

**Introduction to Digital History (CDT 30330)**  
**Spring 2017**  
**Jeffrey L. Bain-Conkin**  
**TR 12:30-1:45**  
**DeBartolo Hall B011**

**Course Site:** [blogs.nd.edu/digitalhistory](http://blogs.nd.edu/digitalhistory)

Office: B003 DeBartolo Hall  
Office Hours: Friday 1:00-5:00 and other times by appointment  
E-mail: [jconkin@nd.edu](mailto:jconkin@nd.edu)

### **Course Description**

Technological tools increasingly provide historians new means of accessing, organizing, analyzing, and disseminating scholarly research. This course introduces students to the practice of digital history—the practices and principles by which historians engage new media conventions. Though primarily a hands-on class, readings on theories and methods as well as the consequent discussions make substantial components of the course. Students will read about and evaluate digital examples as well as produce major digital history projects. Every element of project management (data collection, organization, analysis, presentation) will receive attention. Technological knowledge is not required to take this course though general computer literacy would benefit students.

### **Course Objectives**

Explore...

- a. methodological concerns of digital history
- b. questions of audience regarding digital history
- c. detailed survey of digital history phases
  - a. access
  - b. organization
  - c. analysis
  - d. dissemination
- d. investigation of three major types of analysis
  - a. Data Visualization
  - b. Geographic Information Systems
  - c. Text Analysis
- e. understanding of rudimentary web-based software
  - a. the format of computer coding (with HTML tutorial)
  - b. understanding of SQL (with php tutorial)

Evaluate...

- a. scholarship about digital history
- b. digital history projects
  - a. published and scholarly examples

- b. peer projects
- c. metadata and bibliographic conventions
- d. technological software and hardware for digital history

Produce...

- a. Major project (“length,” etc TBD)
  - a. divided into phases with independent grades
  - b. publicly accessible
  - c. research-based and argument-driven
- b. Essays
  - a. Critical response to digital history project
  - b. Book Review/Review Essay of scholarship on digital history
- c. Blog Entries (informal writing assignments, bibliographies of print and web sources, links to examples and resources)

### **Course Materials (REQUIRED)**

A laptop (with wireless capability) or tablet is strongly recommended

Notre Dame email account (checked daily)

Scribd account

Wordpress.com account/blog

### **Attendance and Participation Policies:**

I expect students to attend every class, but understand that illnesses and other obligations occur. Therefore, students can miss two (2) class meetings with no penalty to their participation grade (see below). One (1) point will disappear from a student’s participation grade (still below) for each additional absence. Officially-excused absences do not count for the three class meetings.

I do not accept late assignments. However, students who approach the instructor more than a week in advance of the due date may receive a negotiated extension. Due dates for assignments remain as posted for students with unexcused absences. For excused absences, the instructor and student will agree upon a new due date.

Participation comprises the “subjective” aspect of grading. Coming to class, asking questions, giving evidence of reading the assigned materials, will make borderline grades more likely to go up. Tardiness, sulking, surliness, lack of preparation, sleeping in class will make borderline grades more likely to remain fixed.

### **Course Cancellation Policy:**

In the unlikely event that the instructor needs to cancel class, he will notify students via email (and, in emergencies, someone will post a notice on the door). Ultimately, students should not wait more than ten (10) minutes before leaving in

the classroom. The instructor will provide his completed discussion and reading notes from the missed class as well as review missed materials upon students' requests.

**Academic Honesty Policy:**

All Notre Dame students pledge the following at their matriculation and sign multiple statements each semester, though—despite rumors—almost never through a blood oath:

“As a Member of the Notre Dame community, I will not participate in or tolerate academic dishonesty.”

Depending on the nature of the offense and the extent of dishonesty within an assignment, penalties will range from a zero of the assignment to failure of the course.

If a student is unclear on the definition or boundaries of plagiarism, that student should see this brief but helpful [guide](#) or contact the instructor.

**Statement on Students with Disabilities:**

Any student who has a documented disability and is registered with Disability Services should speak with the professor as soon as possible regarding accommodations. Students who are not registered should contact the [Office of Disability Services](#).

**Assignments and Grade Breakdown**

\*All assignments will be individually completed unless instructor approves collaboration.

\*Instructor will provide assignment sheets for assignments detailing expectations.

Exams: Zero examinations in this course (You are welcome).

Participation: 10%

See above for attendance and participation requirements. This category also includes participation in the class workshops.

