

The Digital Past

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George Mason University, HIST 390, Summer 2018

Welcome to History 390, The Digital Past. In this course you will learn to do history using digital tools. This course — which satisfies the university's IT requirement — teaches the fundamentals of information technology by applying them to practical historical problems. Although this is an upper division history course, no background in history is required. Throughout our semester, you will use the technologies and strategies we learn in class to explore some aspect of Boston's history between 1890 and 1925. The resulting final research project will be an online exhibit that showcases the skills you have learned in this class.

Boston, in many ways, exemplified the changes in American cities at the turn of the century. Rapid urbanization, technological changes, increased immigration, and changing gender and racial roles all created dramatic change in the city of Boston between 1890 and 1925. Focusing on one city creates a coherent historical theme for the class but also allows students to explore their individual interests and allows us to take advantage of the large amount of digital material about Boston available online.

Over the course of this abbreviated summer term, you will learn how to find, interpret, and analyze primary sources on the web as well as how to put them into context with secondary literature. We will create, manipulate, and interpret datasets. You will create visualizations and analyze documents using digital tools. You will also learn how to effectively present both visual and textual sources on the web as well as how to write and publish effectively on the web. This class prioritizes learning by doing, and most weeks we'll learn a tool and use it to analyze a historical problem.

In this course you will:

- learn the history of Boston between 1890 and 1925.
- create historical scholarship using digital resources and tools, and
- publish on the web

Course Policies

Acknowledgments

Variations of this class are regularly taught by numerous faculty at George Mason. I am indebted to the work of those who have taught this class before me, including: Sharon Leon, Lincoln Mullen, Erin Bush, and Gretchen Burgess.

Communication

Students are welcome to come to my office hours or to arrange an appointment at any time during the semester. All other course communication will take place in our Slack group. If you have registered for the course, and have not received an invitation in your email, please add yourself to the group using your Mason e-mail address. All course announcements will be posted to the #h390summer2017 channel and you are responsible for checking this venue regularly. You may download the Slack app onto your electronic device or use the web based version. See this getting started guide for more information.

Required Purchases

You will need to sign up for Student plan with Reclaim Hosting (\$30) in lieu of a textbook. We'll go over this in class, but please sign up for an account no later than June 6th. The wonderful folk at Reclaim have provided a discount code for students enrolled in this course. Use the coupon code #reclaim4edu to get 20% off your purchase of a student plan.

All other readings will be available for free online.

Technology

You will need to bring a laptop or tablet to every class. You will need it to complete required in-class exercises. Because our class is 2 hours and 40 minutes long, please charge your computer beforehand and bring a charger to class with you.

Technology, while often wonderful, can also cause unexpected problems. I encourage all students to back up their work on an external hard drive or in a Dropbox account. Always keep separate copies of your written assignments and other work. Computer failures are not an acceptable excuse for late assignments and will not constitute an emergency.

Late Work

All assignments must be turned in by the date and time they are due. Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a grad (e.g. from a B to a B-) after the deadline. An additional 1/3 of a grade will be deducted for each 24 hours that pass before the assignment is turned in.

Emergencies, of course, do arise. If you have a documented emergency please see me and we can discuss other arrangements.

Honor Code

Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

Please keep in mind that if you are copying and pasting text that you did not write yourself, you might be plagiarizing. If you are using copied text, whether pasted or retyped manually, you must be sure to accurately cite the information. Text is accurately cited when: 1) pasted text is surrounded by quotation marks or offset as a block quote and 2) the pasted text is attributed to its author and source and 3) the pasted text is cited in a footnote, endnote, or bibliography.

