Intro

The sources for the history of our times are fragile. Joe Ricketts, the billionaire owner of DNAInfo and Gothamist, shut the local news publications down rather than tolerate a unionized workforce. For 11 minutes, Trump was kicked off Twitter. Ian Bogost sees in both episodes a symptom of a deeper problem:

both are pulling on the same brittle levers that have made the contemporary social, economic, and political environment so lawless.

As public historians, what are we to do about this? There are a lot of issues highlighted here, but let’s start at the most basic. It takes nothing to delete the record. The fragility of materials online is both a danger, and an opportunity, for us. Some scholars have “gone rogue” in trying to deal with this problem. That is to say, they neither sought nor obtained permission. They just scoped out a process, and did it.

I initially called this class ‘guerrilla public digital history’ partly tongue in cheek. I imagined us doing some augmented reality type projects in public spaces. Re-programming those public spaces. Using digital techs to surface hidden histories, and insert them into spaces where they didn’t ‘belong’. Counterprogramming. That was the ‘guerilla’ bit.

I still want to do all that. But I think we’re going to have to do a bit more. Digital Public Historians have a role to play I suspect in countering the information power asymmetry. These ways are impromptu, without authorization. Rogue. Improvised.

What is a ‘guerilla digital public history’?

I don’t know. But we’re going to find out.
[... a guerrilla narrative is the] interrupting [of] mainstream organized narratives through counter hegemonic storytelling, and the sabotage of toxic narratives ... particularly those which reproduce or silence injustice. ... Methodologically, adopting a guerrilla narrative approach implies a commitment towards the co-design and co-production of knowledge and the recognition of storytelling as a fundamental tool in this process. - Iengo, Ilenia and Armiero, M. The politicization of ill bodies in Campania, Italy. Journal of Political Ecology 24 (2017) http://jpe.library.arizona.edu/volume_24/Iengoarmiero.pdf

Guerrilla narrative can also be considered an expansion of the oral history methodology to include word-based memoirs, images, videos, audio recordings, and different forms of art among the different storytelling tools. Moreover, the expression guerrilla narrative implies the exercise of storytelling as a deliberate counter-hegemonic strategy, with an explicit political aim. - Ilenia Iengo and Marco Armiero “Toxic Bios: A guerrilla narrative project mapping contamination, illness and resistance” 3 Nov 2017 https://entitleblog.org/2017/11/03/toxic-bios-a-guerrilla-narrative-project-mapping-contamination-illness-and-resistance/

What are the stories in Ottawa that require a guerilla digital public history?
What do you need to know in order to tell such a story?
In this course, we will develop a guerilla digital public history cookbook and perhaps even put some of it into practice.

Warning

This course is an exploratory studio for guerilla digital public history. It involves a whole lot of experimentation and making. Things will break, and will go in directions that you didn’t expect. Part of the learning will involve documenting your practice. I will get you started with three expressive digital media that you can use to explore what it means to do guerilla digital history in the nation’s capital. You will leave this course with an actual ‘thing’ you’ve created and deployed, and a toolkit of your own. We will do a mixture of activities, readings, and discussions to enable you to ground your guerilla digital history toolkit in the scholarship. You will build this toolkit as you put in train your own act of guerilla digital history.

Again, this is a studio course. We will spend very little time in class on readings, as such; when we do discuss such things, it will be to provide context for what
we are doing. I’m inspired very much by the work of historian Bill Turkle, who says to his own students in a similar kind of studio-led course,

Most of your in-class time will be devoted to experimenting with various kinds of technologies and learning how to apply them. It is playful and open-ended, and most of the drive has to come from you. I provide tools and equipment, I can show you how it works and suggest ways you might use it, and if you get stuck I can help you figure out a way forward.

That goes for us too.

This can be disappointing if you are expecting a more traditional arrangement. If you want to learn how to do computational analysis of historical texts, I’d suggest the self-directed version of Crafting Digital History (http://craftingdigitalhistory.ca) would be more appropriate for you, and you can explore that on your own. But in this class, we’re doing something very different.

