

COL 370 / HIST 211  
Spring 2014,  
Tuesday and Thursday, 1.10-2.30pm

## **Digital History**

**Instructor:** Joseph Yannielli  
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**Office Hours:** Tuesday and Thursday, by appointment

**Course Description:** This course is an introduction and critical examination of the emerging field of digital history. Digital history is related to the new and vibrant field of digital humanities, which has taken the academy by storm. The term "digital humanities" (DH) refers to the application of computing techniques to traditional humanities disciplines. This new field has implications for teaching and research, as well as for the presentation of cultural artifacts to the scholarly and general public. Digital humanists employ a wide-ranging set of techniques from text and data-mining to network analysis, topic modeling and 3D visualizations and animation. DH is also a highly collaborative field, and has sponsored far-flung interactions among scholars and students from disciplines that have traditionally been relatively isolated from one another.

Narrowing some of the broad questions raised by digital humanists, this course will take a disciplinary focus. It will examine traditional questions pertinent to historical study and will ask how or whether they have been reconfigured by new media and new applications of computing power. How do we evaluate truth claims in this new environment? Does the change in the mode of historical representation also change the types of questions and research we do? Has the web flattened the differences between public and scholarly history (and do these distinctions make sense)? How do digital tools enable new approaches to traditional fields such as scholarly editing?

**Course Structure:** This seminar has a theoretical and a practical side. The first half of the course provides an overview of current debates and methodologies in the field of digital history. Assignments for this portion of the course include scholarly books and articles, weekly blog entries, and site reviews. Classroom activities will help to build and assess digital literacy skills. The second half of the course focuses on hands-on experience and draws on the insights and abilities learned during the first half. The result will be a collaborative database project. Grades will be determined as follows:

Attendance and Participation.....	30%
Reading Responses.....	30%
Site Review.....	10%
Final Project.....	30%

### ***Required Books:***

Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006)

Roy Rosenzweig, *Clio Wired: The Future of the Past in the Digital Age* (Columbia University Press, 2011)

### ***Supplementary Books:***

James Boyle, *The Public Domain: Enclosing the Commons of the Mind* (Yale University Press, 2008)

Jack Dougherty and Kristen Nawrotzki (eds.), *Writing History in the Digital Age* (University of Michigan Press, 2013)

Matthew K Gold (ed.), *Debates in the Digital Humanities* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012)

*All books are available for FREE on the open web or through the library.*

### ***Assignments:***

*Reading Responses:* You will need to compose a reading response **each week** during the first half of the course. Choose two details that surprised or intrigued you and write a paragraph on each (maximum 500 words). Both details cannot be from the same source. These will be graded as miniature essays. Think creatively – do not be afraid to state your opinion or reference outside material. To receive full credit, your response should be appropriately titled, categorized, and tagged. Post your response to the course blog (<http://col370.blogs.wesleyan.edu>) by **midnight** on Monday.

*Site Review:* You will need to post at least one review of a major digital history project or database (minimum 1,000 words). You can choose any one of the websites mentioned in the reading assignments or select another site in consultation with me. Reviews should evaluate methodological strengths and weaknesses and should place the project in conversation with one or more of the course readings. For inspiration, check out some of the website reviews in the [Journal of American History](#). Reviews can be posted to the course blog at any time before **March 25**.

*Final Project:* The final component of this course is a collaborative digital history project. The goal will be to select, organize, and interpret a body of original source material. We will divide into smaller working groups, each of which will contribute a tangible product to the larger effort. During this time, you will track your progress and coordinate activities on the course blog. The nature and scope of this project will depend upon the particular interests and abilities of the class.

***Late Policy and Academic Integrity:***

I expect all course work to be turned in on time. Late assignments will be penalized 10 points for every 24 hours past the deadline and a note from your dean or medical professional is necessary for any exceptions. Evidence of plagiarism or other violations of the honor code will be taken very seriously.

