University of Manitoba – Faculty of Arts – Department of History

Regular Session: Winter 2017

History 3340: Studies in the History of Digital Culture (3 CH)

When: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30-12:45
Where: 125 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: Tuesdays 2:00-3:00, or contact me by email to set up an appointment.

Course Information

Course Description: This course will examine the social-cultural meanings of computer and communications technologies. The course will predominantly treat the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, examining the evolution of technologies from the 1930s to today. Focussed 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 discussing readings 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 UM Learn. Participation in class discussions and on the course website is essential to understanding course content.

Course Overview: The course begins with a brief unit to introduce the concepts of digital culture and the histories of digital cultures. The second unit proceeds through a roughly chronological examination of the histories of digital cultures. The final unit of the course considers key questions for contemporary and historic digital cultures such as digital inequalities and digital divides, the history and politics of data accumulation, the history and politics of search and the nature and means of creating archives for digital cultures.

There is no required textbook for this course.

Readings and recordings will be drawn from University of Manitoba Libraries holdings or from items published on the open Internet.

The **Course Website** on UM Learn provides course documents, links to some readings, and a forum for weekly discussions.

Evaluation

Assignment	Value	Length	Due
Participation	20%	--	Ongoing throughout term - In class and on UM Learn - UM Learn postings by noon of every Wednesday and Friday
UM Learn Discussion Leader	10%	--	Students will sign up for a particular week during which you will facilitate and lead discussions on UM Learn.
UM Learn Discussion Leader Report	10%	500-1,000 words	By noon the Monday after your week as UM Learn Discussion Leader.
UM Learn Profile & My Digital Life	10%	1,000-1,500 words	By noon of Friday, February 3
History of a Website Proposal	--	250 words	By noon of Friday, March 3
History of a Website Research Paper	20%	1500-2000 words	By noon of Monday, April 3
Take home exam	30%	--	By noon of Monday, April 24

Assignments must be uploaded to the course dropbox on UM Learn.

Evaluative feedback will be provided prior to the voluntary withdrawal (VW) date of March 31, 2017.

Participation (20%)

Like contemporary digital culture, this course is structured around participation. Students are required to participate in face-to-face discussions in class, as well as online on UM Learn.

Classes provide opportunities for face-to-face discussions in pairs, in small groups and with the class as a whole. Since in-class participation is an essential part of how course content is communicated, attendance will be taken and the quality of preparation and participation noted.

UM Learn postings should explore themes, questions and critiques arising from the readings and the discussions in class. Personal reflections on the readings and discussions are welcome. Postings should be about 100 words each. You are **required to post at least two comments per week**, by Wednesday at noon and Friday at noon. You are especially encouraged to post comments in advance of class meetings. You can also post comments that further explore issues raised in the class after the class meeting. Postings can start new threads or respond to someone else's thread. You are encouraged to include links to additional readings and resources (news stories, blogs, video, audio, etc.).

Participation, whether in class or online, is expected to be frequent, thoughtful and respectful of others. Evaluation of participation will consider, in particular:

- Substance and quality of comments and participation
- Frequency of participation
- Respectful interaction with others (for example: building on points raised by others, responding to others respectfully)
- Whether contributions address the readings and are on-topic.

UM Learn Discussion Leader (10%) & Discussion Leader Report (10%)

Each member of the class will sign up to be the UM Learn Discussion Leader for one week of the course (some weeks may have more than one Discussion Leader). The Leader is responsible for initiating and guiding the online discussion during the week. To do this, the Leader will need to do the readings early and kick off the discussion with an early posting that explores the readings in a provocative and insightful way. The Leader will want to follow the discussion closely, frequently responding as comments are posted and working to ensure that the online discussion stays respectful, relevant and focussed. All discussion participants, but especially the Leader, are encouraged to link to relevant additional resources (videos, blogs or news articles) that explore specific themes or issues.

