The University of Iowa

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Department of History

**Digital History Workshop:**

**Global Perspectives on the History of Rural Iowa**

**HIST:2195**

Spring 2020, 3 s.h.

TTh 2:00-3:15pm

Blank Honors Center 214

ICON site: <https://uiowa.instructure.com/courses/127857>

Project site: <https://dsps.lib.uiowa.edu/digital-oxford-twp>

**Matthew Noellert**

Office location: Schaeffer Hall 272; Drop-in hours: W 1:00-4:00pm and by appointment

Phone: 319-335-0802

E-mail: [matthew-noellert@uiowa.edu](mailto:matthew-noellert@uiowa.edu)

History Department office: Schaeffer Hall 280, 319-335-2299

DEO:Landon Storrs, Schaeffer Hall 276

Any revisions to this syllabus will be posted on the course website. Students are responsible for periodically checking the course website and course announcements.

# Course Description

In this hands-on, collaborative workshop, we will work together as a team to research and write a social history of a single Iowa community. The subject of the course is a narrowly defined place that makes it possible to dive deep into the complexity of its long-term social, ecological, economic, political, and cultural development. These developments will be explored using the methods of the twenty-first century historian: computerized textual, spatial and data analysis, and collaborative digital publishing. Through this case study, students will learn how to:

1. Critically engage archival documents and other data sources.
2. Identify interactions between past and present.
3. Find the global in the local.
4. Create new narratives about the past to influence the future.

# Course Format

The entire semester is devoted to creating a single digital project website (URL above) that documents our research and tells the story of our subject community. Beyond this, the format of the course is open-ended and exploratory. The shape of the project will depend on the nature of the data we discover and the interests and skills each student brings to the class.

The course consists of two 75-minute classes each week. The first class each week will focus on planning, organizing, and discussing the progress of our project. The second class each week will focus on data collection, analysis, and writing. We will take full advantage of the TILE classroom and also regularly meet at the State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI).

After a few introductory weeks, students will form small groups and begin working on sub-projects. Individual and group assignments will vary depending on the nature of each sub-project. See Assignments and Grading for details.

All materials for this course are freely available online, in the Main Library, or at the SHSI.

# Assignments and Grading

There are two kinds of assignments in this course: regular weekly tasks and project research tasks. In accordance with Federal and UI guidelines, I expect that each week you will spend an average of 6 hours on coursework outside of class, in addition to the 150 minutes of class time.

## Weekly Tasks

### Timeline

Before each Tuesday class, each individual student must add one new entry to the collaborative timeline Google spreadsheet (HIST2195-Sp20 TimelineJS3). For each entry you must fill in:

1. Date/time period (as precise as possible)
2. Event level (Township, County, State or higher)
3. Headline
4. Text description, with brief explanation of why the event is important/relevant.
5. Source citation (Chicago style, author-date)

Optional: media (photograph, video, screenshot, etc.)

This is not really an independent assignment, but something you should be on the lookout for in the course of your reading and research. For example, in a private diary you are reading it mentions when the first ice cream parlor in town opened. Add it to the timeline!

### Reading Report

Before each Tuesday class, each individual student must post a brief report on one of the items in the course Zotero library (URL below) to our annotated bibliography webpage. Students are also encouraged to add relevant new items to the library. For either one article or one chapter of a book (or other item longer than 20-30 pages), the report must answer the following questions:

1. Is this a primary (direct) or secondary (indirect) source? Why?
2. What is the most important argument/idea?
3. What kind of data/evidence does the author use? (If it is not explicit, guess.)
4. What is the biggest shortcoming? (In terms of argument, biases, methods, etc.)
5. What can the reading contribute to our project in general or your current research task? (In terms of ideas, information, questions, answers, etc.)

Try to complete this task in less than one hour. This means that the aim of reading must be to actively answer these five questions, not passively read the text from start to finish.

### Group Research Report

In class each Tuesday, present a 5-minute report of the research progress of your group. In your report, answer the following questions:

1. What did you accomplish over the past week?
2. What problems did you encounter?
3. Who/where did you go to for help?
4. What is your next step?

Think of these oral reports as an opportunity to reflect on what you are doing and get feedback from peers. They can also be based on your research journal/documentation, as described below.

