



The University of Western Ontario  
**HISTORY 2816A**

**Introduction to Digital History**

**Fall 2018-19**

**Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30-5:30pm, UCC 61**

**Instructor: Professor William J. Turkel**

Office Hours: Thursdays 2:30-3:20pm

Department of History, Office: Lawson Hall 2267

Email: wturkel@uwo.ca

---

**Course Description:**

In this course students will learn how historical content is produced, presented and published online; how to find and evaluate digital primary and secondary sources; and how to use computational techniques to work with digital resources. No previous background in the subject area is required.

***Antirequisite(s):***

History 3816F/G, Digital Humanities 2130A/B, Digital Humanities 3902F/G.

**Course Syllabus:**

Digital History refers to the use of computers, computer programs, digital media and other electronic technologies to teach, communicate, simulate, preserve, access, analyze, research, present and publish interpretations of the past. In this course you will learn how historical content is produced, presented and published in digital form; how to find and evaluate digital primary and secondary sources; and how to use computational techniques to work with digital resources. No programming experience or previous background in the subject area is required.

The objectives of the course are

- Discover the enormous range of historical sources, both primary and secondary, that are available online in digital form
- Learn to utilize sources that are ‘born-digital’
- Apply computational tools to the scholarly activities of **discovering, annotating, comparing, referring, sampling, illustrating** and **representing** (Unsworth)
- Be able to critically engage with the emerging methods of digital history and digital humanities
- Evaluate and determine strategies for historical practice with digital sources and tools

There are two 2-hour sessions per week. For the first hour each day, I will explain and demonstrate the use of particular computational methods or tools on a range of digital historical sources. For the second hour, you will practice using the tool or method in class and I will go around and answer questions and provide assistance. We will follow the in-class work with a group discussion. At the end of each class you will upload a copy of your day's notebook to the OWL Site.

### **Course Materials:**

To get the most out of this class, you will need a Windows, Mac or Linux laptop, which you should bring to every class.

You will also need a **desktop** student license for Wolfram Research's *Mathematica* software. (Don't let the name scare you, you won't need any particular experience with mathematics to do well in this course). You can purchase a one-semester license, a license for the year, or a permanent license.

<http://www.wolfram.com/mathematica/pricing/students-individuals.php>

You don't have to purchase anything else for the course.

All slides and course material will be made freely available on the course website.

### **Methods of Evaluation:**

The grade breakdown is as follows:

- In-class hands-on work (every class session) 30%
- Short assignment 1 (due Sep 27, zero date Oct 16) 10%
- Short assignment 2 (due Oct 18, zero date Oct 30) 10%
- Short assignment 3 (due Nov 8, zero date Nov 20) 10%
- Final research project (due Dec 6) 40%

The short assignments (2-5 pages each) will test your understanding of the course material and your ability to apply the techniques that you have learned. In the final research project you will be asked to use the computational analysis of sources to support or question historical claims made in the scholarly literature on a particular topic. You will also be asked to reflect on the aspects of the process that you felt were successful or not, about other ways that the technology might be used to assist the historian in his or her work, and things that historians should be cautious or critically aware of when using similar tools. More information about the assignments and ways to approach them will be discussed in class.

Participation in the in-class activities is a key component of this class. I expect you to attend every class and participate in the day's activities. This includes asking and answering questions in class.

In general, I don't like to penalize late work. Each assignment will have a suggested due date and, a few weeks later, a zero date. If you hand in your assignment before the zero date, you will receive full credit for your work. After the zero date, it will be worth nothing.

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, you must provide valid medical or other supporting documentation to Academic Counselling as soon as possible.

## **Additional Statements**

### ***Academic Offences:***

Scholastic Offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitute a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### ***Accessibility Options:***

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website:

[www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated\\_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html)

### ***Medical Issues***

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Please go to:

[https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical\\_accommodations\\_link\\_for\\_OOR.pdf](https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical_accommodations_link_for_OOR.pdf)

to read about the University's policy on medical accommodation. In the event of illness, you should contact Academic Counselling as soon as possible. The Academic Counsellors will determine, in consultation with the student, whether or not accommodation should be requested. They will subsequently contact the instructors in the relevant courses about the accommodation. Once the instructor has made a decision about whether to grant an accommodation, the student should contact his/her instructors to determine a new due date for tests, assignments, and exams.

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation: [http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical\\_accommodation.html](http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html)

### ***Plagiarism:***

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of Publication and page number. Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writer's ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source; these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction, your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases, in their suspension from the University.

### ***Scholastic Offences***

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site:

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### ***Support Services***

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western, [http://uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/](http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact, Heidi Van Galen, Administrative Officer, Department of History, 519-661-2111 x84963 or e-mail [vangelen@uwo.ca](mailto:vangelen@uwo.ca).