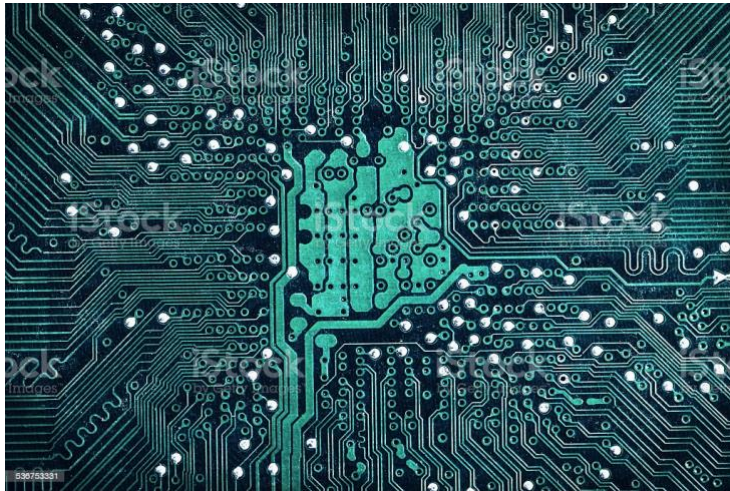


Introduction to Digital History

Professor Jessica Mack



This course introduces students to the field of digital history and teaches them how to use digital tools to understand, interpret, and communicate about the past. Combining scholarship and practice, students will learn about the foundational approaches, ethical issues, and debates in digital history while also gaining firsthand experience using digital tools. Through collaborative exercises, students will develop new digital skills such as mapping, visualization, and curating digital public history exhibits. No prior knowledge or experience is necessary.

Digital history is a collaborative field in which we learn through practice and constant feedback. Our class sessions will be made up of: 1) seminar discussions of our readings, the history of the digital, and debates in the field, and 2) lab time when you will learn to use new digital tools and complete interactive and collaborative in-class exercises. Come to class ready to practice your skills. Each week there will also be in-class and take-home digital skills exercises to complete in addition to the reading. Over the course of the semester, we will build a digital exhibit together about student experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic at Rowan University. As a class, we will consider what it means to tell the histories of our own time in digital form. How can we be responsible storytellers and stewards of this history for our peers and for future generations?

Learning Objectives:

- Learn about the current debates and discussions in the field of digital history and in the digital humanities more broadly.
- Learn how to use digital tools to perform historical analysis and aid in the historical research process.
- Learn how to detect and mitigate inequities in digital source material and search.
- Learn how to assess the reliability of information in digital formats.
- Learn how to create metadata, properly label digital materials, and ensure the broad accessibility of those materials.
- Learn how to conduct oral history interviews using an ethical approach.
- Learn how to curate a digital exhibit for public audiences.

- Learn how to build a collaborative digital project from start to finish.
- Develop strong written and oral communication and computational skills.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will read and critically analyze the debates and theories of digital historians and digital humanists in related fields.
- Students will critically analyze and review a wide range of digital history projects based on criteria they have learned in class.
- Students will use digital primary sources and library materials effectively, incorporating knowledge about biases and assessing the reliability of information online.
- Students will identify and analyze their own source material about the present day.
- Students will conduct oral history interviews with their peers.
- Students will effectively use a variety of digital tools to organize research materials, create visualizations, analyze data, build maps, and practice basic computational analysis skills.
- Students will process, label, and properly display visual and audio materials in digital form.
- Students will collaborate on a digital exhibit project and experience the process of carrying out a digital project from start to finish.
- Students will produce a final digital exhibit that documents student experiences of the pandemic at Rowan and share it with their communities.

Assignments and Assessment:

- Participation: This includes attendance and active participation in class discussions, attendance at three library workshop sessions, submission of ten (10) discussion posts about readings and digital projects, and completion of digital skills exercises. Attendance is mandatory at every class session. Please contact me in advance if you must be absent. (20%)
- Two (2) digital project review papers (1200-1500 words each). You may review a project listed on the syllabus or another project of your choosing with prior approval. These are due before class on October 19 and November 30. (25%)
- Class digital exhibit project (50%):
 - o Submit four (4) sources with complete metadata and descriptions to the digital exhibit. (15%)
 - o Submit one 20-minute oral history interview with complete metadata and transcription to the digital exhibit. (20%)
 - o Peer review of another student's source and interview (5%)
 - o Engaged participation in one project committee (10%)
- Final Oral Presentation (5%): One 5-8-minute presentation of your committee work and your contributions to the digital exhibit.

