William J Turkel

History 9808A: Digital History (Fall 2011)

History 9808A is a one-semester graduate course on digital history that emphasizes both the presentation of history on the web, and the use of computational techniques to work with digital resources. It is required for students in the UWO public history program; other graduate students may take it with my permission. Digital history students may also be interested in the companion studio course History 9832B: Interactive Exhibit Design, offered in the winter term.

Students

- Combined Twitter Feed
- Combined Blog Feed

- Afana, Mohammed (@JamAfana). *Mafana*.
- Ayers, Adriana (@adrianajayers). *History and Such*.
- Coxon, April (@April_VC). *Back to the Future*.
- Jimenez-Mavillard, Antonio (@mavillard). *2011: A Digital Odyssey*.
- Martin, Kim (@antimony27). *How Humanists Read*.
- McGlynn, Douglas (@DubhglasMac). *Public History with a Hint of Tartan*.
- McGlynn, Laurie-Lynn (@LaurieLynnMac). *Creative Explorations into the Past*.
- Nagy, Sarah (@sarahknagy). *Sarah's 'Public History' Spiel*.
- Naraine, Sushima (@Sushima1). *History by Sushima*.
- Petry, Adrian (@adrianp_james). *Not So Private History*.
- Piticco, Laura (@laurapiticco19). *Musings on History*.
- Rivet, Heather (@HeatherRivet). *The Token American*.
- Rosa, Javier de la (@versae). *In My Humble Opinion*.
- Sikkema, Dave (@sikkemad). *Backwards with Time*.
- Simpkin, Sarah (@sarahsimpkin). *A Matter of Degrees*.
- Start, Mary Beth (@marybethstart). *Winter Studies*.
- Van Dyk, Lindsay (@LindsayVanDyk). *Cautious Endeavours*.
- Wasserman, Hilary (@HilaryWasserman). *Trapped in the Library*.

Schedule

1. 14 Sep. Going Digital in Two Hours
2. 21 Sep. Life Online
3. 28 Sep. Special Session: Historical Alternate Reality Games
4. 05 Oct. The Infrastructure of Search
5. 12 Oct. The Promise of Digital History
6. 19 Oct. Can History Be Open Source?
7. 26 Oct. Hacking the Academy

8. 02 Nov. <u>Digital Sources, Markup and Links</u>
9. 09 Nov. <u>Playing the Past</u>
10. 16 Nov. <u>Crowdsourcing</u>
11. 23 Nov. <u>Big Data</u>
12. 30 Nov. <u>Locative Technologies and the Internet of Things</u>
13. 07 Dec. NO CLASS

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for the course other than a willingness to learn new things and the perseverance to keep working when you're confused or when you realize that you could spend a lifetime learning about the topics and technologies that we will cover in class, and still not master them all. Students will come into the course with very different levels of experience and expertise. Some, often most, will be familiar only with the rudiments of computer and internet use. A few may already be skilled programmers.

Readings

There are two kinds of readings listed in the syllabus. "Readings for Discussion" must be done in advance by every student in the class, as they will form the basis of our seminar discussions. "Background Readings" provide some of the detail about particular methods, techniques or technologies. You should dip into these if you are especially interested in the week's topic or if you need more information for a particular assignment.

Evaluation

You will be graded on your participation in seminar discussions (20%), on your reflective blogging (40%; see below) and on a number of small assignments (40%). Your final grade will reflect how much you've learned or accomplished in this course, rather than any overall level of technical attainment.

Blogging and Tweeting

Every student in the class will have an academic blog and will be required to make regular posts to it. This use of blogging is to encourage you to engage in 'reflective practice,' that is, to force you to think about your learning and research as you are doing it. This process was described by Donald Schön in *The Reflective Practitioner* (London: Temple Smith, 1983):

> In each instance, the practitioner allows himself [or herself] to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomena before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behaviour. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomena and a change in the situation… He does not keep means and ends separate, but defines them interactively as he frames a problematic situation. He does not separate thinking from doing… Because his experimenting is a kind of action, implementation is built into his inquiry.

If you have never blogged before, spend some time familiarizing yourself with <u>existing history blogs</u>.

In the class you will have to write four blog assignments of about 1000-1500 words each. In addition to these, I will encourage you to post entries to your blog whenever you have something to say about history.

Setting up Accounts

Before the first class you should go to <u>WordPress</u> or <u>Blogger</u> and create an account and a blog. If possible, create the blog under your own name; if not, choose something professional sounding. Post an introductory message about yourself and then send me the URL of your blog so that I can add you to the course blogroll for History 9808A. You should also go to <u>Twitter</u> and create an account under your own name. Send me your Twitter user name.

Use of Computers

You will obviously be using computers for this course. If you don't have one of your own, you can use a machine in the department or in one of the campus computing labs. Unlike many other courses, however, I also encourage you to use your own laptop (if you have one) during seminar discussions. Take notes, look things up on the web, blog about the ongoing discussion, send tweets. To get the most out of the course, you will want to experiment with new forms of interaction and learning.

Wikipedia

In this class you will be exposed to a lot of technical terms and ideas which may be new to you. You should get in the habit of looking these up in <u>Wikipedia</u> whenever you come across something unfamiliar. You've probably heard that Wikipedia is an unreliable source. That's true, but it's true of any source. In this course we will discuss a number of strategies for reading Wikipedia and other online sources critically. We will also talk about how academics can help to improve the quality of Wikipedia.

Required Texts

Abelson, Hal, Ken Ledeen & Harry Lewis. *Blown to Bits: Your Life, Liberty, and Happiness after the Digital Explosion*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Addison-Wesley, 2008. Copies available in the UWO Bookstore.

Cohen, Daniel J. & Roy Rosenzweig, <u>*Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web*</u>. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2005. Full text available online; if you'd prefer to read a paper copy it can be ordered inexpensively from Amazon, Chapters, etc.

Witten, Ian H., Marco Gori & Teresa Numerico. *Web Dragons: Inside the Myths of Search Engine Technology*. San Francisco, CA: Morgan-Kaufmann, 2007. Copies available in the UWO Bookstore.

Further Reading

Lave, Jean & Etienne Wenger. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge, 1991.

Schön, Donald. "Educating the Reflective Practitioner," American Educational Research Association (Washington, DC, 1987).

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