Digital History FYSM 1405 A, Fall – Winter 2010

Professor: Dr. Shawn Graham

Office: Paterson 406

E-mail: After classes start, please direct all e-mail contact through WebCT e-mail

Office Hours: Wednesdays 11 – 12; other times by appointment

Class Time: Wednesdays & Fridays 8.35 – 9.55 am

Class Location: TBA

Required Textbook: Cohen, Dan and Roy Rosenzweig. *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* University of Pennsylvania Press 2005. A digital version of this book exists free to download at http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/ Other required readings are listed on the course website.

Course Description: 3000 years ago, literacy and the power to record history were the privileges of the few. To record the past was to control it. 3000 years later, and the inverse is true: literacy is widespread, and every voice has an outlet on the internet… or does it? We will look at what Digital History is, the ways it changes the questions we can ask, the way digital methods change what it is even feasible to ask, and how we communicate this research to a wider public. Given that many digital tools are also new media tools, the practice of digital history is also often a kind of public history. This course will survey various concepts and tools currently being used in Digital History. Topics to be discussed include data mining, agent based modeling, geographic information systems, and serious games. These topics will be set in their broader historical contexts.

Outcome:Students who complete this course successfully will have created a significant piece of Digital History, available for public consumption on the internet. Successful students will understand and have demonstrated how to use, (and under what circumstances), the appropriate digital tools for their future research in History & the Humanities. They will be aware of the way digital media promote some interpretations whilst hindering others. They will be equipped to exploit the continuing opportunities of the current information revolution, whilst being aware of its perils.

Weekly Topics: Each week, we will use the first session to set up some of the major themes and questions we will want to explore; in the second session we will look at current research projects, websites, and other materials in the light of those themes. This structure may be modified to take into account student interests and/or developing issues – please see the course website.

The syllabus is divided into parts to illustrate the broad thematic goals. We begin in Part I by examining the sheer mass of historical materials now available on the internet. How do we find our way through these things? How do we visualize or otherwise identify what is important?

This leads to the observation that in digital work, everything is an argument (Part II). We never observe

the past directly; we are always building models to fit what we 'know' into a system of explanation. In digital work, these models are explicitly written in computer code. Understanding how the code forces a particular worldview on the consumer is a key portion of becoming a 'digital historian'. Computer games are another kind of model of the world; historical computer games are some of the best selling games on the market today. How do they represent history? Can we subvert or challenge these representations?

Some of the most interesting discussions about history on the internet occur in the game fan-sites; this leads us to Part III, the 'wisdom of crowds'. We will take a close look at the way 'crowd-sourcing' is used to write history and pseudo-history: what is the difference? How 'true' is a crowd-sourced history anyway – is Wikipedia good or evil?

In Part IV, we look at some of our local 'crowds' – digital history in the Ottawa Valley & the local new media and heritage industries. What face are we presenting to the world? What stories are being told – or not told? Who has access to digital media, and does it matter?

Finally, in Part V, we draw the various strands together to understand the current state of Digital History & the Humanities, where we stand, where we are going, the potentials & the pitfalls. The map is still being drawn; there are still places marked 'here be dragons'.

From time to time there will be invited speakers. The schedule for these speakers will be posted on the class website. **Failure to attend a session with an invited speaker** will result each time this should occur, in a 2% deduction to your participation grade (at the instructor's discretion).

Grades: Grades will be assigned as percentages and alphabetical final grades will be assigned following the percentage equivalents described in the Undergraduate Calendar. Marks for all grade components will be posted on the course WebCT site. Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Evaluation

1) Annotated Zotero library: 10%   Due: September 29

2) Group project contract agreed on time: 5%   Due: October 15

3) Group project proposal (plan of attack): 10%   Due: October 29th

4) Project updates posted on time & on target: 10%   Due: see point 3 below

5) Group project interim progress report: 20%   Due: November 19

6) Seminar/posted reflections participation: 20%   Due: Wednesdays for the previous week, beginning September 22

7) Group final project: 25%   Due: March 23rd. Attendance at the project debriefing the following week is mandatory in order to receive your grade.

I reserve the right to grade group work on an individual basis if the group's dynamics warrant it.

Evaluation Details (more direction will be provided in class)

1) The class will be divided into groups of 5 in order to complete the group project. The exact nature of the group project will be agreed between the professor and the group by **October 15**. Group memberships will be posted on the course website by **October 20th**. Because of withdrawals and so on, the size of your group may shrink; regrouping will be possible only in consultation with me. If a group should become dysfunctional, I reserve the right to reorganize the members of that group elsewhere or assign an individual project. Please note that part of the final grade for the project includes a component on the ability to work together for a common goal.