By noon of the Monday following, the Discussion Leader will submit a 500-1,000 word **Discussion Report** that summarizes the content of the online discussion reflects upon the experience of using the UM Learn discussion forum. The report should be structured into two parts. In Part One you are asked to summarize the **content** of the online discussion, including the key themes, questions or critiques that emerged from it, and consider whether these themes were similar to or different from those of our in-class discussion. In Part Two you are asked to think about the different **dynamics** of online and in-class discussion. How does the discussion environment (UM Learn forum vs. face-to-face learning in the classroom) affect the content, tone and dynamics of the discussion? Secondly, think about the UM Learn discussion interface and functionalities compared to other online discussion forums (such as Facebook, Twitter or Reddit). Think about questions such as: What are the strengths of UM Learn? How is having a discussion on UM Learn different from having one on these other forums? How might the UM Learn discussion forum be improved in terms of its interface and functionalities? What are the strengths, weaknesses and differences of engaging on a forum such as UM Learn, where participation is limited to students enrolled in our class, versus discussions on an open forum such as Twitter or Reddit?

UM Learn Profile & My Digital Life (10%)

For the first part of this assignment you are asked to review the readings discussed in class on January 24 (Digital Identity). In light of the argument, explored in the readings and in class, that identities on social networks are constructed but nonetheless authentic, consider how you would like to present yourself on UM Learn. **Fill out your UM Learn profile and upload an image** that reflects the identity that you would like to project at the University of Manitoba.

The second part of the assignment asks how you would characterize yourself in relation to digital

culture: A participant? A producer? Outside looking in? How do the readings and discussions from the classes on January 24 (Digital Identity) and January 26 (Information Society) contribute to how you understand your digital life?

You are asked to **write a brief (1,000-1,500 word) description of your digital life**. You are encouraged to describe and critically analyze whatever aspects of your life history and social or family relationships seem relevant to how you use digital technologies and interact online. You are encouraged to identify the devices (e.g. smart phone, tablet, desktop or laptop computer) that you use in your daily and academic life, and the websites and social network services that you often visit while doing school work and in other aspects of your life.

- Your essay **must make reference** to the readings from the classes on Jan 24 (Digital Identity) and Jan 26 (Information Society).
- Your essay must discuss the image that you chose to use as an avatar on UM Learn to explain how it relates to the persona that you are seeking to project on UM Learn.

History of a Website Proposal and Research Paper (20%)

For the **proposal** you will identify a website that you would like to use as the basis for the report. Search the Internet Archive to identify two captures of the same website from before 2003 that allow you to trace the development of the website. Your proposal should:

- Identify the website and include its URL.
- Identify at least two pre-2003 captures from the Internet Archive (https:archive.org) that you will use for the purposes of comparison, and provide links to those captures.
- Include a brief (one or two sentence) 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.

In the **History of a Website Research Paper** you are asked to describe and analyze the changes in your website over time, making reference to the current version of the website and at least two captures of the website in the Internet Archive.

You are asked to write a 1,500 to 2,000-word research paper, 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, discussing how it helps us to understand the people who created the website and the people who used the website;
(3) Your general reflections and conclusions.

Variation: If you prefer, you may choose to write a history of an online community. Doing this will require that you analyze the current online representations of the community (including traditional web sites as well as Facebook, Flickr, YouTube or other social media profiles), and that you identify at least two captures from the Internet Archive (at least one from before 2003) that will allow you to study the digital history of the community.

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:

A+	90% and over	C+	65-69%
A	80-89%	C	60-64%
B+	75-79%	D	50-59%
B	70-74%	F	49% and lower

Rules and Policies

Late Penalties

UM Learn Discussion postings must be submitted by Wednesdays and Fridays at noon. Students are allowed two 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: http://umanitoba.ca/student/resource/student_advocacy/AI-and-Student-Conduct-Tutorials.html

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

Student resources

You have access to several important resources to help you navigate your classes and university life more generally. There are writing tutors available to help you with your essays through the Academic Learning Centre (ALC): http://umanitoba.ca/student/academiclearning/ The ALC page also has resources to help you with study skills, organization, as well as assistance for students using English as an Additional Language (EAL). Other issues, including accessibility services, workshops, and tips about academic integrity are addressed at the Student Advocacy Services webpage (http://umanitoba.ca/student/resource/student_advocacy/). The History department will also make a writing tutor available exclusively to History students in the department on one day of the week. More information about scheduling etc. TBA.

All of the above services can also be accessed through this link: http://umanitoba.ca/student/saa/accessibility/student-resources.html

History students can also take advantage of the huge range of academic materials (including primary and secondary sources, as well as pages to help with writing and referencing) made available by the History subject librarian, Kyle Feenstra, and tailored for use by History students. The library website includes separate subject guides for secondary sources (http://libguides.lib.umanitoba.ca/history) and primary sources (http://libguides.lib.umanitoba.ca/c.php?g=453673).