

**HIST 661:  
Seminar in Digital History  
Spring 2019**

**Seminar Meetings:**

Thursdays  
6:30–9:10 PM  
BB 222

**Professor Douglas Seefeldt**

Ball State University  
Department of History  
Burkhardt Building 210  
[wdseefeldt@bsu.edu](mailto:wdseefeldt@bsu.edu)  
<http://dougseefeldt.net>

**Office Hours:**

R 3:30–5:00 PM  
(and by appointment)

“...history may be better suited to digital technology than any other humanistic discipline. Changes in our field far removed from anything to do with computers have helped create a situation in history where the advantages of computers can seem appealing, and perhaps even necessary. At the same time, changes in information technology, far removed from any consideration of its possible uses for our discipline, have made it possible for us to think of new ways to approach the past. The new technologies seem tailor-made for history, a match for the growing bulk and complexity of our ever more self-conscious practice, efficient vehicles to connect with larger and more diverse audiences.”

– Edward L. Ayers

[“The Pasts and Futures of Digital History”](#) (1999)

**Course Objectives**

What is “Digital History”? How has the so-called “digital turn” in the humanities influenced the ways we conceive, research, design, and communicate our historical scholarship? In this graduate research seminar, students will examine these and other questions in both theory and practice by reading leading critical works, experimenting with a variety of new media tools, critically reviewing cutting edge digital history projects, and creating their own digital research modules. Students will be expected to actively participate in weekly seminar discussions and hands-on labs on theories and methods of doing digital history, conduct original research on selected topics in history, and focus their work on the exploration and use of digital tools to interrogate and explain their findings in a digital environment.

While the emphasis in this course is situated in the discipline of history, students from other allied disciplines will be able to develop an awareness of the opportunities and challenges inherent in researching and communicating one’s scholarship using a variety of digital media. The final research project will feature the completion of an original suite of argument-driven digital research communicated via a web site. This scholarly work will include texts analysis, spatial analysis, and data visualizations. These original digital research modules may form the core of a CRPR 698 creative project to complete the digital history option, or they may become a digital component for a traditional text-based Master’s thesis.

## Required Texts

(Please note that additional readings will be posted to the course Canvas site):

- Bodenhamer, Corrigan, and Harris. *Deep Maps and Spatial Narratives* (Indiana U. Press, 2015). [also available as an ebook]
- Booth, Wayne, et. al. *The Craft of Research*, **4th Edition** (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 2016) [also available as an ebook]
- Borner, Katy and Polley, David E. *Visual Insights: A Practical Guide to Making Sense of Data* (MIT U. Press, 2014).
- Gardiner, Eileen and Musto, Ronald G. *The Digital Humanities: A Primer for Students and Scholars* (Cambridge U. Press, 2015). [also available as an ebook]
- Graham, Shawn, Milligan, Ian and Weingart, Scott. *Exploring Big Historical Data: The Historian's Macroscope* (Imperial College Press, 2016). [also available as an ebook]
- Rockwell, Geoffrey and Sinclair, Stefan. *Hermeneutica: Computer-Assisted Interpretation in the Humanities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT U. Press, 2016).

## Course Requirements

### 20% Active Seminar Participation (100 points)

Graduate student attendance at weekly seminar meetings is expected, therefore, attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Please notify the instructor in advance should you need to miss a seminar meeting. All students are expected to actively participate in all facets of the seminar. Participation will be evaluated on a scale of 0-5 points for your thoughtful contributions to the fourteen (14) weekly seminar discussions and labs, five (5) posts to your project blog, and one (1) self-evaluation completed at the end of the semester.

### 20% Reading Reflections (100 points)

Throughout the semester, each student will submit ten (10) 1-2-page reading reflections to the course Canvas site before our seminar meetings. The evaluation criteria, based on a scale of 0-10 points, will include timely completion and the quality of content. These reflections will also serve as the basis for our weekly seminar discussions. Late reflections will be marked down two points per day that they are overdue. No work will be accepted more than one week late without prior permission.

