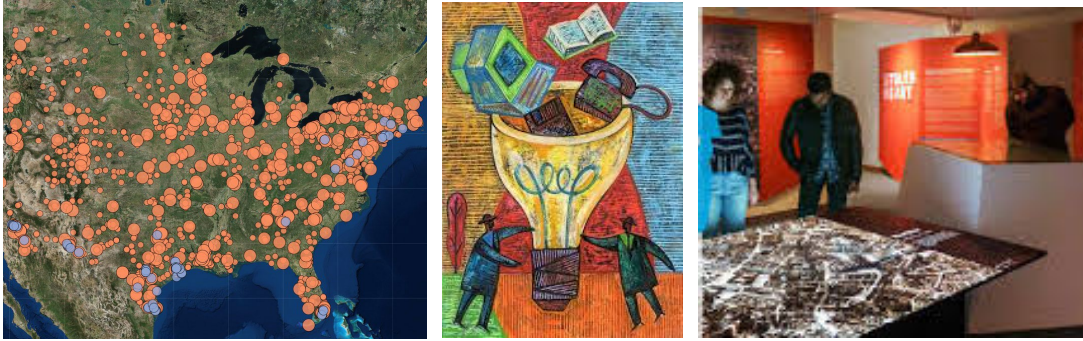# DIGITAL HISTORY ~ SPRING 2020

UNCG HIS/IAR 631
ANNE E. PARSONS
OFFICE: MHRA, #2137

TUESDAYS, 6:30-9:20 PM, MHRA 1209
EMAIL: AEPARSON@UNCG.EDU
OFFICE HOURS: THURSDAYS, 1:00-2:00 PM

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. Libraries and historical institutions have poured their efforts and resources into putting their collections online, creating virtual exhibits, and building their audience base through social media.

During the semester, students will learn about these new digital approaches, build their own digital skills, and will discuss how these 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 inequities in accessibility. 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. Students will also learn about these issues by reviewing contemporary digital projects and by speaking with professionals working in the field today.

Learning Objectives – Core Concepts
The Digital History class will foster understanding about the following areas:

- 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,

- the skills, resources and infrastructure involved in the creation of digital collections and the issues surrounding these projects, including copyright laws, accessibility and the problems of digitized primary sources,

- best practices in interpreting history in digital formats such as podcasts, websites, maps, and timelines, and,

- the ways that digital products alter the presentation of history and the ability to assess the appropriateness of digital methods in research, public history projects and museum exhibitions.

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 in digital media,

- a knowledge of and/or exposure to a variety of multi-media tools including Slack, Islandora, Timeline JS, Sway, WordPress, Omeka, Zotero, Tableau, ArcMap, StoryMaps, and Clio,

- evaluating digital history projects and collections,

- planning digital history projects, including identifying a purpose, audience, set of sources, and designing the products,

- identifying appropriate digital programs and learn the new technologies, 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.

Class Participation – 10%
Participation makes up a central part of this course, as you will grapple with the texts and learn various multimedia tools in the classroom. This grade will be determined by your attendance, participation in the discussions, and critical engagement with the texts and experiences. 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.

Homework Assignments – 30%
Throughout the class, there will be regular homework assignments intended for you to think critically about the readings, to build your digital skillsets, and also to deepen your understanding of digital history. **Homework assignments will be posted to Canvas and are due no later than 12:00 PM the Monday before class.

In-Class Presentation of Digital Tools/Toolsets – 20% – Chosen by Students
Students will get into pairs and each pair will choose one digital tool or toolset. The students will then 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.

Digital History Project – Total 40%
    Project Proposal – 10% – Due February 11 in Class
    The project proposal will include the purpose of the digital history project, the target audience, an initial list of primary and secondary source materials, and a rough structure of the site (ex: number of stops on walking tour, general sense of scope of map).

    Rough Draft of Digital History Project – 5% – Due March 31 in Class
    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.

    Final Digital History Project – 25% – Due April 24 at 5:00 PM
    Submit the final project, along with a 2-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.

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.

BOOKS TO PURCHASE

The majority of the readings will be provided online in the Canvas homework assignments. There are two books for you to purchase, however, and hardcopies are strongly preferred. If you do purchase an e-book, please take detailed notes and be able to easily access specific pages during discussion.

Corrado, Edward M. *Digital Preservation for Libraries, Archives, and Museums*, 2nd ed. Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.

Serrell, Beverly. Exhibit Labels. Rowman & Littlefield: 2015.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Jan. 14   **Introductions to the Class and to Digital History**

Jan. 21   **Critically Engaged Digital Practices**

Due: Homework assignment posted to Canvas & post ideas for final projects.

Jan. 28   **Digital Tools Lab – Choose Your Own Adventure. Guest Speaker Erin Lawrimore, University Archivist.**

Due: Homework assignment posted to Canvas.

Feb. 4   **Introduction to Digital Curation and Creating Sustainable Projects**

Tech Tools Presentation: _____

Due: Read *Digital Preservation for Libraries, Archives, and Museums* and submit Rough Draft of Project Proposal.

Feb. 11   **Preserving Historical Documents – Guest Speaker David Gwynn**

Due: Final Project Proposal Assignment – Feb. 11th in Class.

Feb. 18   **Digitizing Historical Documents – Work Session at Temple Emanuel**

Students will meet in pairs from 1:30 PM to 8:00 PM at the historic Temple Emanuel Greene Street Campus (713 N. Greene Street). Students will choose a time slot to visit.

Due: Homework on Canvas.

Feb. 25   **Making Metadata**

Tech Tools Presentation: _____

Due: Homework on Canvas.

Mar. 3   **Spring Break – No Class**

Mar. 5-6 - NC Digital Humanities Institute at UNCG (Attend if you are able)

Mar. 10   **Writing for Digital Projects**

Tech Tools Presentation: _____

Due: Read *Exhibit Labels* & Submit a preliminary rough draft of the text for your project.

Mar. 17   **Digital Design Skills**

Tech Tools Presentation: _____

Due: Homework on Canvas and preliminary draft of project.

Mar. 24   **Designing Digital Elements in Museum Exhibitions - Guest Speaker from Design Dimension.**

Tech Tools Presentation: _____

Due: Homework on Canvas.

Mar. 31   **The Care and Feeding of Technology in Museum Exhibits – Meet at *Fabric of Memory* exhibit at Revolution Mill.**

Due: Final Project Rough Draft Assignment – March 31st in Class.

Apr. 7   **Reaching New Audiences through Social Media**

Tech Tools Presentation: _____

Due: Homework on Canvas.

Apr. 14   **Individual Meetings about Projects**

Due: Edited Draft of Digital History Project - April 13th at Noon.

Apr. 21   **No Class ~ Work on Projects**

Due Apr. 24th at 5:00 PM: Final Digital History Projects

Apr. 28   **Last Class ~ Processing What We've Learned**