

HIS 479-H003: History in the Digital Age  
Spring 2018  
TTh 2:25-3:40p, LAB 205

Professor Andrew Ross  
Office: LAB 448  
Office Hours: MW 1-3:30p, Tu 1-2p, and by appointment  
E-mail: [andrew.ross@usm.edu](mailto:andrew.ross@usm.edu)  
Office Phone : 601-266-5858

**Course Description:** The recent rise of the digital humanities in general and of digital history in particular has transformed the ways that historians disseminate and produce their work. The basic definition of digital history as the application of digital tools and methods to historical study belies the complexity of the ways in which “new media” has reshaped historians’ work from the moment they enter the archive to the publication of a finished article or monograph. While data mining, digitization, and geographic information systems have changed the ways historians have gathered and analyzed data, Wikipedia, blogs, open-access journals, and social media have challenged traditional publishing. This new course engages with this cutting-edge development by introducing students to both sides of this process, with an emphasis on the latter. Students will gain a new understanding of how technology has transformed the production of human knowledge. Topics include databases and searching, crowdsourcing and Wikipedia, blogging and podcasting, data mining and textual analysis, and presenting audio and visual forms of history.

**Course Objectives:** By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Describe the ways the internet and new media has transformed historical research and publication
- Trace major debates within digital history
- Conduct secondary and primary source research
- Assess digital history on the web and evaluate online resources
- Work effectively in groups
- Design a basic website in WordPress
- Present their research orally

**Required Texts:**

Available in print and for free online:

- Cohen, Daniel J. and Roy Rosenzweig. [\*Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web\*](#). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.
- Dougherty, Jack and Kristen Nawrotzki, eds. [\*Writing History in the Digital Age\*](#). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013.

Available in print:

- Presnell, Jenny L. *The Information-Literate Historian*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

**Required Technology:** While no technology is required in this course, having a laptop or tablet will be highly advantageous. Please bring these with you to class. If you do not have a laptop or tablet, please bring your phone, with the ringer turned off. I am able to provide a limited number of laptops during class.

**Course Format:** Class meets twice a week in seminar format. Each class will feature some mix of lecture, class discussion, and graded and ungraded in-class activities.

### **Course Requirements:**

1. **Attendance and Participation:** As a seminar, active participation and regular attendance is required in order to pass. **You may miss three classes before your attendance and participation grade begins to drop. Missing more than six classes will result in automatically failing the course.** Attendance and participation will be assessed on the basis of two parts: discussion participation and in-class activities. Actively participating in discussion means regularly offering your thoughts of the day's readings and answering and asking questions. It also means, for example, remaining attentive and on task, completing assignments on time, visiting office hours, and being respectful of both your instructor and your peers. *Participation is graded on both quantity and quality.*

In-class activities will be graded regularly on the basis of both participation and completed work. When working with digital tools and projects, *process* in other words can be as important as *outcome*. Instructions on in-class activities will be provided throughout the semester.

2. **Bloggng:** Throughout the semester, students will complete six entries on the course blog. Blog entries should be a well-written response to the day's readings of about 350-500 words (approx. 1-page single spaced). All blog entries are due by 10a the day of our discussion of the reading. Assessment of blog entries will be completed on the basis of a grading rubric provided at the beginning of the semester. At least three blog posts should be completed by Tuesday, March 26.

In addition, all students will be required to comment on at least four entries by the end of the semester. Comments should be about 250-words and should incorporate your own response to the reading, taking into account both class discussion and the opinion expressed in the entry at hand. Comments are due by the end of the week we discussed the reading. Additional comments may be completed for extra credit.

3. **Digital History Project Analysis Paper:** Your first written assignment will be a short analysis of a digital history project that you have located on the web. The project can take on any historical topic, but you must choose a resource that in some ways curates, analyzes, and/or presents digital research using primary sources. In other words, a library website will not count unless it presents its material in some way beyond the library catalog.

- 4. Digital History Exhibit:** In groups, you will complete and put online an exhibit of a particular source or group of sources available through Special Collections at USM. Each group will work together to identify their sources, conduct their analysis, write accompanying text, and visually present their research using WordPress. This assignment will require all groups to draw up and sign a contract laying out specific roles for each group member. A final report will lay out to what extent you accomplished your designated task. All groups will receive a single grade on the final project.

This assignment has a number of parts, beginning with a project proposal and annotated bibliography. After putting your exhibit online, you will present your work to the rest of the class at the end of the semester.