## Research Tasks

### Archive Analysis

Before the third Thursday class of the semester, each individual student must post a brief analysis of a single SHSI archival document sample to the appropriate webpage. Select a sample of a type of document that you may be interested in working on for the rest of the semester. Your sample can consist of a representative page of an administrative record (census, tax list, land map, etc.), a historical newspaper, private correspondence, a single photograph, etc. Your analysis must answer the following questions:

1. What information interests you, and why? (Information including both the content and the physical properties of the document.)
2. What information is difficult to understand (not just difficult to read)?
3. Why do you think this document was created?
4. What questions can the document help us answer?
5. What does the document *not* tell us?

To prepare for this assignment, in the second week of the semester we will do example analyses together in class and you will be introduced to the SHSI collections.

### Digital Project

Over the course of the semester, each group must complete all of the following 10 research tasks for at least one subtopic:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Topic | Subtopic | Research Task | | | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Find Data | Evaluate | Digitize | Transcribe | Tabulate | Categorize | Visualize | Compare | Explain | Publish |
| People | Migration |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Family |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Resources | Land |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Housing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Animals |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Implements |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Economy | Agriculture |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Industry |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Consumption |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Transport/Trade |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Society | Religion |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Politics |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Education |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Culture |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

You will keep track of your progress in these tasks in a research journal/blog on our project website. This journal will be the basis of your sub-project documentation, which includes a written record of all the decisions you made in the course of your research and a manual that explains to a stranger how to use all your data and analysis. Here are some examples of things to document for each task:

1. Find Data: How and where did you find your original data sources? Why did you choose to focus on the data you are using? What other options were there?
2. Evaluate: Who created your data, for what purpose, and how? What are its strengths? What are its biases/limitations?
3. Digitize: Who digitized your data, and how? If it is not digitized, do you need/want to digitize it? Why?
4. Transcribe: Who transcribed your data? What format/structure did you use, and why? What data did you choose to transcribe, and why? What data did you choose to leave out of your transcription, and why?
5. Tabulate: What variables/types of information are in your data? Which variables are well-recorded and which are poorly recorded? What are the relationships between different variables? What kinds of spatial or temporal patterns can you explore in your data?
6. Categorize: How and why do you group together different records/observations? What questions are you trying to answer?
7. Visualize: What do you want to tell your audience? What is the most effective way to show the patterns you found (on a map, a table, a graph, a diagram, animation, etc.), and why?
8. Compare: How do your findings compare to your initial ideas or expectations? How do your findings compare to what other people have said or done on the subject for the same place and time, or in different places or different times?
9. Explain: What can your findings tell us about the subject? What can they not tell us, or what’s missing/incomplete? What are the broader implications of your findings? What new questions do they raise?
10. Publish: Share, describe, and explain your research and your findings to a general audience on our project website.

These tasks will be evaluated based on the quality and completeness of your documentation as well as your final product(s). Because everyone’s data is different, no two tasks will be the same. Some groups may have a harder time finding and evaluating their sources, some groups may have to spend more time on digitizing and transcribing, and some groups may spend more time on visualizing and comparing, etc. In all cases, however, I will treat your documentation as an accurate reflection of the amount of effort you put into your research.

## Grading

### Assignment Points

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Weekly Tasks | Timeline Entries (9\* x 1 point) | 10 |
| Reading Reports (9\* x 1 point) | 10 |
| Group Research Reports (9\* x 2 points) | 20 |
|  |  |  |
| Research Tasks | Archive Analysis (1 x 10 points) | 10 |
| Digital Project tasks (10 x 5 points) | 50 |
| Course Total |  | 100 |
|  |  |  |

\*Note: Because the university canceled classes the week of 3/23, there are now only 9 weeks of weekly tasks instead of 10.

This course will use the plus or minus grading system. A+ grade(s) are given only in extraordinary situations. Below is a detailed breakdown of grade ranges:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A+ (100)  A (93-99)  A- (90-92) | B+ (87-89)  B (83-86)  B-(80-82) | C+ (77-79)  C (73-76)  C- (70-72) | D+ (67-69)  D (63-66)  D- (60-62) | F (<60%) |

### Grading Policy

Assignments will be graded satisfactory, revise and resubmit, or incomplete. If you are asked to revise an assignment, you will have one week to revise and re-submit it for full credit, otherwise you will receive half credit.

### Late Policy

Any assignment that is submitted within one week after the stated due date will receive half credit. Any assignment that is more than one week late will not be counted (0 points).