Readings and Materials:

There are no required books for purchase for this class. All reading material will either be posted on Canvas or can be accessed electronically through Campbell Library Search. All the required software and digital tools are available online for free.

Discussion Posts:

Each week students will have a required assigned reading and a digital history project to review before class. By 10:00am each Wednesday, post 1-2 paragraphs on the Canvas discussion board that addresses the following:

- Choose a quote from the reading that you found to be significant and explain why.
- Summarize the main contribution or argument of the reading. What new questions or issues does the author raise?
- Describe the contribution of the digital project(s). What do you see as the most successful aspect of this project? What aspects could be improved upon? (When there are multiple digital projects listed in one week, you may analyze one or compare them.)

There are fourteen (14) weeks in the semester and a minimum of ten (10) discussion posts are required. This means you can miss a few without penalty.

Life Happens Policy:

The pandemic is still a concern, and many members of our community are dealing with challenging personal circumstances. Under any circumstances, many students experience anxiety, depression, and other emotional and psychological challenges during college. My 'Life Happens Policy' is as follows: all students may take one 48-hour extension for any one assignment (excluding the final digital exhibit submission), no questions asked. Send me an email before the deadline letting me know you will be taking the extension. Since each assignment builds upon the previous assignment in this course, I cannot accept late work apart from this one extension (and except for in extenuating circumstances as described in the Attendance Policy below). However, please reach out to me at any time during the semester if you are experiencing difficulties or would like help finding resources or support at Rowan.

Extra Credit:

If you provide documentation that you consulted the [Rowan Writing Center](#) to work on a draft of either of your project review papers, you will receive extra credit on that assignment. I highly recommend doing this—receiving early feedback and revising your work is guaranteed to strengthen it.

Extra credit is also available for those who attend an additional [Campbell Library Workshop](#) that is not on our syllabus and submit 1-2 paragraphs summarizing what you learned and how it relates to our class.

Schedule:

Note: Readings and materials are listed on the day they are due. Paper deadlines are highlighted in yellow. Tasks related to the class digital exhibit are listed in red.

Week 1: Introduction: What is digital history?

Wednesday, September 7, 2022

In-class exercise: Comparing historical images in [Juxtapose](#)

In-class activity: Into the Library Stacks

Register for Library Workshops listed below. Contact me about any scheduling conflicts.

Sign-up for office hours sometime during the month of September.

Week 2: Historical Research: Between the Analog and the Digital

Wednesday, September 14, 2022

Read: Ian Milligan, *The Transformation of Historical Research in the Digital Age*,
Chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-44)

Watch: [Navigating Knowledge: Hypertext Pioneers](#)

Listen: The Last Archive Podcast, [Episode 7: The Computermen](#)

Download [Zotero](#) and review the [documentation](#)

Week 3: Born-Digital Materials and Digital Collecting

Library Visit with Dr. Andrea Baer – Campbell Library 128

Wednesday, September 21, 2022

Read: Roy Rosenzweig, “Scarcity or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era”
American Historical Review

Read: Rebecca Wingo, “[Inside JOTPY’s COVID-19 Curatorial Collective](#)”

Project Review: [A Journal of the Plague Year](#)

Bring to class: A born-digital or digitized primary source from your own life that sheds light on student experiences at Rowan during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Week 4: Equity, Inclusion, and Postcolonial Digital Humanities

Wednesday, September 28, 2022

Read: Roopika Risam, *New Digital Worlds: Postcolonial Digital Humanities in Theory, Praxis, and Pedagogy*, Introduction (pp. 3-21)

Watch: Cathy O’Neill, [The Truth About Algorithms](#)

Read: Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*, Introduction (pp. 1-14)

Watch: “[The Metadata Librarian Explains Metadata](#)”

Project Review: [Documenting Ferguson](#)

In-class: Omeka training and metadata exercise.

