Critical Making in Digital History

Figure 1: *Every Course Needs A Logo, Right?*

Course Website: https://shawngraham.github.io/hist3812w18/.

**NB** This document is a static version of the live website. Where there is disagreement between this document and the website, the website shall be taken as correct.

**Key Questions:**

- What happens to history as it gets digitized?
- That is, what does history look like, what happens to our materials, and the stories we tell or the questions we ask, as we abstract further and further away from ‘In Real Life’?
- What does ‘digital history’ really *mean*?

**How will we explore these questions?**

You will choose a real world object/building/site here in Ottawa that you can access and:

- progressively abstract it away from the real world with a series of technologies from photogrammetry to augmented reality
all the while attending lectures to learn the context of what we’re doing and why,
annotating the readings collaboratively on the open web
as you keep open notebooks reflecting on this progression
so that you can build a digital experience of your understanding of your results
for a public reveal to be held on campus at the end of term.

Your Prof: Dr. Shawn Graham

I’m an Associate Professor of Digital Humanities in the Department of History at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada.
No one is more surprised by this than me.

Interests

• Computational Creativity for History & Archaeology
• Open Access Everything
• Digital Public History & Archaeology

I’m currently working on things like machine learning, and the dodgy trade in human remains, and a textbook on digital archaeology with its own integrated computational environment. Recently I designed, built, and launched a journal for creativity in history and archaeology called Epoiesen. The journal went live in October 2017.

Education

• PhD in Archaeology, 2002, University of Reading
• MA City of Rome, 1998, University of Reading
• BA Hons, Archaeology, 1997 Wilfrid Laurier University

Core Course Info

Core Philosophical Perspectives


Read online at: http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/benjamin.pdf

Read online at: http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/108-ADAM-FACSIMILES-GB.pdf


Read online while connected to the Carleton VPN if off campus at: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1468-2303.2009.00500.x


Read the blog version as it is easier to annotate at: http://nowviskie.org/2013/resistance-in-the-materials/

More readings will of course be provided, but these pieces together in this reading order set the stage for what we shall attempt to do in this course.

Finally, for an example of the kind of work, polish, and reflective depth I’m looking for in your final work in this course, please see


This work was produced for Jentry Sayer’s ENGL508 at the University of Victoria. A 3rd year project by a Carleton history student from a few years ago, Ryan Pickering’s ‘Searching for Residential Schools’ used the same basic template, which adds another level to this idea of remixing...

Hypothesis

The majority of our readings are provided to you online. When you read online, please have the Hypothesis web annotation plugin installed (there is a link behind that text, which goes to the Hypothesis website). You should also consult The Quickstart Guide for Students. You do not need to use your own name as a username with Hypothes.is; but you should let Dr. Graham know what your username is so your work can be credited appropriately.

Make your annotations to the Critical Making in Digital History reading group (the link takes you to the ‘join the group’ page). You can respond to others’ annotations, link outwards from an annotation to another website or resource, or link to an annotation from another location. Annotations are visible
to anyone who joins the group. **Appropriate public behaviour is expected at all times.** Trolling, shaming, or abusive behaviour will not be tolerated.

**Open Notebook**

You will need to keep an open notebook of your experiments and your thinking in this class. You will do this by using a popular versioning control and collaboration website, Github.com. Sign up for an account; you do not need to use your own name. To start, you will create a repository, initialized with a ‘readme.md’ file, called ‘Notebook’. Over the duration of the course you may end up creating many more. (You do not necessarily have to install Git on your own computer, at least for now).

**Computing Resources**

You are welcome to use your own laptops or desktops. You can use the computers in the Underhill Resource Room in the Department of History (but check in with Dr. Graham first). You can use the public computers in the Library or any of the public computing labs. I would not recommend trying to do everything via an iPad or other tablet, though it might be possible. You may need to use a mobile phone from time to time. If you don’t have one, you can team up with someone else.

If you have any concerns, contact Dr. Graham as soon as possible.

**When things go wrong, technically speaking**

This is a digital history class. **Things will break.** The ways things break are instructive and opportunities for reflection and learning. I expect you to be flummoxed by what we’re doing. I also expect you to be **honest** about when things don’t go the way you’re expecting. For more on this outlook on digital work, see this essay by Croxall and Warnick, especially the ‘curatorial statement’.

