University of Manitoba – Faculty of Arts – Department of History

Regular Session: Winter 2012

History 3120: History of Digital Culture (3 credit hours)

When: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00-11:15
Where: 204 St. John’s College

Instructor: Greg Bak (you can call me Greg)
Office: 247 St. John’s College
Phone: 272-1578
Email: greg.bak@ad.umanitoba.ca
Office hours: Wednesdays, 9:00-12:00, or by appointment.

Course Information

Course Description: This course will examine the social-cultural impacts of computer and communications technologies. The course will predominantly treat the twentieth century, examining technological revolutions from mainframe computers to Web 2.0. Focussed on the global west, the course will also consider the worldwide implications and reach of digital cultures and technologies. [from calendar]

The course will be run as a seminar. Everyone will be expected to contribute to the discussion, and everyone will have a chance to lead the discussion.

Required Text (available from the bookstore):


Additional readings will be drawn from University of Manitoba Libraries holdings or from items published on the open Internet.

I expect you:
• To attend every seminar and to arrive on time. If you are going to miss a seminar, or if you are going to be late, please email me in advance.
• To be prepared for every seminar. This means having completed the readings and being ready to enter a discussion, offer a critical response, share your reactions, draw out common themes among the readings as a body and so on.
• To participate in every seminar by speaking up, responding to questions, raising questions about readings and course content and so on.
• To be courteous and respectful in responding to others in the classroom.
• To meet deadlines.
You can expect me:
- To arrive at class 10 minutes early and stay 10 minutes after.
- To start and end seminars on time.
- To promote respectful, courteous and equitable seminar participation.
- To be available to meet outside of class time, during office hours or by appointment.
- To provide feedback on request as well as in response to written assignments.

**Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminar participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Ongoing throughout term</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Article reflection due each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Weds by noon</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- feedback email due by noon</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jan 25, Mar 15, Apr 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical reading</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>500 words</td>
<td>By noon on Wednesday or Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>before your Seminar presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10 mins presentation + discussion</td>
<td>First 30 mins of class time for that class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of a website proposal</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>250-500 words</td>
<td>By noon of Monday, February 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of a website report</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1500-2000 words</td>
<td>By noon of Monday, March 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take home exam question proposal</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>100-500 words</td>
<td>By noon of Monday, April 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take home exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>By noon of Friday, April 12</td>
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Course assignments may be submitted electronically, by email attachment, in any standard word-processing format. Article reflections will be uploaded as “messages” under the Discussions tab of the course page on D2L.

**Seminar Participation (20%)**

Seminar participation grades are assigned based on your attendance and contributions to the discussion, your weekly article reflections and your feedback email.

By noon each Wednesday you will submit a 100-200 word article reflection, based on one of the readings for Thursday’s class. You should provide: (1) a very brief (one or two sentences) summary of the author’s argument; (2) discuss what you found surprising or interesting in the article; and (3) identify a topic or question that you would be interested in exploring further. Article reflections are not individually graded for content, but a late or missing reflection will result in a 2 point deduction from your participation grade. Article reflections will be uploaded as “messages” under the Discussions tab of the course page on D2L. Everyone is encouraged to read everyone else’s article reflections.

By noon on the Friday following the last seminar in each unit (Jan 25, Friday Mar 15, and Friday Apr 10) you will send me a brief feedback email in which you reflect back on the readings and
discussions of the unit. You are encouraged to identify readings that you found particularly helpful or particularly difficult, topics that interested you and seminar discussions that you felt went well, or that you felt could have gone better. You are encouraged, as well, to reflect on your own participation in the unit, identifying those discussions in which you were particularly satisfied with your contributions, or in which you felt you could have contributed more or differently. Feedback email will not be graded for content, but a late or missing feedback email will result in a 2 point deduction from your participation grade.

In addition to the required feedback email, you are encouraged to submit additional feedback email whenever you like during the term. In past seminars I have had some students submit weekly email. Your feedback is essential for me to improve my teaching and my course offerings. I very much appreciate any feedback that you would like to give.

**Critical Reading (10%) and Seminar Presentation (10%)**

At the beginning of the term you will sign up to lead a seminar at some point during the term. Your critical reading assignment will help you to prepare for your seminar. Your presentation will give you a chance to think about how to communicate the content of your critical reading in a way that promotes discussion within the class.

Those who take an early seminar slot will have the advantage of getting this assignment out of the way. They will also find their weekly article reflections easier for having worked through the critical reading assignment.

For the critical reading assignment you will read the web essay “Critical Reading of An Essay's Argument” by LK Wheeler ([http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/reading_basic.html](http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/reading_basic.html)) and work through his five-stage process for analyzing the argument in your assigned article. Your critical reading report will be structured according to the instructions provided in the “Critical Reading” assignment handout. Your critical reading report should be about 500 words and is due by noon the day before your seminar presentation.

Your seminar presentation will consist on a five to ten minute presentation on the theme of that day’s seminar. Your presentation should incorporate your critical response to the reading, but you should also seek to articulate the relationship between the seminar theme and the general course content and themes. You are encouraged to use part of your presentation time to play or lead the class through digital resources such as videos and websites. Your presentation should inspire the rest of us to engage with your analysis of the seminar theme. As well, you should think about some questions to stimulate discussion, and some strategies that you can use to either kick off the discussion, or to keep it moving along.

**History of a Website Proposal (5%) and report (20%)**

For the proposal, you will identify a website that you would like to use as the basis for the report. You will search the Internet Archive to identify a capture of the same website from 2002 or earlier that you will use for the purpose of comparison. Your proposal will identify the website and include its URL. It will also identify, by date, the specific pre-2003 capture that you will use, and provide the link to that capture. Finally, your proposal will present a justification
for why you would like to write your report on this particular website. Your justification can be based on personal interest or social/cultural importance.