*Grading rubrics and further instructions on all assignments will be provided throughout the semester.*

### **Grading Breakdown**

Attendance and Participation: 25%

- Class Discussion: 10%
- In-Class Activities: 15%

Blogging: 10%

Digital History Project Analysis Paper: 15%

Digital History Exhibit: 50%

- Project Proposal and Annotated Bibliography: 10%
- Final Project: 25%
- Project presentation: 10%
- Contract report: 5%

### **Grade Scale:**

- A: 90 – 100%
- B: 80 – 89%
- C: 70 – 79%
- D: 60 – 69%
- F: 59 and below

### **Course Policies:**

1. **Submission of Written Work:** All written work will be submitted electronically via turnitin.com on our course Canvas site. Your digital exhibit will be published using Wordpress.com. All assignments are due at the day and time listed on the syllabus.
2. **Late Assignments:** Late blog posts and group work will not be accepted. Other assignments will be accepted late with a penalty of one grade per day.

3. **Contacting Me:** The best way to get in touch with me is through e-mail ([andrew.ross@usm.edu](mailto:andrew.ross@usm.edu)). In order to guarantee a rapid response, e-mails should include a clear subject, your name, the course the message is regarding, and your question or message. Further information on e-mail etiquette can be found at <http://www.usm.edu/arts-letters/now/student-resources/email-etiquette.html>.

*I will respond to your e-mail within 24 hours.* If you have not heard from me after that time, you may send me another note. Do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions regarding the course material or any other concerns, but I will not respond to questions that can be answered by reading the syllabus.

My office hours and office phone number are at the top of the syllabus; if those times are not convenient for you I am happy to make other arrangements.

4. **Classroom Environment:** As in most college courses, this class encourages a high level of active engagement, sometimes with controversial and sensitive material. Some of this material may challenge received wisdom, contrast with your personal beliefs, or make you otherwise uncomfortable. Please help us foster an atmosphere that encourages critical reflection on and greater understanding of these issues by always remaining respectful to your peers, even when you disagree. I am always available to discuss course material or class discussion one-on-one during office hours or by appointment.

All student activities in the University, including this course, are governed by the University's "Policy on Classroom Responsibilities of Faculty and Students," as outlined in the Student Handbook and at <http://www.usm.edu/provost/classroom-conduct-policy>. Students who engage in behavior that disrupts the learning environment may be asked to leave the class.

5. **Course Workload:** Students are expected to invest considerable time outside of class in learning the material for this course. The expectation of the University of Southern Mississippi is that each week students should spend approximately 2-3 hours outside of class for every hour in class working on reading, assignments, studying, and other work for the course. We realize that most students work and have family or other obligations. Time management is thus critical for student success. All students should assess their personal circumstances and talk with their advisors about the appropriate number of credit hours to take each term, keeping in mind that 30 credit hours each year are needed to graduate in four years. Resources for academic support can be found at [www.usm.edu/success](http://www.usm.edu/success).
6. **Academic Integrity:** All students at the University of Southern Mississippi are expected to demonstrate the highest levels of academic integrity in all that they do. Forms of academic dishonesty include (but are not limited to):
1. Cheating (including copying from others' work)
  2. Plagiarism (representing another person's words or ideas as your own; failure to properly cite the source of your information, argument, or concepts)
  3. Falsification of documents

4. Disclosure of test or other assignment content to another student
5. Submission of the same paper or other assignment to more than one class without the explicit approval of all faculty members' involved
6. Unauthorized academic collaboration with others
7. Conspiracy to engage in academic misconduct

Engaging in any of these behaviors or supporting others who do so will result in academic penalties and/or other sanctions. If a faculty member determines that a student has violated our Academic Integrity Policy, sanctions ranging from resubmission of work to course failure may occur, including the possibility of receiving a grade of "XF" for the course, which will be on the student's transcript with the notation "Failure due to academic misconduct." For more details, please see the University's [Academic Integrity Policy](#). Note that repeated acts of academic misconduct will lead to expulsion from the University.

### Course Resources

1. **Library Research Assistance:** For basic information, see the website for the University Libraries: [www.lib.usm.edu](http://www.lib.usm.edu). There is also a Library Guide specifically for History classes at <http://libguides.lib.usm.edu/history>.

Reference librarians are available at the Library Assistance Desk in the Learning Commons and through the Ask-a-Librarian service.