The Group Project Agreement' will be available from the course website and you will use this to

help organize your group, to set its ground rules;

lay out how your group will communicate with each other, and when;

and what you will do in order to resolve disputes.

The group project proposal that you complete by **October 29th** must

1. Describe the project: what historical problem or question will you be addressing? If you are exhibiting materials, who is your target audience, and why is this exhibition necessary – what will people learn?
2. Indicate that you have thought about, and have chosen appropriate tools to achieve this (see the weekly topics list for ideas). Is your project feasible?
3. Schedule for completion and who will do what. Take care to assign responsibility for deliverables to specific individuals or subgroups.

Once this project is agreed, major changes can be made only in consultation with me.

We will discuss throughout September & October various possibilities and approaches you might explore.

2) Each group will be required to maintain its own public project site. WordPress.com or Blogspot.com are useful platforms in this regard; Facebook or a Wiki site would also be acceptable; I am willing to entertain other suggestions. The location and URL of your group project site will need to be communicated to me by **October 29th**; links to all group sites will be made available on the course website.

Please note that **ultimately nothing posted online is private**: proper decorum and behavior as befits a member of Carleton's academic community is expected. While you need not necessarily use your proper name as your on-screen 'handle', academics do not typically obscure their identity online. If you do not feel comfortable using your real name on any public materials produced in the course of this class, you may use some other nom-de-plume (in consultation with me).

3) Progress reports on your group project are to be made on **your project** site on **November 5, November 19, December 3, January 14, January 28, February 11, March 4, March 18th**. Each individual report is worth 2%, with a possible 2% bonus for additional in-depth & reflective posting. We will discuss what this means and what should go into these reports.

4) Each student should create an account with zotero.org. Zotero is a plugin for the Firefox browser that allows you to collect and manage bibliographic information. Detailed instructions are provided on the course website. You are expected to be collecting and collating information that you will or you

might use for your group project using Zotero. Your zotero collection will be set to 'public' (see the detailed instructions). I will be reviewing your libraries from September 29, though I expect you'll continue to use the tool after that time. The grading rubric for this review is on the course website.

5) On November 19th, in addition to presenting your work to the class, you will submit a formally written report. Please see the interim progress report rubric on the course website. Your presentation to the class will be anonymously peer-reviewed by your peers, and will contribute 5% to the grade (so 15 + 5 %)

6) On March 23rd your group will submit your project to the Online Digital Showcase (housed on the course website), by providing an URL, or the relevant files (as the case may be). Please review the Group Project Rubric now to understand how the grade will be earned.

7) On March 23rd or 25th, your group will present its project in class time for the benefit of your peers and some invited guests. At the end of the project, each member of the group will assess the contributions of the other members' of the group (5%). Each group project will also be assessed by the remainder of the class (10%). (So 5% intragroup + 10% intergroup + 10% instructor). These rubrics & how they will be applied are available on the course website.

Seminar Participation: You are expected to attend classes regularly, and to make informed and constructive contributions to the class discussion. You should demonstrate awareness of the issues raised by the readings assigned. You should be an 'active listener', which you demonstrate through thoughtful and considered replies to others' contributions. You will post to the class website your brief reflection (~ 200 words) on the previous week's seminars and a response to one of your peers' reflections ('good job', 'right on' 'I agree' etc are not considered adequate responses, as they add nothing of substance).

Late Work: **In order to receive full value, assignments must be handed in (or posted online, as the case may be – you will provide me a link and the time that link is in my WebCT inbox counts as 'handed in') at or before the BEGINNING of class on the due date. If the time stamp shows that the assignment was sent in *during* class time, that assignment will be considered late.**

Late work may be handed in up to one week from that date, with 10% being deducted each day for lateness. After one week, the work cannot be accepted.

Technology Requirements: As much of this course depends on the internet, you will be expected to have appropriate internet connectivity, and a backup plan for your work: 'my computer crashed' (and similar) **will not be an acceptable excuse**. Please make sure your computer is as up to date as possible in terms of software, drivers, Java, and so on.

A list of useful programs & tools is maintained on the course website.

Plagiarism and Cheating

The University Senate defines plagiarism as "presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own". This can include:

- Reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;

- Submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;

- Using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;

- Using another's data or research findings;

- Failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;

- Handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence. If there is a suspicion of plagiarism, the Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student. The penalties for plagiarism are not trivial, and can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

Academic Accommodations

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website http://www.carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/student_guide.htm

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website http://www.carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/student_guide.htm

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but are not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that I receive your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by the deadlines published on the PMC website: http://www2.carleton.ca/pmc/new-and-current-students/dates-and-deadlines/