For the **History of a Website Report** you will describe and analyze the changes in your website over time, making reference to the current version of the website and at least one previous capture of the website from the Internet Archive. You will write a 1,500 to 2,000 word report, structured into three sections: (1) an analysis of the changes in the structure, design and functionalities of the website over time, including an analysis of the extent to which the Internet Archive succeeds or fails in preserving these aspects of the website; (2) a contextual history of the website, exploring how its content, structure, design and functionalities reflect changing expectations of either the creators or the viewers of the website; (3) your general reflections and conclusions.

**Take Home Exam Question Proposal (5%)**

For this assignment you will look back over the course and propose one or more questions for the take home exam. Creating a question will involve reviewing your readings, seminar notes and assignments to identify key themes and issues from the year. This is your chance to craft an exam question that you feel would be in keeping with the topic and themes of the course, but that would still challenge yourself and your peers to synthesize and extend what we have learned. And who knows? Your question, or a variation of it, just might end up on the exam!

The assignment will consist of one or more essay-style exam questions/topics, as well as a brief (approximately 100 word) explanation or justification for why this would be an appropriate question.

**Take Home Exam (30%)**

The take home exam will be distributed during the final class of the term. It will consist of questions that address the readings, themes and discussions of the entire course.

Evaluative feedback will be provided prior to the voluntary withdrawal (VW) date of March 20, 2013.

**Grade Scale:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90% and over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>80-90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>75-79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>70-74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>65-69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>60-64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>50-59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>49% and lower</td>
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**Referencing Style Guide:** The style guide for *Archivaria* (available at the Association of Canadian Archivists' website) is used in this course. See: [http://www.archivists.ca/sites/default/files/Attachments/Communications_attachments/Archivaria/Archivaria_Style_Guide-Jan2010.pdf](http://www.archivists.ca/sites/default/files/Attachments/Communications_attachments/Archivaria/Archivaria_Style_Guide-Jan2010.pdf)

**Course Policy on Late Assignments:** Article reflections submitted after Tuesday at noon will be considered late and will result in the loss of 2 marks from your overall participation grade.
Mandatory feedback email received after Friday at noon will be considered late and will result in the loss of 2 marks from your overall participation grade. Other term work will be penalized by 5% for each week or part of a week that it is late.

**Faculty Policy on Uncollected work:** Uncollected term work will become the property of the Faculty of Arts and will be subject to confidential destruction.

**Academic Dishonesty**

The University’s regulations regarding plagiarism, cheating and impersonation found in Section 8 of the General Academic Regulations in the online Academic Calendar and Catalog and the Faculty of Arts regulation (online at [http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/student/student_responsibilities.html](http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/student/student_responsibilities.html)) which reads:

"The common penalty in Arts for plagiarism on a written assignment is a grade of F on the paper and a final grade of F (DISC) (for Disciplinary Action) for the course. For the most serious acts of plagiarism, such as purchase of an essay and repeat violations, this penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five (5) years from registration in courses taught in a particular department/program in Arts or from all courses taught in this Faculty.

The Faculty also reserves the right to submit student work that is suspected of being plagiarized to Internet sites designed to detect plagiarism or to other experts for authentication.

The common penalty in Arts for academic dishonesty on a test or examination is F for the paper, F (DISC) for the course, and a one-year suspension from courses acceptable for credit in the Faculty. For more serious acts of academic dishonesty on a test or examination, such as repeat violations, this penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five years from registration in courses taught in a particular department or program in Arts or from all courses taught in or accepted for credit by this Faculty.

If you are at all uncertain of your responsibilities with regard to academic integrity and student conduct, you are encouraged to complete the online, self-guided *Academic Integrity and Student Conduct Tutorials* available from the University’s Student Affairs website: [http://umanitoba.ca/student/resource/student_advocacy/AI-and-Student-Conduct-Tutorials.html](http://umanitoba.ca/student/resource/student_advocacy/AI-and-Student-Conduct-Tutorials.html)

**Term at a Glance**

**Unit 1: What is digital culture?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T Jan 8</td>
<td>Introduction and course policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R Jan 10</td>
<td>Dark age or golden age?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T Jan 15</td>
<td>Digital inequalities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
R Jan 17    Researching digital history
T Jan 22    Defining digital culture
R Jan 24    Defining digital history

Unit 2: Understanding the technology

T Jan 29    Before mainframes
R Jan 31    Preserving early computer history

History of a Website proposal due by noon Monday, February 5

T Feb 5    Mainframe computing
R Feb 7    Office technologies of the 1950s and 1960s
T Feb 12   Minicomputers
R Feb 14   From ARPANET to the World Wide Web

Reading Week: Feb 18-22

T Feb 26    Desktop computing
F Feb 28    What happened to the paperless office?
T Mar 5     Internet and the World Wide Web
R Mar 7     Social media
T Mar 12    Mobile computing
R Mar 14    Internet of Things

History of Website Report due by noon Monday, March 18

Unit 3: The future of digital history

T Mar 19    History of the digital future 1
R Mar 21    History of the digital future 2
T Mar 26    Future of digital history 1
R Mar 28    Future of digital history 2

Take Home Exam Question Proposal due by noon Monday, April 1

T Apr 2    Digital heritage 1: search engines
R Apr 4    Digital heritage 2: Internet Archive
T Apr 9    Digital heritage 3: history of gaming

Take Home Exam due by noon Friday, April 12