCES

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro seeks to promote meaningful access to educational opportunities for all students. Should you have any needs or questions related to disability issues, please contact the [Office of Accessibility Resources and Services](#) (OARS), located in the Elliot University Center, #215. As an instructor, I am committed to making this course accessible to all of the students in it, and will work with OARS to accommodate students' requests. N.B. You do not need to disclose details about your disability to the instructor in order to receive accommodations.

For assistance with writing assignments, contact the [UNCG Writing Center](#), where staff members hold appointments both in person and via instant-messaging. [The Digital Media Commons](#) and the [Digital ACT Studio](#) in Jackson Library provide help with multimedia projects and UNCG's [Speaking Center](#) offers a great resource for building public, small-group or individual speaking skills.

## READINGS

The following readings are available at the bookstore, on Amazon.com, and through the UNCG library or Interlibrary Loan.

### Required

Dan Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital History* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

Heather Mansfield, *Social Media for Social Good* (McGraw Hill, 2012).

Ross Parry, *Museums in a Digital Age* (Routledge, 2010).

Loic Tallon and Kevin Walker, eds., *Digital Technologies and the Museum Experience* (AltaMira, 2008).

Robin Williams and John Tollett, *The Non-Designer's Web Book* (PeachPit Press, 2006).

### Optional

Herminia Din and Phyllis Hecht, eds., *The Digital Museum: A Think Guide* (AAM, 2007).

## CLASS SCHEDULE

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**Jan. 14**      **Introductions, "When Smart People Act Stupid," Discussion of Project Ideas**

**Jan. 21**      **The Nature of the Web and Digital Sites**

Rosenzweig and Cohen, Introduction, Chapters 1-2 (pp. 1-79)

Williams and Tollett, Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 11-46) and Self-Guided Tours and Quizzes.

*Digital Workshop: WordPress I*

- Jan. 28**      **Designing for the History Web: Structuring the Site**  
Rosenzweig and Cohen, Chapter 4 (pp. 108-140)
- Williams and Tollett, Chapters 3-6 (pp. 47-134), and Self-Guided Tours and Quizzes

*Digital Workshop: WordPress II*

- Feb. 4**      **Designing for the History Web: Site Design, Digitizing Materials and Copyright**  
Cohen and Rosenzweig, Chapters 3 and 7 (80-107, 189-219)
- Williams and Tollett, Chapters 7-11 (135-240) and Self-Guided Tours and Quizzes for Chapters 7 and 11

- Feb. 11**      **The Digital Museum & The Question of Resources**  
Herminia Din and Phyllis Hecht, *The Digital Museum*, pp. 1-44, 110-134, 179-196.

*Due: Project Proposal*

- Feb. 20**      **Digital Technologies in the Museum Experience**  
Tallon and Walker, Chapters 1-5, 10-11.

- Feb. 22-25**    **Tech Tools in the Shaping of History**  
**Field Trip to Washington, D.C. – No Class Session – Class Work in D.C.**  
Richard Rabinowitz, “Eavesdropping at the Wall: Interpretive Media in the *Slavery in New York* Exhibition,” *The Public Historian* 35:3 (2013).
- Bill Adair, Benjamin Filene, Laura Koloski, eds., *Letting Go?* Chapters 7, 9 and 10.

- Mar. 4**      **User-Generated History and Authority**  
Din and Hecht, eds., *The Digital Museum*, pp. 57-66.
- Adair, Filene, Koloski, eds., *Letting Go?* Chapters 1-4.
- Parry, *Museums in the Digital Age*, 229-236.

Roy Rosenzweig, "Can History Be Open Source?," *Journal of American History* 93 (1).

**Mar. 11**      **Spring Break – No Class**

**Mar. 18**      **Usability and Accessibility**  
Tallon and Walker, Chapter 6.

Parry, *Museums in a Digital Age*, 177-219, 281-290.

*Due: Papers on Digital History*

**Mar. 25**      **Building an Audience**  
Cohen and Rosenzweig, Chapter 5.

Mansfield, *Social Media for Social Good*.

**Apr. 1**        **Digital Preservation**  
Din and Hecht, eds., *The Digital Museum*, 167-179.

NYPL, [Designing a Digital Project for a Historical Collection](#).

*Due: Rough Draft of Website*

*Workshop: Omeka*

**Apr. 8**        **Authenticity in the Digital Age**  
Parry, ed., *Museums in a Digital Age*, 237-246, 291-350.

[Martha Sandweiss, "Artifacts as Pixels, Pixels as Artifacts, Perspectives," November 2013.](#)

**Apr. 15**      **MetaData & Website Presentations**  
[An Introduction to MetaData](#).

Williams and Tollett, Chapters 14-16.

**Apr. 22**      **Evaluation & Website Presentations**  
Parry, ed., *Museums in a Digital Age*, 351-416.

Din and Hecht, eds., *The Digital Museum*, 179-188.

**May 3**      **Final Projects Due by 5:00 PM**

*N.B. This syllabus is subject to change.*