Week 5: Digitization, Searchability, and Optical Character Recognition (OCR)

Wednesday, October 5, 2022

Read: Lara Putnam, “The Transnational and the Text-Searchable: Digitized Sources and the Shadows They Cast,” *American Historical Review*

Project Review: [Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers](#)

Project Review: [Digital National Security Archive](#)

Watch: [Getting Started in Tropy](#) and Download [Tropy](#)

Submit: Upload your first digital primary source with complete metadata and a 4-5 sentence description to the Omeka site.

In-class: Peer review of sources and metadata.

In-class: Tropy exercise and OCR training

Week 6: Mapping and Spatial History

Tuesday, October 11, 2022

Attend: [Library Workshop on Geographic Information Systems \(GIS\)](#) – 2:00pm online

Wednesday, October 12, 2022

Read: Richard White, “[What is Spatial History?](#)”

Project Review: [Geography of the Post](#)

Project Review: [Mapping Inequality](#)

Project Review: [Glassboro Memory Mapping Project](#)

Submit: Four (4) sources with complete metadata to the Omeka site.

In-class exercise: Georeferencing in Mapwarper and narration in StoryMaps.

Week 7: Oral History and Ethical Considerations

Wednesday, October 19, 2022

Read: Rebecca Sharpless, “The History of Oral History”

Read: [The Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide](#)

Listen: Studs Terkel, “[The Working Tapes](#)” on *Radio Diaries*

Project Review: [Charting Crisis: Collective Storytelling in the Age of Covid-19](#)

Submit: Digital Project Review Paper #1 (1200-1500 words)

In-class exercise: Oral history plugin for Omeka

Week 8: Digital Public History, Crowdsourcing, and Citizen Archivists

Wednesday, October 26, 2022

Attend: [Library Workshop Using Wikipedia Wisely](#) – 11:30am online

Read: Roy Rosenzweig, “Can History Be Open Source? Wikipedia and the Future of the Past” *Journal of American History*

Read: Yoni Appelbaum, “[How the Professor Who Fooled Wikipedia Got Caught by Reddit](#)”

Read: Jason Heppler and Gabriel Wolfenstein, “[Crowdsourcing Digital Public History](#)”

Project Review: [Documenting the Now](#)

In-class: [Citizen Archivist Transcribe-a-thon](#) – National Archives
Submit: Interview questionnaire and completed interviewee consent form.
In-class: Peer review of interview questionnaires.
Schedule and prepare for your interview.

Week 9: Access and Accessibility in Digital History

Wednesday, November 2, 2022

Read: Andrew Hurley, “Chasing the Frontiers of Digital Technology,” *The Public Historian*

Read: [W3C Accessibility Standards](#)

Watch: [Web Accessibility Perspectives](#)

Project Review: Choose a project we have already reviewed and assess its accessibility.

Submit: Unedited audio of your interview and signed interviewee consent form.

In-class exercise: Transcribe interviews and add alt-text, tags, and keywords.

In-class exercise: Editing audio in [Audacity](#).

Week 10: Computational History and Data Visualization

Wednesday, November 9, 2022

Read: Lincoln Mullen, [Computational Historical Thinking, Introduction](#)

Read: John Theibault, “[Visualizations and Historical Arguments](#),” *Writing History in the Digital Age*

Watch: *Into the Archive* videos: Interpreting Archival Material Using Digital Tools, [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)

Project Review: [DataViz as History: Annotating Minard’s Napoleon Map](#)

Submit: Upload edited interview with complete metadata and transcription in Omeka.

In-class exercise: Creating Visualizations

Week 11: Narrative Digital History: Stories, Podcasts, and Tours

Wednesday, November 16, 2022

Listen: “[Revolutions](#),” Episode 3 of *Intertwined: The Enslaved Community at George Washington’s Mount Vernon*

Project Review: [Histories of the National Mall](#)

Project Review: [Mapping the University](#) (especially this [essay](#))

In-class: Digital exhibit committee meetings and role assignments.

Week 12: Immersive History: Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, and 3-D Modeling

Wednesday, November 23, 2022

Read: John Bonnett, “[Following in Rabelais’ Footsteps: Immersive History and the 3D Virtual Buildings Project](#)”

Project Review: [Digital Karnak](#)

Project Review: [Penn and Slavery Project](#)

Project Review: [3D Videos of Slaving Vessels](#)

Submit: Digital exhibit committee workplan (1-2 pages).
In-class: Digital exhibit committees present their goals and workplans.

