Overview

This course explores changing methods and practices of history in a digital age. It is designed to expose students to the wide variety of work being done computationally by historians and other humanists today, and equip them to be creative producers of new work and critical and constructive readers of existing projects. We'll look at how the historian's craft in three major units: the creation of digital sources, the algorithmic transformations that computers can enact on cultural materials like texts, and the new ecologies of publishing and scholarly communication made possible by new media.

1. Digital Sources   What is a digital source? How do we create them? Looking at both "born-digital" sources and the processes of digitization, we'll explore the theory and practice of bringing artifacts from the analog world into the digital one, of interpreting secondary literature from fields that build heavily on data-as-evidence, and the obligations that the social construction of the digital archive creates on us as critical readers of digital primary sources.

2. Algorithmic transformations   Tools and methods developed over the last few decades can be of tremendous value for humanists. We'll spend a week learning the theory and basics of these fields, including network analysis, digital mapping, text analysis and categorization, and analysis of tabular data.

3. Digital Publishing   All publishing today is digital. Some digital projects express their final form on paper, some in printed 3D models, and some on phone and computer screens. This section will focus on the debates and possibilities surrounding telling historical story through these various digital media, with a particular focus on building web exhibitions for public history projects and online components for more traditional scholarship.

Note on scheduling

We'll be working together to make this course as useful to your professional development as possible. That means you should feel free to communicate any changes you'd like to see to me; it also means that the syllabus is subject to be updated, with due notice, at any time. The latest version of the syllabus will be the one on the course website; in the event of any conflicts about what to read, first priority goes to any e-mails from myself; second to the latest version on the website; and only third priority to what's listed on the paper copy of the syllabus.