# Class Schedule

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Week** | **Topic** | **Class (Date)** | **Homework Before Class** | **Classwork** |
| 1 | Course Goals | 1/21 | - Read: course syllabus | - Introductions - Pirsig's brick |
| 1/23 | - Pick your favorite digital project from the below “Digital Project Examples” | - Local, social, digital history |
| 2 | The Township | 1/28 | - Read: "History of Johnson County, Iowa", in *Combination Atlas Map of Johnson County, Iowa* (1870), pp.6-7 - Read: "Annals of Oxford", in *History of Johnson County, Iowa* (1883), pp.586-598 | - 1888 *Oxford Journal* front page - 1860 manuscript census - 1842 township survey |
| 1/30 |  | MEET @State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI) 402 Iowa Ave. - Orientation |
| 3 | Course Methods | 2/4 | - Read: "Historical Observation", in *The Historian's Craft*, pp.48-78 - Read: "Preface", in Suicide (1897), pp.xxxiii-xxxvii | - Evidence-based historical research - Sources, information, and data |
| 2/6 | - Post archive analysis | MEET @SHSI |
| 4 to 8 | Weekly Routine | T | - Add timeline entry to spreadsheet  - Post reading report to webpage - Prepare group report for class | - Group research reports - Discuss research topics |
| Th | - Work on research tasks - Update research journal/documentation | - Review documentation - Discuss research tasks |
| 9 | SPRING BREAK |  |  |  |
| 10 to 14 | Weekly Routine |  |  |  |
| 15 | Project website | 4/28 | - Write project and sub-project introductions and conclusions | - Discuss project framing and audience |
| 4/30 | - Edit and clean up site | - Make list of loose ends |
| 16 | 5/5 | - Review all of your own group's published materials | - Discuss site organization and interface |
| 5/7 | - Review another group's published materials | - Discuss social media and outreach |

# Online Resources

### Course Zotero Library

Iowa\_workshop\_Hist2195-Sp20 <https://www.zotero.org/groups/2426135/iowa_workshop_hist2195-sp20/library>

* Contains a live collection of readings relevant to this course.

### Some example digital projects

(Note: All these examples took more than one semester to accomplish.)

*Brainerd, Kansas*. <http://www.rootinaround.com/brainerd/>

Connecticut Humanities. <https://connecticuthistory.org/>

Chicago Historical Society and Northwestern University. *The Great Chicago Fire and the Web of Memory*. <http://www.greatchicagofire.org/>

Downs, Gregory P. and Scott Nesbit. *Mapping Occupation.* <http://mappingoccupation.org/>

Ehrstine, Glenn. *German Iowa and the Global Midwest.* <http://germansiniowa.lib.uiowa.edu/>

Gordon, Colin. *Growing Apart: A Political History of American Inequality*. <https://scalar.usc.edu/works/growing-apart-a-political-history-of-american-inequality/index>

Gordon, Colin. *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City.* <http://mappingdecline.lib.uiowa.edu/>

Harvard University. *China Biographical Database Project (CBDB)*. <http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/cbdb/home>.

“Imaging the French Revolution,” *American Historical Review* 110 (Feb. 2005). <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/imaging/home.html>

Iowa Women’s Archive. *Migration is Beautiful.* <http://migration.lib.uiowa.edu/>

Thomas, William G. III, and Edward L. Ayers. *The Differences Slavery Made: A Close Analysis of Two American Communities*. <http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/AHR/>

University of Delaware. *Colored Conventions Project.* <http://ccwrdpress.lib.udel.edu/>

### Recommended Sources

*Ancestry.com*. <https://www.ancestry.com/>

* Contains huge digital collection of vital records, including manuscript census, birth, marriage, and death registers, etc. etc.
* Requires a free account, then all record images are downloadable.

*Community History Archive.* Oxford Public Library.<http://oxfordpl.advantage-preservation.com/>

* Text searchable, digitized local newspapers:
  + *Oxford Weekly Journal*,1888-95
  + *Oxford Leader,* 1918-32
  + *Johnson County Democrat and Oxford Leader,* 1932-41
  + *Johnson County Democrat,* 1932-37
  + *Oxford High School Report Card*, 1950-52
  + *The Leader,* 1985-93
* Downloadable one page at a time.

*Digital Johnson County*. <http://worldmap.harvard.edu/digitalJC/>

* Contains geo-rectified maps and atlases of land parcels and owners in 1875, 1900, 1905, and 1930.
* Contains various other ecological and social layers.
* All map data is downloadable.