Week 13: Textual Analysis, Distant Reading, and Topic Modeling
Wednesday, November 30, 2022

Attend: [Library Workshop on Text Analysis with Voyant Tools](#) – 1:30pm online

Read: Rebecca Sutton Koeser, "[Trusting Others to 'Do the Math'](#)"

Project Review and Watch Video: Micki Kaufman, "[Everything on Paper Will Be Used against Me:](#)" [Quantifying Kissinger](#)

Project Review: Robert K. Nelson, [Mining the Dispatch](#)

Submit: Digital Project Review Paper #2 (1200-1500 words)

In-class: Topic modeling exercise

Week 14: Sharing Digital History: Outreach and Public Engagement
Wednesday, December 7, 2022

Last day of class

Read: Kerri Young, "[Audience analysis and the role of the digital in community engagement](#)"

Read: Deborah Boyer, "[Finding the intersection of technology and public history](#)"

In-class: Digital exhibit committee updates

(Wednesday, December 14, 2022 – Reading and Review Day)

**** Monday, December 19, 2022 –**

All digital exhibit materials and committee work due by 5:00pm **

Final Experience:

Wednesday, December 21, 2022 — 2:45pm - 4:45pm

Final student presentations on digital exhibit and committee work

Class Policies:

Grading Scale: This grading scale is commonly used by Rowan University faculty. Students must receive C- or better to fulfill departmental prerequisite requirements for upper-level courses.

A: 93-100	B-: 80-83	D+: 67-69
A-: 90-92	C+: 77-79	D: 64-66
B-: 87-89	C: 74-76	D-: 60-63
B: 84-86	C-: 70-73	F: 0-59

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend each meeting of each scheduled class for which they are officially registered and are responsible for knowing their instructors' attendance policies as stated in the syllabus. Students who are absent for the reasons listed below must inform their instructors of their absence and provide documentation. For planned absences, notice must be given before the missed class meeting. In the case of unexpected absences, documentation must be provided as soon after the absence as possible. Students must consult with their instructors to determine what is considered acceptable documentation.

1. Official University activities
2. Illness
3. Death of a family member or loved one
4. Inclement weather

Rowan respects the diversity of faiths and spiritual practices in the university community. Students planning to observe religious holidays that occur on scheduled class days must inform their instructors at the beginning of the term. Students who make such arrangements will not be required to attend classes or take examinations on the designated days. In the case of rare and compelling circumstances not listed above, students should make every effort to discuss reasonable accommodations with their instructors in advance (if feasible) or as soon as possible afterward.

<https://confluence.rowan.edu/display/POLICY/Attendance+Policy>

Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Statement

Rowan University promotes a diverse community that begins with students, faculty, staff and administration who respect each other and value each other's dignity. By identifying and removing barriers and fostering individual potential, Rowan will cultivate a community where all members can learn and grow. The Rowan University community is committed to a safe environment that encourages intellectual, academic, and social interaction and engagement across multiple intersections of identities. At Rowan University, creating and maintaining a caring community that embraces diversity in its broadest sense is among the highest priorities.

Plagiarism Policy

All direct quotations, factual information, and material that are not common knowledge should be cited correctly, i.e., all citations should be listed as footnotes or endnotes and not as parenthetical references. **Students who plagiarize any part of their coursework will be subject to the Academic Integrity Policy.** The full policy is available at:

<https://confluence.rowan.edu/display/POLICY/Academic+Integrity+Policy>. Rowan University has a license agreement with Turnitin, an online service that can be used to detect and prevent plagiarism in student assignments. If you would like to opt out of Turnitin, send me an email stating this preference by September 15.

Disability Policy

Your academic success is important. If you have a documented disability that may have an impact on your work in this class, please contact me. Students must provide documentation of their disability to the Academic Success Center in order to receive official University services and accommodations. The Academic Success Center can be reached at 856-256-4234. The Center is located on the 3rd floor of Savitz Hall. The staff is available to answer questions regarding accommodations or assist you in your pursuit of accommodations. We look forward to working with you to meet your learning goals.

Mobile Device Policy

Students are expected to use electronic devices only as part of ongoing class activities. Also, the use of any device for purposes of audio or video recording may occur only with the prior approval of the instructor.