### 20% Project Research & Proposal (100 points)

Students will research a topic of their choice and make occasional progress reports:

- 10% (50 points) Presentation of your project's preliminary research questions and possible primary sources during week 04

- 10% (50 points) Presentation of your project proposal, including revised research questions, key arguments, site map, sources/data during week 07

#### **40% Final Project (200 points)**

Students will use digital history tools to build a suite of original research modules consisting of textual analysis, spatial analysis, and data visualization components approved by the instructor. This score will be broken down into the following components:

- 10% (50 points) Project prototype presentation (Pecha Kucha format) during week 10
- 30% (150 points) Completed digital history research modules due during finals

#### **Final Grade Scale**

A+	100-97%	B-	83-80%	D	66-64%
A	96-94%	C+	79-77%	D-	63-60%
A-	93-90%	C	76-74%	F	59-0%
B+	89-87%	C-	73-70%		
B	86-84%	D+	69-67%		

N.B.: At the graduate student level, any mark below the occasional B+ is unacceptable.

#### **Academic Honesty**

Academic dishonesty is prohibited at BSU will not be tolerated in this course. Examples of academic dishonesty include the following types of actions and behavior: Cheating, fabrication or falsification, plagiarism, abuse of academic materials, complicity in academic dishonesty, falsifying grade reports, and misrepresentation to avoid academic work. Academic dishonesty has serious consequences including course failure and/or disciplinary proceedings. For a complete discussion of academic dishonesty, see the *Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities*, [Appendix T: Student Academics Ethics Policy](#).

#### **Classroom Etiquette**

In order for everyone to have the opportunity to learn, we must strive to create an open, positive, non-threatening classroom atmosphere. Please do not talk to friends, eat, sleep, read/post to social media, surf the web, or communicate with others via email or text message during class. Please step out of the classroom if you need to text someone or make a call. We will have a break to afford you the opportunity for those activities.

Curiosity, honesty, and above all, respect, are characteristics inherent in healthy discourse. A great deal of this seminar revolves around discussions of material that can lend itself to contested meanings and strong personal opinions. We may address some divisive topics and it will be perfectly appropriate for us to end our discussions in disagreement. One of the greatest strengths of the seminar will be the variety of experiences and perspectives each one of us

brings to the subject. No personal attacks or disrespect will be tolerated and proper sanctions will be imposed. Please familiarize yourself with the [“The Beneficence Pledge.”](#)

### **Administrative Information**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.

The Registrar’s Office has two important deadlines for you to be aware of:

- Su 1/13: Last day to register, add a class, or drop a class and receive a refund
- W 3/18: Final date for dropping a class without being subject to a “W” grade

### **Course Schedule & Assignments**

Please complete the readings and assignments prior to each seminar meeting, as we will discuss the material as a group. I reserve the right to change the schedule as necessary and will give you notice when I do via Canvas announcement. Note: [C] indicates items accessible via the course Canvas site

#### **Week 1: The Digital Turn in the Humanities, Part I**

**R 1/10**

##### Reading Assignment:

- Cohen, Ramsay, Fitzpatrick, “Open Access and Scholarly Values: A Conversation,” *Hacking the Academy* ([2010] 2013) [C]
- Scheinfeldt, “Theory, Method, and Digital Humanities,” *Hacking the Academy* ([2010] 2013) [C]
- Carmody, “The Trouble with Digital Culture,” *Hacking the Academy* ([2010] 2013) [C]

Presentations: Introductions and interests; favorite online history resources

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#### **Week 2: The Digital Turn in the Humanities, Part II**

**R 1/17**

##### Reading Assignment:

- Gardiner & Musto, *The Digital Humanities*, entire [except chpt. 9]

##### Writing Assignment:

- Reading Reflection #1

Lab: FTP tutorial (bring your laptop)

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### **Week 3: What is Digital History?**

**R 1/24**

#### Reading Assignment:

- Seefeldt and Thomas, "What Is Digital History? A Look At Some Exemplar Projects" *Perspectives on History* (2009) [Bb]
- Tanaka, "Past in a Digital Age" *Writing History in the Digital Age* (2013) [C]
- Ayers, "Does Digital Scholarship Have a Future?" *Educause Review* (2013) [C]
- Graham, Milligan, and Weingart, *Exploring Big Historical Data*, chpts. 1 & 2

