

HIST 941 (970)
Seminar in Digital History
William G. Thomas, III
University of Nebraska
Syllabus
Spring 2007

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Office Hours: W and F 1:30-2:30

Course Description:

This research seminar course will examine leading digital history works of scholarship, explore theories of narrative in hypertext, and develop models of digital scholarship. Students will be expected to conduct research around selected topics in history, focus their work on the creation of a digital project, and participate in class discussion on methods and theories of digital media. Projects may take many forms, including but not limited to: web site hypertext, xml/xsl markup of texts, geographic information systems data sets, database development, web programming, animation and simulation, and visualization technologies. The emphasis in this course, however, will be to develop in students an acute awareness of the consequences of writing for the digital medium. Students will explore the possibilities for scholarly communication in the digital medium and their theoretical implications at every stage of their work. Students will gain instruction from Library's Center for Digital Research in the Humanities staff on technical issues and concentrate their work on the forms of narrative available in the digital medium. The final research project will feature the completion of a digital work of scholarship equivalent in scope to a standard research seminar paper. Readings include among other articles, Cohen and Rosenzweig, *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web*, and Jerome McGann, *Radiant Textuality*.

Course Readings:

In bookstore:

Patrick J. Lynch and Sarah Horton, *Web Style Guide 2nd Edition Basic Design Principles for Creating Web Sites* (Yale University Press 2001)

Chuck Musciano and Bill Kennedy, *HTML and XHTML: The Definitive Guide* (O'Reilly, 2007)

McGann, Jerome, *Radiant Textuality: Literature after the World Wide Web* (Palgrave 2002)

Daniel J. Cohen & Roy Rosenzweig, Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

On reserve <http://segonku.unl.edu>:

selections from Schreibman, Susan, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth, *A Companion to Digital Humanities* (Blackwell Publishing 2004)

David J. Staley, "Designing and Displaying Historical Information in the Electronic Age," *Journal of the Association for History and Computing* 1, no. 1 (June 1998).

Ayers, Edward L. "The Pasts and Futures of Digital History," Virginia Center for Digital History, < <http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/PastsFutures.html>>

Thomas, William G. III, and Edward L. Ayers, "The Differences Slavery Made: Two Communities in the American Civil War," *American Historical Review*, December 2003. <<http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/AHR>>

Ethington, Philip J. "Los Angeles and the Problem of Urban Historical Knowledge," *American Historical Review* 2000.
<<http://cwis.usc.edu/dept/LAS/history/historylab/LAPUHK/>>

Hunt, Lynne, and Censer, Jack, "Imaging the French Revolution: Depictions of the Revolutionary Crowd," *American Historical Review* 2004. < <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/imaging/essays/introessay.html>>

Darnton, Robert, "An Early Information Society: News and the Media in Eighteenth Century Paris," *American Historical Review* 105 February 2000.

Hayden White, "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory," *History and Theory* vol. 23 (Feb. 1984): 1-33. JSTOR

Daniel J. Cohen, "History and the Second Decade of the Web" *Rethinking History* Vol.8, No.2, June 2004, pp. 293-301
<http://chnm.gmu.edu/resources/essays/essay.php?id=34>

Orville Vernon Burton, "American Digital History," *Social Science Computer Review*, Vol. 23 No. 2, Summer 2005 206-220 <http://chnm.gmu.edu/resources/essays/essay.php?id=30>

Janet Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (Free Press, 1997).

Stuart Moulthrop, "You Say You Want a Revolution: Hypertext and the Laws of Media," *Postmodern Culture* 1(3) May 1991, in *Essays in Postmodern Culture* (Oxford University Press, 1993)

Marshall McLuhan, "Introduction," *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (McGraw-Hill, 1964)

Selected Web Site Reviews:

The Valley of the Shadow
Walt Whitman Archive
Mark Twain and His Times
Uncle Tom's Cabin
Television News of the Civil Rights Era
Who Killed William Robinson
Malcolm X: A Research Site
Southern History Database
The Geography of Slavery
Virtual Jamestown

Other Web sites selected by students

Grading:

Class Participation	40 %
Written Web Reviews	20 %
Final Project	40 %

Web Reviews: At each class meeting web reviews and analysis will be conducted. Students will be responsible for writing a detailed review of one of the above web sites and two that they have selected not from the list: including the technical specifications, systems, and practices, and forms of presentation, navigation, and design. Narrative, argument, and analysis in these sites will also be evaluated based on the theory and readings in the course. Each student will complete three independent reviews with links and examples and these will be posted on the course wiki "DigitalHistoryWiki" site in moodle--<http://segonku.unl.edu>.

