University of Manitoba – Faculty of Arts – Department of History

Regular Session: Winter 2014

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

When: Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:00-2:15
Where: 202 St. John’s College

Instructor: Prof. Greg Bak (you can call me Greg)
Office: 247 St. John’s College
Phone: 204-272-1578
Email: greg.bak@umanitoba.ca
Office hours: Tues and Thurs 10:00-11:00, or contact me by email to set up an 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. Focused on the global west, the course will also consider the worldwide implications and reach of digital cultures and technologies. [from calendar]

Students can expect to:
- Think about what is digital culture and what is the history of digital culture;
- Learn how digital culture is preserved and how it can be researched;
- Gain experience writing, interacting digitally and speaking in class.

Class meetings blend lecture with discussions in small groups and with the class as a whole. Class discussions are initiated and extended on the course website, on D2L. Participation in class discussions and on the course website is essential to understanding course content.

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.

The Course Website on D2L provides course documents, links to some readings, and includes a forum for weekly discussions.
Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Due</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Ongoing throughout term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In class and on D2L</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D2L posting every Wednesday by noon</td>
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<tr>
<td>D2L Discussion Ace</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5-10 mins presentation</td>
<td>Beginning of Thursday class for your week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Report</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>500-1,000 words</td>
<td>Friday of week that you are Discussion Ace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of a website proposal</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>250-500 words</td>
<td>By noon of Monday, February 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of a website report</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1500-2000 words</td>
<td>By noon of Monday, March 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take home exam question proposal</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>100-500 words</td>
<td>By noon of Monday, March 31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take home exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>By noon of Tuesday, April 15</td>
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Course assignments can be submitted as email attachments or uploaded to D2L. Email communications must conform to the UManitoba policy on student email (http://umanitoba.ca/registrar/email_policy/) requiring the use of your university email account.

Evaluative feedback will be provided prior to the voluntary withdrawal (VW) date of March 19, 2014.

**Participation (20%)**

Like contemporary digital culture, this course is structured around participation. Classes will provide opportunities for discussions in pairs, in small groups and with the class as a whole. Readings and course themes will be discussed in class, as well as through the discussion forum on the course website, on D2L. Students are **required each week to post at least one comment on the week’s readings to D2L by Wednesday at noon.**

Postings to D2L should explore key themes and questions arising from the week’s readings. They can also include personal reflections on the readings and critiques of the readings. Postings should be about 100 words each.

**D2L Discussion Ace (10%) & Discussion Report (10%)**

Each member of the class will sign up to be the D2L **Discussion Ace** for one week of the course (some weeks will have more than one Ace). The Ace is encouraged to shape online discussion that week by posing questions and responding to individual postings on D2L. In the Thursday class, the Ace will make a short presentation (5-10 minutes) that summarizes **three key themes**, questions or critiques that have emerged from the online discussion.

At the end of the week, on Friday, the Discussion Ace will submit a 500-1,000 word **Discussion**
Report that explores the content and differences between online and in-class discussions. The report should be structured into two parts. In Part One you will present an analysis of the online discussion, including a write-up of the three key themes, questions or critiques that you brought to class. In Part Two you will compare the online and in-class discussions in terms of their themes, content and dynamics. Did the discussion in class extend the online discussion, or did it go in a different direction? How well did the online and in-class discussions, together, explore the content and analysis of the week’s readings?

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, at least one pre-2003 capture that you will use for the purposes of comparison, 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.
Grade Scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90% and over</td>
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<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>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>60-64%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>50-59%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>49% and lower</td>
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Rules and Policies

Late Penalties

D2L postings must be submitted by Wednesday at noon to allow that week’s Discussion Ace sufficient time to review and analyze all of the postings. Students are allowed one missed posting and three late postings without penalty. Additional missed or late postings will result in a loss of two marks each 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.

Academic Integrity

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.

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:


Grade Appeal

Students who wish to appeal a grade given for term work must do so within TEN (10) working days after the grade for the term work has been made available to them.

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

Referencing Style Guide

Students are asked to provide all citations and references in Chicago format. For a brief overview, consult the UManitoba Libraries website:

http://libguides.lib.umanitoba.ca/content.php?pid=356868&sid=2918540
A note about the instructor, and my approach to teaching

Prior to July 2011 I was a digital archivist at Library and Archives Canada, Canada’s national archives, specializing in digital preservation and digital information management. I was hired by the University of Manitoba to teach in the Master’s Program in Archival Studies, a program of the Department of History. My interest in the History of Digital Culture emerges from my ongoing research into the challenges of creating digital archives that express the complexity and fluidity of digital communications.

It has been my experience that one can only learn about digital systems by engaging with them. We have all likely had someone try to explain to us how to use a particular computer program or app. No amount of abstract explanation can provide the level of understanding attained by even fifteen minutes logged in and using the system.

I believe that this holds true for all learning. I bring to my teaching a variety of active learning strategies, hoping to create opportunities for you to engage with course content through discussions, assignments and presentations. Since not everyone is comfortable speaking in front of the class I make use of online discussion and, in class, I frequently ask that you work in pairs or small groups. As we get to know each other over the term, I hope that everyone will become more comfortable speaking out in class.

The readings that I assign are the necessary foundations to the discussions that occur on D2L and in class. Completing the readings, logging into D2L and coming to class, then, are essential to your success in the class. If you miss classes or don’t join into the discussion on D2L your learning will suffer. The real learning in this class does not occur just through the readings, or through my lectures: it occurs through your active engagement with the readings in class and on D2L. What you get out of this class is exactly proportionate to the effort that you put into it.

What I enjoy most about teaching is your learning. I value your feedback on the course content and on my teaching, and I encourage you to talk to me before or after class, during my office hours or by appointment.

I look forward to getting to know you over the coming term. I hope that you have an enjoyable and academically rewarding experience in this course.

Term at a Glance

Unit 1: What is digital culture?

T Jan 7 Introduction and course policies
R Jan 9 Dark age or golden age?
T Jan 14 Digital inequalities
R Jan 16 Gender and technology
T Jan 21 Digital Aboriginal
R Jan 23 The business of the Internet
T Jan 28  What is digital culture?
R Jan 30  What is digital history?

**History of a Website proposal due by noon Monday, February 3**

**Unit 2: Technology and culture**

T Feb 4  Before mainframes
R Feb 6  Preserving early computer history
T Feb 11 Mainframe computing
R Feb 13 Changing office technologies – early twentieth century

**Reading Week: 18 Feb – 21 Feb**

T Feb 25 Minicomputers
R Feb 27 ARPAnet
T Mar 4 Desktop computing
R Mar 6 History of the digital future: Vannevar Bush and Douglas Engelbart
T Mar 11 The Internet
R Mar 13 The Internet before the World Wide Web

**History of Website Report due by noon Monday, March 17**

T Mar 18 Hypertext and the World Wide Web

**VW for Winter Courses Wednesday March 19**

R Mar 20 The World Wide Web and social media
T Mar 25 Ubiquitous computing
R Mar 27 Games

**Take Home Exam Question Proposal due by noon Monday, March 31**

**Unit 3: Preserving digital culture**

T Apr 1 Digital preservation
R Apr 3 Preserving the Internet
T Apr 8 Preserving digital culture

**Take Home Exam due by noon Tuesday April 15**