#### Writing Assignment:

- Reading Reflection #2

Presentations: Discuss one of the AHA Roy Rosenzweig Prize for Innovation in Digital History (2009-18) award-winning projects and explain what makes it a model of the genre

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### **Week 4: Assembling a Research Argument**

**R 1/31**

#### Reading Assignment:

- Booth, et. al., *The Craft of Research*, Parts II & III [chpts. 3-11]

#### Writing Assignment:

- Reading Reflection #3

Presentations: Share your project's preliminary research questions

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### **Week 5: Copyright**

**R 2/7**

#### Reading Assignment:

- Lessig, "Getting Our Values around Copyright Right" [C]
- Gardiner & Musto, *The Digital Humanities*, chpt. 9

Writing Assignment: Reading Reflection #4

Lab: Website templates; HTML & CSS tutorials (bring your laptop)

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**Week 6: Computational Text Analysis, Part I**

**R 2/14**

Reading Assignment:

- Rockwell and Sinclair, *Hermeneutica*, entire

Writing Assignment: Reading Reflection #5

Lab: Voyant text analysis tutorial (bring your laptop)

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**Week 7: Computational Text Analysis, Part II**

**R 2/21**

Reading Assignment:

- Graham, Milligan, and Weingart, *Exploring Big Historical Data*, chpts. 3 & 4

Writing Assignment: Reading Reflection #6

Lab: Text mining playtime! (bring your laptop)

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**Week 8: Project Proposals**

**R 2/28**

Reading Assignment:

- Booth, et. al., *The Craft of Research*, Part I [Prologue, chpts. 1 & 2]

Writing Assignment: Blog Post #1

- Introduce your project to the world!

Presentations: Share the scope of your digital history project: revised research questions, key arguments, site map, and primary sources/data

Lab: Project Blog setup and post #1

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**Week 9: Spring Break – No Seminar Meeting**

**R 3/7**

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**Week 10: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production, Part I**

**R 3/14**

Reading Assignment:

- Börner & Polley, *Visual Insights*, chpts. 1-7

Writing Assignment: Reading Reflection #7

Lab: Palladio Network visualization tool (bring your laptop)

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**Week 11: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production, Part II**

**R 3/21**

Reading Assignment:

- Graham, Milligan, and Weingart, *Exploring Big Historical Data*, chpts. 5, 6 & 7

Writing Assignment: Reading Reflection #8

Lab: Gephi Network visualization tool (bring your laptop)

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**Week 12: Project Prototype Pecha Kucha Presentations**

**R 3/28**

Writing Assignment: Blog Post #2

- Prototype Presentation Postmortem (composed after seminar)

Presentations: Prototype Presentation: With a limit of 20 seconds per slide, each student will present 20 slides containing 1 image and no more than 5 words. Other seminar participants will evaluate the prototype and provide criticism.

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**Week 13: Spatial History, Part I: Humanities GIS**

**R 4/4**

Reading Assignment:

Bodenhamer, Corrigan, and Harris, *Deep Maps and Spatial Narratives* [entire]

Writing Assignment: Reading Reflection #9

Lab: ArcGIS Online & Story Maps (bring your laptop)

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**Week 14: Project Development & Troubleshooting**

**R 4/11**

Writing Assignment: Blog Post #3

Lab: DH Hackathon (bring your laptop)

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**Week 15: Spatial History, Part II: Virtual Worlds**

**W 4/17** Bernard Frischer, DSL Lecture, TBA

**R 4/18** Reading Assignment:

- Bell, "Toward a Definition of 'Virtual Worlds'" *Journal of Virtual Worlds Research* (2008) [C]
- Downey, "History of the (Virtual) Worlds" *The Journal of Technology Studies* (2014) [C]
- Frischer, TBD [C]

Writing Assignment: Reading Reflection #10

Lab: Virtual worlds playtime!

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**Week 16: Project Development & Troubleshooting**

**R 4/25** Writing Assignment: Blog Post #4

Lab: DH Hackathon (bring your laptop)

\*\*\*Course/Instructor Evaluations Due\*\*\*

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**Finals Week: Completed Final Project**

**R 5/2** Assignments [all due before 9:00 PM]:

- Project files handoff in Box
- Blog Post #5 -- Introduce your project to the world!
- Self-Evaluation [C]