See also this talk: https://www.youtube.com/embed/Lo_QQl22Uhg

**Collaboration**

I welcome collaboration. If you decide to collaborate with one (or at most, two) of your peers, I encourage that. Digital History is indeed a team sport. All collaboration must be fully and mindfully credited on any work that is completed. My expectation is that people who collaborate are able to produce a correspondingly greater piece of work. **Collaborative teams should schedule**
an appointment with Dr. Graham as soon as possible so that he can help you lay out ground rules for your collaboration.

You are welcome to complete this course on your own, of course.

Privacy Policy

You are in no way obligated to do any of the public-facing work of this course under your own name. Pseudonyms are ok. You do not need to explain why you want to use a pseudonym to me. At all times, keep your own personal safety online front and centre: my experience of the internet, and of academic culture, will have been different from yours, and my goal is to listen more than I talk when it comes to these issues.

If you wish to use a pseudonym for your Hypothesis and Github accounts, simply send a note to Dr. Graham telling him the account name.

Assessment

This course is divided into four modules. Each module is worth 20% of the final grade. The final piece you will make is also, in toto, worth 20%.

For each module, to obtain full grades, I expect to see at a minimum:

1. collaborative reading of assigned readings, including perceptive and incisive responses to others’ annotations
2. active listening and attention in lectures
3. 1 major digital artefact you have made, complete with paradata
4. complete and truthful logging of the process in the open notebook

If one of those aspects is missing (annotations, evidence of active listening in lectures, digital artefact with paradata, notebook), no points will be earned for that aspect.

Digital artefacts must have a paradata document. Both elements must be complete; otherwise no points for this aspect will be earned.

Each of those four aspects will be assessed on the grade scale “unsatisfactory - satisfactory - exceptional”. Numerically, this translates as:

- unsatisfactory: 0-2 points
- satisfactory: 3-4 points
- exceptional: 5 points

Do not let ‘points’ distract you from the serious effort this course requires.

I will return feedback as soon as possible.
How to submit your evidence

You submit evidence for each of these four aspects by filling in the online form available from the ‘assessment’ section of the website. That form requires you to provide a link to your Hypothesis user page, your logs, your repository or other location for your digital artefact, and any other evidence you wish to submit. Fill in each prompt as appropriate. Evidence of active listing and attention in lectures for instance could be provided by a written reflection citing things said by your peers or points raised in discussion.

Note that I fully expect that sometimes things won’t pan out how you want/expect/hope. Document the things that fail all the while reflecting on how and why and what the fail reveals. This too counts as evidence.

Work is due by Midnight the Sunday before the next Module begins (but check the schedule).

Digital Artefacts, or, Things You Will Make

Module 1: Physical to Digital Copies

In this module, you will create a digital copy of an artefact, site, or building, from the Ottawa area. Choose wisely; you will continue to work with this target in the remaining modules. You will need to research 3d photogrammetry apps that you can install on your phone or on your computer. You will log the steps that you do in this process, the decisions you make, the challenges you encounter, and any observations you make about your target (especially in the light of our lectures, discussions, and readings). This information goes into your notebook. You will use these notes to write a paradata description of your artefact:

   Documentation of the evaluative, analytical, deductive, interpretative and creative decisions made in the course of computer-based visualisation should be disseminated in such a way that the relationship between research sources, implicit knowledge, explicit reasoning, and visualisation-based outcomes can be understood.

Take care to document the background or ‘biography’ of your target. You might also find these works of use: Ottawa, an Illustrated History and History of Nepean.

Module 2: Digital Copies to Digital Things

In this module, you will translate the data from your digital object into some other kind of digital thing. This could mean remixing your object with another digital object; it could mean visualizing the underlying data; it could mean
translating the data into sound. What is key is that it should be a translation that can only be effected by digital means. Again, you will log all steps, decisions, fails, and reflections into your notebook. You will use these notes to write another paradata document on the resulting creation.

Module 3: Digital Things to Digital Worlds

In this module, you will translate either the artefact from module 1 or the remixed artefact from module 2 into a game world. It could be a 3d photorealistic world; it could be a minimally blocky world like Minecraft. It could even be a text-based world such as those created by Twine. How does interacting with the artefact in the context of a digital world change what it is to know this artefact? Log all steps, decisions, fails, and thoughts into your notebook. Use these notes to write another paradata document on the resulting creation.