<http://www.lib.usm.edu/services/forms/askalib.html> / Phone: 601.266.4249

2. **Writing Center:** The Writing Center is a free tutorial service available to any USM student who wants assistance with a writing project. We offer one-on-one writing instruction that's designed to help students become more effective writers. This tutorial service is offered on a walk-in basis or by appointment (on the hour for 45 minutes). Make an appointment using the online scheduler today (<https://usm.mywconline.com/>). Walk-ins are also available depending on tutor availability. Call (601) 266-4821 or stop by The Writing Center (located on the first floor of Cook Library just past Starbucks). Their website is: <http://www.usm.edu/writing-center>.
3. **Speaking Center:** Trained in our nationally-certified training program, our Speaking Center peer-consultants will help you advance your oral presentation skills, regardless of the context. Each step of the way, the goal is to improve your ability to produce effective oral presentations. To schedule these free services, use any one of these methods: call 601-266-4965, visit the center in Cook Library room 117 (along the same first floor wall as Starbucks and the Writing Center), or access our online schedule here: <http://usm.mywconline.com/>. The website for the Speaking Center is: <http://www.usm.edu/speaking-center>.

### ADA Syllabus Statement

If a student has a disability that qualifies under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and requires accommodations, he/she should contact the Office for Disability Accommodations (ODA) for information on appropriate policies and procedures. Disabilities covered by ADA may include learning, psychiatric, physical disabilities, or chronic health disorders. Students can contact ODA if they are not certain whether a medical condition/disability qualifies.

Address:

The University of Southern Mississippi  
Office for Disability Accommodations  
118 College Drive # 8586  
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Voice Telephone: 601.266.5024 or 228.214.3232 Fax: 601.266.6035

Individuals with hearing impairments can contact ODA using the *Mississippi Relay Service* at 1.800.582.2233 (TTY) or email [oda@usm.edu](mailto:oda@usm.edu)

Web: <http://www.usm.edu/oda>

**Course Schedule:**

*Note: It is especially important to have your laptop/phone/tablet with you on days marked "Lab." If you need to borrow a laptop, I am able to provide a limited number.*

**Week 1: January 15 – January 19: Introductions I**

Tuesday: Introducing the Course

Thursday: What is Digital History?

Readings: Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, "[Promises and Perils of Digital History](#)," in *Digital History*; Sherman Dorn, "[Is \(Digital\) History More than an Argument about the Past?](#)" in *Writing History in the Digital Age* and Stefan Tanaka, "[Pasts in a Digital Age](#)," in *Writing History in the Digital Age*

**Week 2: January 22 – January 26: Introductions II**

Tuesday: Lab: Introduction to Digital History on the Web

Reading: Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, "[Exploring the History Web](#)," in *Digital History*; Presnell, chap 7

Thursday: Lab: Introduction to Wordpress and Blogging

Readings: Alex Sayf Cummings, and Jonathan Jarrett, "[Only Typing? Informal Writing, Blogging, and the Academy](#)," *Writing History in the Digital Age*

**Week 3: January 29 – February 2: Conducting Research**

Tuesday: Lab: Research Process, Digital Notetaking, and Citation

Reading: Presnell, chap. 1 and Ansley T. Erickson, "[Historical Research and the Problem of Categories: Reflections on 10,000 Digital Notecards.](#)" *Writing History in the Digital Age*.

Thursday: Lab: Assessing Digital Projects (and visit from the Speaking Center)  
Assignment: Locate and be prepared to discuss the digital project you will evaluate; e-mail the URL to me before class

Reading: Presnell, chap. 5; Kathryn Kish Sklar and Thomas Dublin, "[Creating Meaning in a Sea of Information: The Women and Social Movements Web Sites.](#)" in *Writing History in the Digital Age*

#### **Week 4: February 5 – February 9: The Digital Archive**

Tuesday: Lab: Databases and Searching (Meet in Cook Library Classroom)

Reading: "Database Search Tips: Overview" at MIT Library (<http://libguides.mit.edu/c.php?g=175963&p=1160724>); Presnell, chap. 3 and 4

Thursday: Introduction to Digital Archives (Meet at Digitization Lab in McCain)

#### **Week 5: February 12 – February 16: Beginning Research**

Tuesday: No Class (Mardi Gras)

Thursday: Conceptualizing Your Own Digital Exhibit

Reading: Cohen and Rosenzweig, "[Designing for the History Web](#)"

*Digital History Project Analysis Paper Due before Class on Monday, February 19*

#### **Week 6: February 19 – February 23: Promises and Perils of Collaboration (I)**

Tuesday: Crowdsourcing and Wikipedia

Reading: Robert S. Wolff, "[The Historian's Craft, Popular Memory, and Wikipedia.](#)" in *Writing History in the Digital Age*; Timothy Messer-Kruse, "[The 'Undue Weight' of Truth on Wikipedia.](#)" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 12, 2012.

