

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: Tuesdays 11 – 12; other times by appointment

Class Time: Mondays & Wednesdays 8.35 – 9.55 am

Class Location: TBA

Class Website: www.digitalhistory.graeworks.net

Required Textbook: There is no set text for this course. Our core readings will be drawn from chapters in James Gleick *The Information: A History, A Theory, A Flood* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2011), various papers, articles, and ebooks by Roy Rosenzweig and Dan Cohen which are available online from the Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, and selections from Ian Bogost, *Persuasive Games* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press 2009). Other required readings are listed on the course website.

Course Description: This seminar looks at the ways history can be represented, explored, and written using various digital tools. It also explores how media of communication more generally affect society, from antiquity to the modern day. 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; who then controls the past? When you add the internet to the mix, how does history change? This course will survey various concepts and tools currently being used in 'Digital History', especially as they concern the representation of Greco-Roman antiquity. Topics to be discussed may include data mining, agent based modeling, geographic information systems, and serious games. We will explore these topics through various mini-projects; be prepared to engage in group work.

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. Students will be expected to have completed all readings and will be prepared to lead the discussion.

From time to time there may 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

Major Assignments

Fall Term: Writing the Wikipedia	25%
Winter Term: Creating Digital History	25%
Weekly Wiki Class Notes & Participation	30%
Final Exam	20%

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) Writing the Wikipedia

One of the major objectives of this course is to understand how our knowledge about the past is being transformed by new media. In a [Marshal McLuhan](#)-esque turn, our media and how they work is now transforming how knowledge is created. In a sense, because of our technology, the past is changing. This is what I mean by digital ancients in the title of this course. We never confront the past directly: we only encounter that which survives to the present. The tools we use change the meaning of those traces, too. As well, the internet itself is not transparent. Its structures and its own history are starting to dictate what we understand about the past. Do a Google search, and one of the first results will be from the Wikipedia. That's as far as many people will look: and so if it's not on Wikipedia, not retrieved by Google and displayed in the first few results, *it may as well not exist*.

In this assignment, we will look at how Wikipedia creates knowledge about Antiquity.

Objective: to take a Wikipedia stub on Classical Antiquity, ([Ancient Greece stubs](#), [Ancient Rome stubs](#), [Ancient Roman mythology stubs](#) and [Ancient Greek mythology stubs](#)) and turn it into a Featured Article. While not formally allied with the [WikiProject Classical Greece and Rome](#) we share its goals:

1. Increase the exposure and quality of Classics articles on Wikipedia.
 2. Improve every article in the categories: [Ancient Greece stubs](#), [Ancient Rome stubs](#), [Ancient Roman mythology stubs](#) and [Ancient Greek mythology stubs](#).
 3. Ensure that every Classics article on Wikipedia is well written, comprehensive, factually accurate, appropriately referenced, neutral, and stable.
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4. Support other Wikiprojects, groups, and editors, who are striving to achieve the same goals.

This project will be done in groups of two. Further details will be discussed in class.

2) Creating Digital History

By the winter term, you will have encountered numerous theoretical and methodological issues concerning the representation of Antiquity using modern digital media. In this assignment, you will build a digital artifact exploring these issues as they pertain to the subject of your previous assignment. Other topics may be acceptable, but these must be cleared with Dr. Graham first. The digital artifact may for instance be a game, a simulation, an online exhibition, or a historical GIS. This project will be completed in groups of two. Your artifact will be presented to the rest of the class towards the end of term; further details will be discussed in class.

3) Weekly Wiki Class Notes

One of the aims of this course is to train you in the art of collaborative writing and knowledge creation. Wiki Class Notes is an exercise in reflecting the collective experience of the classroom (as a colleague puts it). The final exam will be drawn from this digital artifact that you are creating. You will have already been paired into groups for the major Fall assignment. Those will be the same groups for your Wiki Class Notes.

Each week, you and your partner will put together its notes on the Monday and Wednesday session. You will then login to the wiki, and create/add-to the relevant page. **Do not edit the page without logging in.** Otherwise, credit cannot be awarded.

If another group has already posted some materials, add your own (as appropriate: make this a coherent narrative, rather than a series of cut and pastes) or edit accordingly. This is an exercise in collaborative writing. If you dispute the information provided, or have a question etc, click on the discussion page and talk it out there. Your notes **SHOULD NOT TRANSCRIBE WHAT I'VE SCRIBBLED ON THE BOARD, A HANDOUT, OR A POWERPOINT.**

The class wiki may be found at <http://digitalhistory.graeworks.net/wiki>. Further details will be discussed in class.

4) Participation in the Seminar

Each week, two students will be responsible for leading the discussion of that week's readings. All other students are expected to have read the assigned readings and to be prepared to engage thoughtfully with the materials. You may sign up to lead a particular week's discussion on the course website. The number of discussions each student is expected to help lead depends on enrollment and is TBA.

In some weeks, we will do in-class exercises or 'mini projects' meant to develop your methodological or historiographical skills.

5) Final Exam

The final exam is an essay-style reflection on the topics, readings, and digital artifacts covered/created in the course.

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.

Useful programs & tools will be posted on the course website.

Plagiarism and Cheating

Please see the attached document.

Academic Accommodations

Please see the attached document.