Module 4: Digital Worlds back to the Physical World

In this final module, you will use an augmented reality platform to place your digital objects back into the world. You will need to research the various platforms available to make this happen (for inspiration, see this entry from HeritageJam 2017) What does this do to how you tell history? How does it affect what it is to know the object? Log all steps, decisions, fails, and thoughts into your notebook. Use these notes to write another paradata document on the resulting creation.

Critical Making: A Portfolio

For the final 20%, you will pull together all the evidence from over the course that answers the key question we opened with. This work will be presented in a ‘fair’ - like format at the end of term, possibly in the Library’s Discovery Centre.

Schedule

This class meets M and W, 11.35-12.55, SA304.

The exact schedule is subject to modification as needs arise.
Things you need to do before the first meeting of the term

- Get a Hypothes.is account, install the browser plugin, and join the HIST3812 group.
- Annotate THIS PHRASE within the group to show you can do it.
- Annotate this website using the tags ‘weird’, ‘wonderful’, and ‘worrying’ so that we know what your concerns are, what you are excited about.
- Read and annotate the Core Philosophical Perspectives
- Get a Github account, and make a new repository there called ‘Notebook’, initialized with a ‘readme.md’ file.
- email me at shawn dot graham at carleton dot ca with ‘HIST3812 usernames’ in the subject line, telling me what your Hypothesis account name is, and your github account (ie, for Github, ‘github.com/shawngraham’ is mine.)

Weekly Pattern

Most weeks will begin with me setting the scene, discussing the major issues, and making suggestions for what you need to pay attention to in the readings. The second session each week will begin with what I am calling ‘entry tickets’, a quick piece of writing that you need to hand in to get the discussion going. **These should be done before class.** An entry ticket is merely one or two lines where you transcribe one sentence or quote from the reading or one of your fellow students’ annotations that really caught your attention (for whatever reason!). These entry tickets will form the basis for our discussion (and they can also be put into your open notebooks).

January

Getting Started

Jan 8 - The Big Ticket Issues, or, What is this course about and how will it work?

Jan 10 - entry ticket based on the readings listed under Core Concepts

Module 1

- Jan 15 - Photogrammetry. App based solutions: Trnio, for iOS, SCANN3D, for Android; 3DF Zephyr, camera + Windows; and finally, for Mac, Agisoft Photoscan is installed on the Underhill computer room computers for your use. Have something installed on your phone, or bring a camera. We’ll be practicing in pairs, so not everyone will need a phone etc.
February

Module 1 Work Due by Midnight Feb 04

Module 2

- Feb 05 - History is a Remix
- Feb 12 - Museums and 3d Scanning - fears, issues, and opportunities
- Feb 14 - entry ticket Jacob, Sam. 2016 The copy in contemporary culture is both despised and feared. dezeen.com Feb 25. https://www.dezeen.com/2016/02/25/sam-jacob-opinion-column-copying-conservation-contemporary-culture-queen-other-nefertiti/
  Also The Life of Attributes

fyi Scan the World

Feb 19, Feb 21 Reading Week. No Classes.

Module 2 Work Due by Midnight Feb 25

Module 3

- Feb 26 - The Virtual World of the Past Tutorial on getting historical maps into Minecraft. Required software is on the Underhill Research Room computers; I can also make minecraft available to you via our library if you don’t have a copy. Twinery

March

- Mar 05 - History in Videogames
- Mar 12 - Archaeogaming
- Mar 14 - **entry ticket** Read at least two of the articles in the special themed issue of the SAA Archaeological Record, Nov 2016 edition

**Module 3 Work Due by Midnight Mar 18**

Module 4

- Mar 19 <- Class Cancelled; Graham to Conference. Augmented Reality and History

*This lecture will be videotaped before hand*

**students are expected to meet together to help each other with their builds, in this timeslot** A tutorial on building AR with Unity is at the Programming Historian; Unity may be downloaded for free, or you can use the version on the computers in the Underhill room.

- Mar 21 <- Class Cancelled; Graham to Conference

**students are expected to meet together to help each other with their builds, in this timeslot**

- Mar 26 - Politics of (un)Critical Making
April

- Apr 02 - entry ticket What Have I Learned?
- Apr 04 - exit ticket What Have We Learned?

Module 4 Work Due by Midnight FRIDAY Apr 06 NB the change of day.

- Apr 09 Digital History Fair

Your final piece is due Midnight, Apr 16

There is no final exam.