Thursday: Lab: Digital Resources in Special Collections

Reading: Presnell, chap. 6

*Group Contract Due Before Class, February 22*

#### **Week 7: February 26 – March 2: Promises and Perils of Collaboration (II)**

Tuesday: Archives and Digitization (Meet in Digitization Lab)

Reading: Kritika Argarwal, "Doing Right Online: Archivists Shape an Ethics for the Digital Age," *Perspectives on History* November 2016

Thursday: Lab: Preparing for our Wikiblitz

**Week 8: March 5 – March 9: Promises and Perils of Collaboration (III)**

Tuesday: Lab: Working with Wikipedia: Wikiblitz

Thursday: No Class (SFHS)

*Project proposal and annotated bibliography due Friday, March 9 by midnight.*

***Spring Break***

**Week 9: March 19 – March 23: Forms of Digital Analysis**

Tuesday: Lab: Data Mining and Textual Analysis

Reading: Fred Gibbs and Trevor Owens, [“The Hermeneutics of Data and Historical Writing.”](#) in *Writing History in the Digital Age*

Thursday: Class Visit by Dr. Craig Carey

**Week 10: March 26 – March 30: Public History and Visualization**

Tuesday: Lab: Maps, Graphs, and Photographs

Reading: Presnell, chap. 8; Stephen Robertson, [“Putting Harlem on the Map.”](#) *Writing History in the Digital Age*

*At least three blog posts should be completed by Tuesday, March 27. Six more opportunities remain to post from this date.*

Thursday: Class Visit by Dr. Joshua Haynes

**Week 11: April 2 – April 6: Presenting Research**

Tuesday: Progress Check and Oral Presentation Assignment

Thursday: Giving a Presentation (Meet in Speaking Center)

Reading: Presnell, chaps. 9 and 11; Elisabeth Bumiller, “We Have Met the Enemy and He is PowerPoint,” *New York Times* 26 April 2010; Katherine Schulten, Is PowerPoint in the Classroom ‘Evil?’ *New York Times*, 3 May 2010.

**Week 12: April 9 – April 13: Video and Audio**

Tuesday: Documentaries and YouTube

Reading: Ian Parker, [“Ken Burns’s American Canon.”](#) *The New Yorker* September 4, 2017; Jonathan Rees, [“Teaching History with YouTube.”](#) *Perspectives on History* May 2008



Thursday: Class Visit by Dr. Kevin Greene (Tentative)  
 Reading: Listen to a "Mississippi Moments" of your choice before class  
 (<http://www.mississippimoments.org/>).

### **Week 13: April 16 – April 20: Social Media**

Tuesday: Research Day (Meet in Library)

Thursday: Twitter and Facebook  
 Reading: Miriam Posner and Stewart Varner, "[Creating Your Web Presence: A Primer for Academics](#);" Nick Statt, "[Trump's tweets will be preserved by the US National Archives](#)," *The Verge*, April 3, 2017; Elziabeth Ann Pollard, "Tweeting on the Backchannel of the Jumbo-Sized Lecture Hall: Maximizing Collective Learning in a World History Survey," *The History Teacher* 47, no. 3 (2014): 329-354.

*Digital Exhibits Must be Live by 5:00pm, Friday, April 20*

### **Week 14: April 23 – April 27: Fake News/Fake History?**

Tuesday: The Problem of "Fake History"  
 Reading: Leslie, Madsen-Brooks, "[I Nevertheless Am a Historian: Digital Historical Practice and Malpractice around Black Confederate Soldiers](#)," in *Writing History in the Digital Age*; Kevn M. Levin, "[The Remedy for the Spread of Fake News? History Teachers](#)," *Smithsonian.com*, December 6, 2016.

Thursday: Gaming and History  
 Reading: Laura Zucconi, et. al. "[Pox and the City: Challenges in Writing a Digital History Game](#)," in *Writing History in the Digital Age*

*Remaining blog posts must be completed by Thursday, April 26.*

### **Week 15: April 30 – May 4: Presentations**

Tuesday: Presentations

Thursday: Presentations

*Group Contract Report Due Monday, May 7 by midnight.*