



HIS 326

Digital History

Course Description

The advent of computers and the internet have transformed our world. The discipline of history might seem an unlikely candidate for radical transformation through technology, but that's exactly what's underway right now. From transforming access to new forms of collaboration to an entirely new set of publishing platforms, digital technology has changed the way we think about and do history at every level. In this class, we will examine the rise and impact of digital tools on the practice and theory of history, and consider the many ways it challenges us all to rethink our approach to the past. Students will be introduced to the variety of innovative ways that working historians are integrating new technologies into their study of the past, and will then apply what they've learned to creating their own digital history project.

Instructor: Jim Rankine

Email: jsrgla@rit.edu

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 2-3pm.

If you are not available during these times, I am happy to arrange a different time to meet!

Grading

Grades for this course will be determined using the following criteria:

93-100 = A	73-76 = C
90-92 = A-	70-72 = C-
87-89 = B+	67-69 = D+
83-86 = B	63-66 = D
80-82 = B-	60-62 = D-
77-79 = C+	0-59 = F

Attendance and Participation — 20%

Attending *and* participating in the class is important, both for your learning and for your peers. Together, we learn more effectively as collaborators and interlocutors than as isolated individuals. In Digital History, where projects require close collaboration, this is even more crucial. Participation means bringing your thoughts, skills, knowledge and ideas to class **in any way you can**. Participating in discussions, doing the assigned readings, and helping your classmates with your own insights and perspectives through questions or answers are all strongly encouraged, and I strive to create a classroom where everyone can find a way to do so. You are allowed **three** unexplained absences, although I strongly encourage you to attend all the classes! More absences will negatively impact your 20% Attendance and Participation grade.

If you are absent, for any reason, **please contact me** for information about anything you may have missed.

Homework Assignments — 20%

Throughout the semester you will be assigned homework assignments, these are tasks designed to reinforce what we have learned in class and to foster engagement with in-class sessions. These do not demand a high workload, but are extremely useful in enriching our class sessions. They also often offer you an opportunity to engage directly in the direction and content of our class discussions. Your contributions will be assessed over the course of the semester as part of your final grade.

Note: Some, **but not all**, of the assignments are noted in the syllabus schedule, some of them will be assigned during the semester.

Oral Presentations — 30% (15% each)

Twice during semester, students will present a short, concise review of an existing digital history project. This is an opportunity to apply the ideas we are learning in the course to assessing actual digital history projects, and develop your ideas and approach to your final project. Your review

should reflect a critical engagement with both the concepts and the practical elements explored in the course. Presentations will be 6-8 minutes, with a brief question and answer section.

Final Project — 30%

Digital history has always required a willingness to engage with the unfamiliar as well as close collaboration with others. Bearing this in mind, the class will form small groups to work on a unique digital history project from conception through to publication in a digital format. This project will be hosted on a website, but can take the form a wide variety of media, including maps, videos, podcasts, timelines, interactive exhibits, and games, or a combination of these. More detailed information will be provided early in semester as you form groups and proposals.

Academic Honesty

As members of an academic community, students and faculty assume certain responsibilities, one of which is to engage in honest communication. Academic dishonesty is a serious violation of the trust upon which an academic community depends. A common form of academic dishonesty is plagiarism. The representation of another person's work as one's own, or the attempt "to blur the line between one's own ideas or words and those borrowed from another source" —more specifically, the use of an idea, phrase, or other materials from a written or spoken source without acknowledgment in a work for which the student claims authorship. Examples include: the misrepresentation of sources used in a work for which the student claims authorship; the improper use of course materials in a work for which the student claims authorship; the use of papers purchased online and turned in as one's own work; submission of written work such as laboratory reports, computer programs, or papers, which have been copied from the work of other students, with or without their knowledge and consent. A student can avoid the risk of plagiarism in written work or oral presentations by clearly indicating, either in footnotes or in the paper or presentation itself, the source of any idea or wording that he or she did not produce. Sources must be given regardless of whether the idea, phrase or other material is quoted directly, paraphrased or summarized in the student-writer's own words.

Academic Assistance and More Resources

This classroom respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities. I invite you to talk with me about any concerns or situations that may affect your ability to complete your assignments successfully. Additionally, if you have any issues throughout the semester I strongly encourage you to contact the Academic Support Center (ASC). ASC supports students at RIT with services that promote academic success, including course-specific collaborative study groups, study skills counseling, a study skills course, and disability support.