If you have questions or concerns, get in touch right away.

Office Hours

• By chance or appointment. PA406. shawn.graham@carleton.ca

Getting Started

NB As the schedule, supporting readings, and work we do can change rapidly, I’m electing to use the Wiki at https://github.com/shawngraham/5702w-w18/wiki for handling any schedule updates.

At a minimum, you’ll need:

• an account with Github or a domain of your own
• an account with Hypothesis

Whether or not you use your own name in any part of your username is up to you - you can be pseudonymous. You do need to let me know what your username is, of course.

Join our 5702w collaborative web annotation group here: https://hypothes.is/groups/mjB4yX9/hist5702w. If you’ve not used Hypothesis before, here is some help: https://web.hypothes.is/quick-start-guide-for-students/ I would suggest that you annotate everything - everything, including tutorials and manuals - you read for this course with hypothesis.
DO I NEED TO BE ‘TECHY’?

What does that mean, ‘techy’? It’s worth pondering. Short answer: no. If you can write an email, there’s nothing we’ll do in this course that is beyond you.

BUT WHAT HAPPENS IF SOMETHING DOESN’T WORK?

That is, in many ways, part of the point. Things will break. It’s when things break that we discover how best they can serve the broader goal. You will keep track of what you do, what you’re thinking, as you experiment and push yourself.

GLORIOUS FAILURE IS AS VALUABLE AS GLORIOUS SUCCESS

An ambitious project that succeeds is just as important to me as an ambitious project that fails spectacularly: both earn high grades! Document everything, and swing for the bleachers. That is the recipe for success. You’re welcome to play it safe, but know that playing it safe leads to lower grades.

Core Concepts

It feels odd to try to define ‘core concepts’. But these are things that I believe to be true:

- digital history is about making things
- the point of making is about discovery, not justification
- through making we come to understand the issue deeply, differently, divergently
- that making might let us find again the web we lost, the web we have to save.
- that the digital world overlays and intertwines the physical world and so we can’t leave it to the tech folks alone: we must engage
- that because this engagement can involve using digital tools, platforms, and data against the ways that the hegemons desire, it is political
- that because it is political, it involves an element of danger (for whom is undefined) and so the weapons of guerilla digital history might be truth and beauty bombs[1]

Assessment

- 4 Oral Reports - 25% total - see schedule for due dates
- 10 Devlogs - 25% total - to be kept in a timely fashion over the duration of the course (see devlogs below)
- Project - 50% total - due the last day of term
  - Paradata: 20%
  - the Thing itself: 30%

Oral Reports

These can be as formal or informal as you like. You have between 7 and 10 minutes.

Oral Report 1: cracks in the system. How has your chosen tech been used in Ottawa? How could it be used? What are its affordances and edges? Where and why do these resonate with the history you wish to tell/explore? What is it that you don’t know but need to find out?

Conceptually, this sets the scene for your act of guerilla digital public history

Oral Report 2: storyboards or paper prototypes of what you think you’re going to build

Go wild. Think big. Impress us. Ground what you’re going to do in the literature. Take care to illustrate/discuss the theoretical implications for what you’re proposing to do.

Oral Report 3: Work in progress- show us your paradata!

Paradata are the data that describe the scholarly apparatus behind your creative choices. See the London Charter and HeritageJam

Oral report 4: The Users Response

Your response to someone else’s project. A critical constructive response in the manner of Epoiesen

Devlogs

Ten entries. These entries are your own personal notes on what you’re doing, what you’re reading, what you’re drawing on, and why. In an ideal world, these would let someone else reproduce your project (recreate it from scratch and arrive at the same thing) and replicate it (follow your method on a different body of evidence). These can be a mixture of bullet points and narrative, however you like. You need to also create a repo just for your project materials itself, and keep everything you build there.
I won’t put a due date on these 10 entries; I expect you to step up and do the work in a timely fashion *because otherwise what is the point?* You *could* write them all at the very end of the course. But: since they are clearly not documenting work in progress, they really wouldn’t be ‘devlogs’ in that case, but simply busy work, and wouldn’t really be satisfactory, would they?