***Students with Disabilities:***

It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known to us in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with us as soon as possible during the third week of the semester, so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at:

<http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/disabilities/>

***Schedule:***

Week 1

Jan. 23 – Introductions

Week 2 **History of the Digital**

Jan. 28 – Blum, “[A Network of Networks](#)”

Rosenzweig, “[Wizards, Bureaucrats, Warriors, and Hackers](#)”

McDaniel, “[Blogging in the Early Republic](#)”

[Wayback Machine](#)

Jan. 30 – Film: *To Dream Tomorrow*

Week 3 **What is Digital History?**

Feb. 4 – Cohen and Rosenzweig, “[Introduction](#)” and “[Exploring the History Web](#)”

Rosenzweig, “[Scarcity or Abundance?](#)”

[What is Digital Humanities?](#) and [#DH](#)

Feb. 6 – Posner, “[How did they make that?](#)”

[Perseus Digital Library](#) and [Women in World History](#)

[Archimedes Palimpsest](#) and [Livingstone Spectral Imaging Project](#)

[Railroads and the Making of Modern America](#) and [The Louverture Project](#)

[Digital Harlem](#) and [Murder on Beacon Hill](#)

[Invisible Australians](#) and [London Lives](#)

#### Week 4 **Big Data**

Feb. 11 – Manovich, “[Trending](#)”

Theibault, “[Visualizations and Historical Arguments](#)”

Cohen, “[Is Google Good for History?](#)”

Michel et al., “[Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books](#)”

O’Malley, “[Ngramatic](#)”

Ewing et al., “[Mining Coverage of the Flu](#)”

*Blog Challenge:* Embed a relevant image

Feb. 13 – Film: [The history of our world in 18 minutes](#)

Willard, “[Picture of Nations](#)”

Woodbridge, “[Chart of the Inhabited World](#)”

[Feltron Reports](#)

#### Week 5 **Small Data**

Feb. 18 – [The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database](#)

Rediker, “[Introduction](#)”

[Visualizing Emancipation](#)

Ayers and Nesbit, "[Seeing Emancipation](#)"

[Legacies of British Slave-ownership](#)

Draper, "[Possessing Slaves](#)"

*Blog Challenge:* Embed a relevant film or music clip

Feb. 20 – [Documenting Runaway Slaves](#)

[The Geography of Slavery in Virginia](#)

[North Carolina Runaway Slave Advertisements](#)

[Texas Runaway Slave Project](#)

[Yale Slavery and Abolition Portal](#)

**Week 6 The Democratization of Knowledge**

Feb. 25 – Sweet, "[Wikipedia's Success and the Rise of the Amateur-Expert](#)"

Rosenzweig, "[Can History be Open Source?](#)"

Wolff, "[The Historian's Craft, Popular Memory, and Wikipedia](#)"

Updike, "[The End of Authorship](#)"

Black, "[The Dumbing Down of World Knowledge](#)"

Feb. 27 – Saxton, "[Wikipedia and Women's History](#)"

Potter, "[Prikipedia?](#)" and "[Readers Respond](#)"

Yasseri et al., "[The most controversial topics in Wikipedia](#)"

[Wikipedia Guidelines](#)

**Week 7 Open Access and the Digital Divide**

March 4 – Film: *We Are Legion*

March 6 – Boyle, “[The Second Enclosure Movement](#)”

Rosenzweig, “[Should Historical Scholarship Be Free?](#)”

Bailey, “[All the Digital Humanists Are White, All the Nerds Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave](#)”

Williams, “[Disability, Universal Design, and the Digital Humanities](#)”

Cohen and Rosenzweig, “[Owning the Past](#)”

Film: [Workers Leaving the Googleplex](#)

[Computer and Internet Use in the United States](#) and [Global Internet Map 2012](#)

[Arguments for Open Access](#)

*Blog Challenge:* Embed a link to an earlier post by a classmate

**\*\*Spring Break\*\***

### Week 8 **Crowdsourcing Cultural Heritage**

March 25 – Owens, “[The Key Questions of Cultural Heritage Crowdsourcing Projects](#)”

Thomas et al., “[History Harvests](#)”

Gutterman, “[OutHistory.org](#)”

Castañeda, “[Writing Chicana/o History](#)”

Cohen and Rosenzweig, “[Collecting History Online](#)”

[DIY History](#) and [Historypin](#)

[reCAPTCHA](#)

*Final Day for Site Reviews*

March 27 – *Guest Speaker:* Paul Grant-Costa, [Yale Indian Papers Project](#)

Week 9 **Planning the Final Project**

April 1 – Cohen and Rosenzweig, “[Becoming Digital](#),” “[Designing for the History Web](#),”  
and “[Building an Audience](#)”

[The Programming Historian 2](#) and [Bamboo DiRT](#)

April 3 – Working Group Assignments

Weeks 10-13 **Individual and Group Meetings**

April 8 – *Guest Speaker*: April Glaser, [Electronic Frontier Foundation](#)

Week 14

May 6 – Final Project Launch

Conclusions