- 1) Presenting at workshop.
- 2) Participating in others' workshop (attending, contributing).

Midterm Evaluation and Exit Interviews: 5%

This course is relatively new for the instructor and the University of Notre Dame. In addition to the official feedback mechanism (CIFs), students will have individual opportunities to reciprocate feedback on the course. Attendance is the primary measure for the grade.

Informal Writing and Class Activities: 20%

1. Blog entries, of which students will choose three (3) for grading. Grades determined by thoughtfulness and relevance to topic.

2. Annotated Bibliography of works about digital history.
3. Annotated compendium of examples of digital history.

Formal Writing: 20%

1. Review essay (1000 words) DUE: 3 March
2. Project review (1000 words) DUE: 24 March

Final Project: 45%

### **Grading Scale**

A	93-100%
A-	90-92%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	73-76%
C-	70-72%
D-F	why are you still reading?

### **Course Schedule**

Note: Due Dates (\*\*) apply to 11:59 pm (South Bend time) of the noted date, even for those students with unexcused absences. The student is responsible for posting her/his materials (and double-checking availability).

Week One: Introductions

17 January Syllabus

19 January (Discussion)

What is History?

Explore [this site](#) (AHA's "Why Study History?" pages)

Week Two: What is Digital History?

24 January

Read: E. Ayers "The Pasts and Futures of Digital History"

Read: "Interchange: The Promise of Digital History"

26 January (Lab)

Digital History Examples, discovery and evaluation

Week Three: Access to Historical Materials (General Public)

31 January (Discussion)

Read: T. Hangen "Historical Digital Literacy"

Read: S. Graham "The Wikiblitiz"

Read: J. Barlow "Historical Research and Electronic Evidence" (esp. 205-225)

2 February (Lab)

## Wikipedia Exploration

### Week Four: Access to Historical Materials (Scholars)

7 February (Discussion)

Read: S. Ramsay "The Hermeneutics of Screwing Around; or What You Do with a Million Books"

Read: R. Rosenzweig "Scarcity or Abundance?"

9 February (Lab)

Finding materials

### Week Five: Organizing and Evaluating Sources

14 February (Discussion)

Read: W. Turkel, K. Kee, and S. Roberts "A Method for Navigating the Infinite Archive"

Read: J. Presnell "History and the Internet"

16 February (Lab)

Bibliographic Managers

### Week Six: Organizing Data

21 February (Discussion)

Read: A. Erikson "Historical Research and the Problem of Categories"

Read: R. Rosenzweig and D. Cohen "Appendix"

23 February (Lab)

Databases and file formats

### Week Seven: Textual Analysis

28 February (Discussion)

Read: T. Underwood "Seven ways humanists are using computers to understand text"

Read: D. Cohen "From Babel to Knowledge: Data Mining Large Digital Collections"

2 March (Lab)

Text analysis tools

\* 3 March (Friday) Review Essay Due 11:59 pm (EST)

### Week Eight: Geographic Information Systems

7 March (Discussion)

Read: E. Ayres "Turning Toward Place, Space, and Time"

9 March (Lab)

GIS tools

Spring Break (13-17 March)

Week Nine: Data Analysis and Visualization

21 March (Discussion)

Read: B. Ferster "Introduction" to *Interactive Visualization*

23 March (Lab)

Data tools

\* 24 March (Friday) Project Review Due 11:59 pm (EST)

Week Ten: Disseminating Historical Scholarship

28 March (Discussion)

Read: L. Madsen-Brooks "Digital History Practice and Malpractice around Black Confederate Soldiers"

Read: Dougherty, Nawrotzki, Rochez, Burke "Conclusion: What we Learned from *Writing History in the Digital Age*"

30 March (Lab)

Presentation, publishing, and curation tools

Week Eleven: Copyright (yours and others')

4 April (Discussion)

Read: R. Rosenzweig and D. Cohen "Owning the Past?"

6 April (Lab)

Copyright options

Week Twelve: Synthesis

11 April (Discussion)

Read: S. Dorn "Is (Digital) History More than an Argument about the Past?"

Read: D. Thomas and V. Johnson "New Universes or Black Holes: Does Digital Change Anything?"

13 April (Lab)

Troubleshooting/Project work

Week Thirteen: Workshops

18 April

20 April

Week Fourteen: Workshops

25 April

27 April

Week Fifteen: Workshops

2 May

Final Exam Period (time, date, place, and content: TBA)