*Historical Statistics of the United States* (HSUS)*.* Millennial edition online. <https://hsus.cambridge.org/HSUSWeb/toc/hsusHome.do>

* Comprehensive resource for scholarship and data on national trends in historical U.S. population and economy, etc.

*Internet Archive*. <https://archive.org/>

* Possibly the largest digital library ever.
* Everything published before 1923 is downloadable in plain text (OCR).
* Includes the Wayback Machine, a 20+ year history of over 400 billion web pages where you can find pages that do not exist anymore.

*Iowa Digital Library.* <http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/>

* Contains a wide variety of thematic collections of local Iowa archives.

*Iowa State University, Sociology Extension.* <https://ext.soc.iastate.edu/>

* Provides various reports and resources for understanding rural life in Iowa, mostly post-1980s.

*Johnson County Property Information Viewer.* <https://gis.johnson-county.com/piv/>

* Basemaps include aerial photos from 1930s-2019.
* Links to recent parcel data, including past three owners, land values, etc.
* Assessor’s reports for each parcel have links to digital images of deeds, from which you can browse through all deeds and other land records from 1840s-present (text searchable from 1983-) through the Johnson County, Iowa Recorder’s eSearch, <http://recorder.johnson-county.com/External/LandRecords/protected/SrchQuickName.aspx>

*The Annals of Iowa,* 1863-. <https://ir.uiowa.edu/annals-of-iowa/>

* Official journal of the State Historical Society of Iowa, since 1863.
* Contains useful articles on local Iowa history, etc., all open-access

*The Programming Historian.* <https://programminghistorian.org/en/>

* The first place you should go to learn digital tools and methods.

*General Land Office Records*. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. <https://glorecords.blm.gov/>

* Contains original land patent, survey, and tract book records for all of Johnson Co. (and most of the U.S.).
* All images are downloadable.

# College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Information and Policies for Undergraduates

### Absences and Attendance

Students are responsible for attending class and for contributing to the learning environment of a course. Students are also responsible for knowing their course absence policies, which will vary by instructor. All [absence policies](https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/attendance-absences), however, must uphold the UI policy related to student illness, mandatory religious obligations, including Holy Day obligations, unavoidable circumstances, or University authorized activities. Students may use this [absence form](https://registrar.uiowa.edu/sites/registrar.uiowa.edu/files/wysiwyg_uploads/absence_explanation_form2019revised.pdf) to aid communication; the instructor will decide if the absence is excused or unexcused.

### Academic Integrity

All undergraduates enrolled in courses offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's [Code of Academic](https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code) [Honesty.](https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code)  Misconduct is reported to the College, resulting in suspension or other sanctions, with sanctions communicated with the student through the UI email address.

### Accommodations for Disabilities

UI is committed to an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (such as mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related condition) by registering with [Student Disability Services (SDS)](https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/). The student is then responsible for discussing specific accommodations with the instructor.

### Administrative Home of the Course

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the administrative home of this course and governs its add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and related policies. Other colleges may have different policies. See [CLAS policies](https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook) for more information.

### Communication and the Required Use of UI Email

Students are responsible for official correspondences sent to the UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for all communication within UI ([Operations Manual, III.15.2](https://opsmanual.uiowa.edu/human-resources/professional-ethics-and-academic-responsibility#15.2).k).

### Complaints

Students [with a complaint](https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities) about a course should first visit with the instructor or course supervisor and then with the Chair of the department or program offering the course; students may next bring the issue to CLAS in 120 Schaeffer Hall.

### Final Examination Policies

The [final exam](https://registrar.uiowa.edu/final-examination-scheduling-policies) schedule is announced around the fifth week of classes; students are responsible for knowing the date, time, and place of a final exam. Students should not make travel plans until knowing this information. No exams of any kind are allowed the week before finals.

### Nondiscrimination in the Classroom

UI is committed to making the classroom a respectful and inclusive space for all people irrespective of their gender, sexual, racial, religious or other identities. Toward this goal, students are invited to optionally share their preferred names and pronouns with their instructors and classmates. The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination and harassment against individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other identity categories set forth in the University’s Human Rights policy. [Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity](https://diversity.uiowa.edu/office/equal-opportunity-and-diversity).

### Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community must uphold the UI mission and contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment must be reported immediately. For assistance contact [OSMRC](https://osmrc.uiowa.edu/).