Disability Services

If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; <http://ds.gmu.edu>) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

Assignments

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<tr>
  <th>Assignment</th>
  <th>Due Date</th>
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<th>Grade Percentage</th>	
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<tr>	
<th >quizzes<="" scope="row" td="" th><=""></th>	
<td>throughout semester.<="" td="" td><="" the=""></td>throughout>	
<td><td>5%</td></td>	<td>5%</td>
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<tr>	
<th >participation<="" scope="row" td="" th><=""></th>	
<td>throughout semester.<="" td="" td><=""></td>throughout>	
<td><td>10%</td></td>	<td>10%</td>
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<tr>	
<th >midterm<="" scope="row" td="" th><=""></th>	
<td><td>July 2nd</td></td>	<td>July 2nd</td>
<td><td>20%</td></td>	<td>20%</td>
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<tr>	
<th >blog="" posts<="" scope="row" td="" th><=""></th>	
<td><td>Throughout the semester.</td></td>	<td>Throughout the semester.</td>
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<tr>	
<th >mini="" projects<="" scope="row" skills="" td="" th><=""></th>	
<td><td>Throughout the semester.</td></td>	<td>Throughout the semester.</td>
<td><td>40% (8 @ 5% each)</td></td>	<td>40% (8 @ 5% each)</td>
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Quizzes (5%):

This course will include readings related to both the history of the Progressive Era and to Digital History. You should come to class prepared to discuss the readings listed on the syllabus for that day. On any day I may give a short quiz on the readings.

Participation (10%):

This is an abbreviated summer class making attendance even more crucial to your success. We'll cover 16 weeks of history and technology skills in just 8 weeks which means missing class will put you at a severe disadvantage. Our assignments will build on the exercises and demonstrations done in class and students who are not present will have difficulty keeping up. At the end of class I will pass around a sign in sheet to keep track of attendance.

While class participation necessitates you attend class, but it is not defined solely by attendance. I expect that students will come to class having done the readings beforehand. Students should be ready to discuss the readings, exchange ideas, and actively participate in class discussions. Grades will be determined by not just your presence in class but also by your contribution to class discussions and activities.

Midterm (20%)

There will be an in-class midterm on Monday, July 2.

Blog Posts (25%):

Throughout the semester you will write a total of **6** blog posts. Each blog post will build on a topic discussed in class and they will often build on our in class tool tutorials. Blog posts will be due the following Sunday by 9:00am.

Your blog posts should be at least 350-500 words and should be written in a semi-formal scholarly style (complete thoughts, correct spelling, grammar and syntax.) Please use the Chicago style guide to cite any sources. Each blog post is worth a total of 3 points. A grading rubric can be found on the Blog Criteria page.

Mini Skills Projects (8 @ 5% each = 40%):

Throughout the course we will learn to use a series of digital tools and methodologies to ask and answer historical questions. The results of each small project will be embedded on your blog. The 9 projects are: (1) metadata in Omeka, (2) exhibits and digital storytelling in Omeka, (3) a database, (4) mapping, (5) text mining, (6) visualizations, (7) a timeline, (8) a reflection and portfolio of your work throughout the class. Further details for each are available on the course schedule.

Monday Jun 04: Getting Started

Before Class:

- Join our Slack group. If you have registered for the course and have not received an invitation, please add yourself to the group using your mason email address.
- Megan O'Neil, "Confronting the Myth of the 'Digital Native'," Chronicle of Higher Education, April 21, 2014.
- Miriam Posner, Stewart Varner, and Brian Coxall, "Creating Your Web Presence," ProfHacker, February 14, 2011.

- Ryan Cordell, “Creating and Maintaining a Professional Presence Online,” ProfHacker, October 3, 2012.

After Class:

- Purchase a Student Plan (\$30) from Reclaim Hosting and choose a domain name.
- Take the Student Technology Survey

Monday Jun 11: Secondary Sources & Who were the Progressives?

test

Wednesday Jun 13: Primary Sources

test

Monday Jun 18: Copyright, Ethics, Metadata (Omeka pt 1)

test

Wednesday Jun 20: Exhibits and Digital Storytelling

Monday Jun 25: Databases pt 1

Wednesday Jun 27: Databases pt 2

Monday Jul 02: Midterm

Wednesday Jul 04: Mapping

Week 06, Monday Jul 09: Mapping Week 06, Wednesday Jul 11: Text Mining
 Week 07, Monday Jul 16: Visualizations Week 07, Wednesday Jul 18: Programming & Machine Learning Week 08, Monday Jul 23: Sustainability, Ethics, etc
 Week 08, Wednesday Jul 25: Catch up and Conclusion