Classroom Conduct

We are all responsible for maintaining a respectful, thoughtful and genuine atmosphere of mutual engagement in the classroom. You're all encouraged to express your thoughts, opinions, and ideas, and to agree or disagree with one another in a respectful manner. We will engage the content

with critical thought, imagination, and generosity, and extend the same to one another, and together, enrich the experience for everyone.

Technology Policy

You are welcome to use laptops for note-taking, displaying readings, and other classroom activities. However, be aware that it is all too easy to be distracted or diverted! You may have to turn off devices to be fully present in discussions, lectures and class activities. If you find yourself becoming distracted, please be prepared to turn your electronic devices off.

Note: Readings will be made available via MyCourses. If you have any issues accessing readings do not hesitate to contact me!

Class Schedule

Unit 1: What is Digital History? Theory and Ideas

Week 1

Monday 13th of January — Introductions, Expectations, Aspirations.

Wednesday 15th of January — Digital Humanities: A Tour

Week 2

Monday 20th of January — Martin Luther King Day, No Class.

Wednesday 22nd of January — Digital History: A History and a Future?

Roy Rosenzweig and Daniel Cohen, Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web, "[Introduction](#)" and "[Exploring the History Web](#)".

Week 3

Monday 27th of January — Getting Started in Digital History.

Roy Rosenzweig and Daniel Cohen, Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web, "[Getting Started](#)" and "[Becoming Digital](#)".

Wednesday 29th of January — Design, Audience, Purpose, and Presentation

Rosenzweig and Cohen, "[Designing for the History Web](#)" and "[Building an Audience](#)"

Week 4

Monday 3rd of February — Accessibility, Inclusion, Diversity

[George H. Williams, "Disability, Universal Design, and the Digital Humanities"](#)

Wednesday 5th of February — Oral Review Presentation 1 Due

Unit 2: Digital History in Practice

Week 5

Monday 10th of February — DHSS Lab Visit & Brainstorming Session

Wednesday 12th of February — Managing and Refining Historical Data

Week 6

Monday 17th of February — Virtual Cary Archive Demonstration with Stephen Galbraith.

Wednesday 19th of February — Wikipedia Edit-a-thon with Rebekah Walker

Week 7

Monday 24th of February — Data Visualisation with Rebekah Walker

[Hans Rosling, 'The Best Stats You've Ever Seen', TEDTalk, 2009.](#)

Wednesday 26th of February — Mapping and GIS Systems with Blair Tinker

Week 8

Monday 2nd of March — Creating, Visualising and Using Network Data.

Wednesday 4th of March — Publishing Your Digital Project

SPRING BREAK

Monday 9th of March NO CLASS

Wednesday 11th of March NO CLASS

Week 9

Monday 16th of March — Podcasting the Past, with Ellen Rosen and Jacob Kaucher.

[Benjamin Franklin's World, Episode 84, Zara Anishanslin, "How Historians Read Sources"](#)

Wednesday 18th of March — Photogrammetry and 3D Modelling with Josh Romphf

[The Challenges of Digital Preservation in a Virtual Reality Environment: The Case of Cirtual Bethel](#)

Week 10

Monday 23rd of March — Games, Gamification, and Digital History.

[Trent Hergenrader, "The Place of Games in the Digital Humanities", *On the Horizon*, Vol. 24, Issue 1, \(2016\), pp. 29-33.](#)

Wednesday 25th of March — XR: The New Frontier

[Sean Kheraj, "The Presence of the Past: The Possibilities of Virtual Reality for History"](#)

Unit 3: Creating Your Digital History Projects

Week 11

Monday 30th of March — Built to Last: Digital Preservation and Longevity.

Cohen and Rosenzweig, [“Preserving Digital History”](#)

Wednesday 1st of April — Oral Review Presentation 2 Due.

Week 12

Monday 6th of April — Digital Restoration and Recovery with Helen Davies.

Wednesday 8th of April — Individual Group Meetings

Week 13

Monday 13th of April — In Class Group Project Session

Wednesday 15th of April — In Class Group Project Session

Week 14

Monday 20th of April — In Class Group Project Session

Wednesday 22nd of April — Final In Class Group Project Session

Week 15

Monday 27th of April — Final Project In Class Presentations.

Wednesday 29th of April — Final Projects Due 5pm (No Class)