**Project**

A project that builds a work of guerilla DH. Because of their power to break boundaries of control, these projects should be built on (or in a combination of) projection mapping, AR, location based storytelling. That is, they are not confined to the screen. The rationale behind grading such unconventional work is that of Paul Daniel O’Donnell’s ‘unessay’ structure:

An unessay is compelling when it shows some combination of the following:

- it is as interesting as its topic and approach allows
- it is as complete as its topic and approach allows (it doesn’t leave the audience thinking that important points are being skipped over or ignored)
- it is truthful (any questions, evidence, conclusions, or arguments you raise are honestly and accurately presented)

In terms of presentation, an unessay is effective when it shows some combination of these attributes:

- it is readable/watchable/listenable (i.e. the production values are appropriately high and the audience is not distracted by avoidable lapses in presentation)
- it is appropriate (i.e. it uses a format and medium that suits its topic and approach)
- it is attractive (i.e. it is presented in a way that leads the audience to trust the author and his or her arguments, examples, and conclusions).

To be completed by the last day of term.

**Paradata**

The paradata that you submit for your project can obviously be a worked up and up-to-date version of what was created for the oral report 3. **Bonus marks** available for projects that build their paradata as a public facing website to show off the project.

**Going Big is better than Playing Safe** If things break, or fall apart, or it all goes pear-shaped at the last hurdle... tell us about it. Put it all into the paradata - not as a self-excusing ‘oops’ but rather as a critical post-mortem: what have you learned, and how will the next time be better? In what ways did this failure illuminate something important about your work? About PH in
general? Indeed these are things that even a wild success should think about too. I invite you to think carefully about what ‘fail’ means, in digital history.

Privacy

No student is compelled to use their real name in any public-facing work: this also includes Github user accounts or Hypothes.is accounts. Students should let me know what their username/account names are though.

Schedule

Each session will be a mixture of you reporting on tutorials you’ve done, things you’ve read, work you’ve completed, and me guiding your thinking about how we could uses these tools, skills, or perspectives towards a ‘guerilla digital public history’, whatever that may be.

There are basic things that you need to know how to do, if you’re going to be an effective historian in 2017. Them’s fighting words, I know. Tough. BEGIN WITH THE REQUIRED Selected Programming Historian Tutorials which you may find on the course wiki.

1. January 11

What digital history is and could be; counternarratives and hidden stories; Ottawa as canvas; the Library’s emerging technology collection

to do for today Have the linked texts referenced in Core Concepts on the Wiki read and annotated

2. January 18

Design thinking; affordances; Three technologies: projection mapping, augmented reality, pirateboxes

In particular, we are going to think of using these things in the first case around the Carleton Campus. I am particularly intrigued by the opportunities afforded by the architectural model of Ottawa’s downtown held in the Ottawa resource room.

3. January 25

poetic terrorism and art as sabotage; case studies; brainstorming

to have done for today the required Selected Programming Historian tutorials completed and your github devlog built; it should have one entry in it already reacting to what you have already done/learned. One devlog per week is now required for a total of 10 entries.
4. Feb 1

*Oral Report 1: cracks in the system.* How has your chosen tech been used in Ottawa? How could it be used? What are its affordances and edges? Where and why do these resonate with the history you wish to tell/explore? What is it that you don’t know but need to find out?

5. February 8

*making and the digital humanities; generonimos*

6. February 15

*Oral Report 2: storyboards or paper prototypes of what you think you’re going to build*

7. March 1

*studio time*

8. March 8

*studio time*

9. March 15

*Oral Report 3: Work in progress- show us your paradata!*

10. March 22

*studio time*

11. March 29

*Project Reveals*

12. April 5

*Oral report 4: The Users Response*

On Monday, April 9th, I am holding an event in the Discovery Centre to showcase the digital work being done across my three digital courses this term. I would like for you to demonstrate your projects as well. This is not a course requirement; rather, it is an opportunity.

**Late Work**

With regard to oral reports, students should contact me in the first instance in the event of a document illness contact me in order to make appropriate accommodations.