Final Project: Each student will complete a final web site digital history project. The basis for the project should be an existing piece of research--a seminar paper, a chapter for a dissertation, an M.A. thesis. The research project for this course will be to develop an argument in digital form that is an extension of, or elaboration of this earlier work. Because the course will emphasize the production of an argument in digital form, students will be encouraged to begin with a project for which they have already done significant primary research. With sources for digitization identified early on, students will proceed to digitize and render these sources and the argument/narrative they will make. All final project work will be in basic HTML or XHTML. Students will concentrate on how design and the medium affect their interpretive work and its relationship to the historiography. The final project will be approximately 30-40 web pages in scope and should represent an equivalent work for a research seminar paper.

Class Participation: Students will be assessed on their participation in the discussion of readings and in their collaborative postings on the seminar's discussion lists. The discussions are encouraged to range from technical fixes to ideas about the nature of the medium and narrative.

Additional Resources: Students may wish to take a free UNL ITG Resources short course on various software packages, such as Flash, SPSS, Dreamweaver, or others. The course schedules are available at: <http://itg.unl.edu>.

The Library will support this course through its Digital Learning Lab staff and systems. The web site is: <http://www.unl.edu/DLL/>. We will take a tour of these facilities in Week 2 and meet with Library staff. All aspects of digital capture and digitization support will be coordinated for this course through Jeanne Cross (jcross3@unl.edu)

We will have server space on the CDRH development server for project development as well as space through student's individual accounts. Extraordinary disk space needs can be met through the Library and other arrangements. Our server for class work, readings, postings, and exchange will be: <http://segonku.unl.edu>

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: What is Digital History?

Readings:

Thomas "Computing and the Historical Imagination," *Blackwell's Companion to Digital Humanities*.

Daniel J. Cohen, "History and the Second Decade of the Web" *Rethinking History* Vol.8, No.2, June 2004, pp. 293-301

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/resources/essays/essay.php?id=34>

Orville Vernon Burton, "American Digital History," *Social Science Computer Review*, Vol. 23 No. 2, Summer 2005 206-

220 <http://chnm.gmu.edu/resources/essays/essay.php?id=30>

Assignment due Friday: Write a brief description of your proposed research project (1 page) with a list of identified primary sources and their location and availability (1 page).

Week 3: What is New Media?

Readings:

Vannevar Bush, "As We May Think," *Atlantic Monthly*

Lev Manovich, "What is New Media," in *The Language of New Media*, 18-55

Marshall McLuhan, "Introduction" *Understanding Media*

Week 4: *American Historical Review* Digital History Scholarship

Readings:

Thomas, William G. III, and Edward L. Ayers, "The Differences Slavery Made: Two Communities in the American Civil War," *American Historical Review*, December 2003. <<http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/AHR>>

Ethington, Philip J. "Los Angeles and the Problem of Urban Historical Knowledge," *American Historical Review* 2000. <<http://cwis.usc.edu/dept/LAS/history/historylab/LAPUHK/>>

Hunt, Lynne, and Censer, Jack, "Imaging the French Revolution: Depictions of the Revolutionary Crowd," *American Historical Review* 2004. <<http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/imaging/essays/introessay.html>>

Darnton, Robert, "An Early Information Society: News and the Media in Eighteenth Century Paris," *American Historical Review* 105 February 2000.

Week 5: Hypertext Theory

Readings:

McGann, Jerome. *Radiant Textuality*

Murray, Janet. *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, 65-97

Moulthrop, Stuart. "You say you want a revolution"

Week 6: Narrative and History

Readings:

Ayers, Edward, "Pasts and Futures of Digital History" <http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/PastsFutures.html>

Hayden White, "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory," *History and Theory* vol. 23 (Feb. 1984): 1-33. in JSTOR

David J. Staley, "Designing and Displaying Historical Information in the Electronic Age," *Journal of the Association for History and Computing* 1, no. 1 (June 1998).

Week 7: Tools

Readings:

Chuck Musciano and Bill Kennedy, *HTML and XHTML: The Definitive Guide* (O'Reilly, 2007), chapter 1.

Marilyn Deegan and Simon Tanner, "Conversion to Primary Sources," *Blackwell's Companion to Digital Humanities*.

Week 8: Design

Readings:

Patrick J. Lynch and Sarah Horton, *Web Style Guide 2nd Edition Basic Design Principles for Creating Web Sites* (Yale University Press 2001)

Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, "'So the Colors Cover the Wires': Interface, Aesthetics, and Usability," *Blackwell's Companion to Digital Humanities*.

Week 9: Planning

Readings:

Daniel J. Cohen & Roy Rosenzweig, Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), chapters 7.

Daniel Pitti, "Designing Sustainable Projects and Publications," *Blackwell's Companion to Digital Humanities*.

Week 10: Research

Week 11: Research

Week 12: Research

Week 13: Research

Week 14: Production Prototype

Week 15: Revision and Editing

Week 16: Final Project Due