

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY—WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

HIST 507: Digital History Methods

Fall Quarter, 2024–2025, 4 credits

Class time: Tues/Thurs, 12:00 – 1:50 p.m.

Location: HH 112

Instructor: Christine Johnston

Contact: Christine.Johnston@wwu.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. & by appt

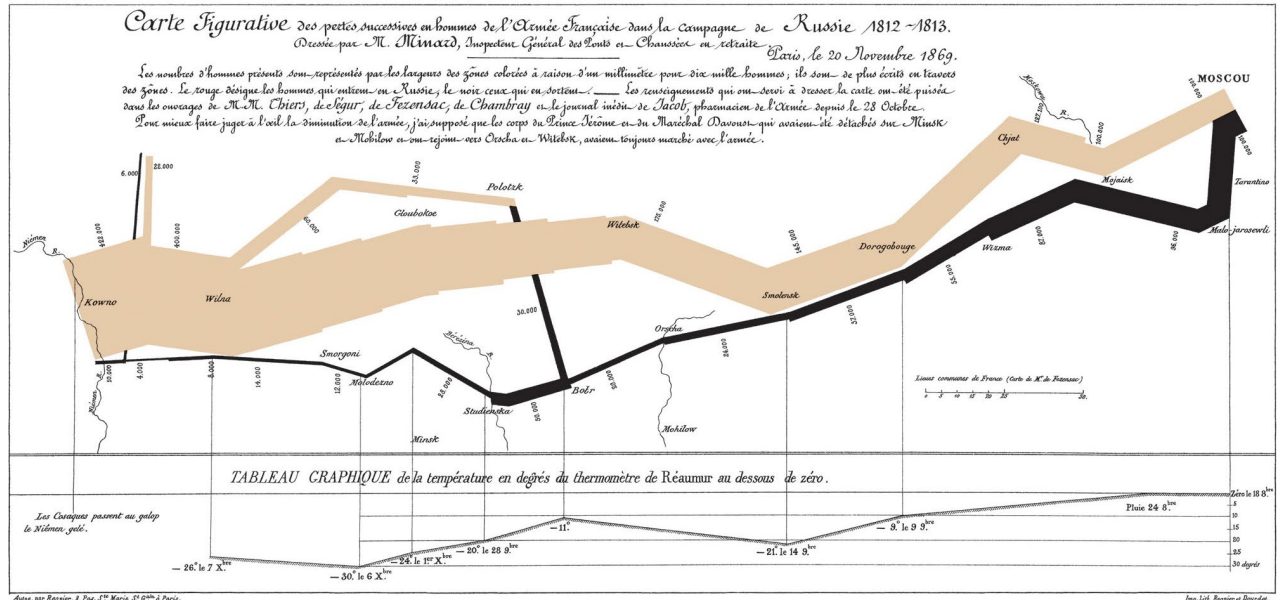


Figure 1. Charles Joseph Minard's flow map of military losses during Napoleon's invasion of Russia (1869). This graph is often referred to as "[the best graphic ever produced.](#)"

HIST 507 offers an overview of digital methods for the analysis of historical texts and data. Students will be introduced to the theoretical basis for different digital applications and tools in the field of history, as well as the underlying considerations and limitations of each method. Weekly modules will focus on different aspects of historical research, including digital archive navigation, data collection and analysis, text mining, spatial thinking and mapping, and public history engagement using digital tools. Each module will include discussion of sample studies drawn from different periods of historical research, followed by labwork each Thursday during which time students will have the opportunity to apply the digital method under study to a historical archive / dataset selected at the start of the quarter. This course provides students with the opportunity to enhance their digital literacy and develop an understanding of how historical research questions can (and sometimes can't) be answered using digital research methods.

Readings: There are no required books for the course. All class readings are uploaded on the Canvas course website. All assigned material should be worked through before the class for which it is listed.

Course Goals: In this course, students will gain an understanding of:

- Digital Resources and Information Literacy
- Data Ethics and Inequities
- Text Mining and Linguistic Analysis
- Social and Geographic Networks
- Spatial Thinking and Mapping
- Public History and Information Sharing

Learning Objectives: Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- Analyze and evaluate complex historical problems using digital tools
- Critically evaluate primary and secondary texts and data
- Effectively articulate and substantiate research conclusions in different formats

Assessment:

- 10% – Weekly Reflections
- 40% – Module Worksheets (Digital Archives, Network Analysis, Data Analysis, Virtual Exhibit, Wiki Review)
- 20% – Digital Project: this includes Visualizations (10%) and Timeline/StoryMap (10%)
- 30% – Research Paper: this includes a bibliography/outline (5%) and paper (25%)

Schedule of Assignments (all deadlines are 11:59 pm on the date listed):

Assignment Name	Due Date
Worksheet: Digital Archives	Sunday October 13 th
Worksheet: Networks	Sunday October 27 th
Worksheet: Data Analysis	Sunday November 10 th
Worksheet: Digital Exhibit	Sunday November 17 th
Paper Bibliography and Outline	Wednesday November 27 th
Worksheet: Wiki Review	Sunday December 8 th
Research Paper and Visualizations	Wednesday December 11 th
Digital Project: StoryMap/Timeline	Thursday December 12 th

Weekly Reflections: Each week you will submit a short reflection (300–500 words) on the method discussed, the assigned case studies / readings, and potential application of the method to your historical subfield.

Module Worksheets: There will be five module worksheets through the quarter, of which students must complete four. These will be introduced and started during the Thursday Lab class for the topic's module (Weeks 3, 5, 7, 8, and 11). Students will complete the worksheets using their selected archive / dataset.

Research Project: Students must complete a research project worth 50% of the total grade. The project should incorporate one or more of the digital tools or techniques surveyed in

the course. The paper will include a preliminary outline and bibliography due November 27th (worth 5%), and a research paper of approximately 3000–4000 words in length, due December 11th (worth 25%). The digital project includes data visualizations / maps (worth 10%) and a Timeline or StoryMap (worth 10%). The visualizations will be submitted with the paper on December 11th, while the timeline will be submitted to Canvas and shared in a discussion board on December 12th. All research papers will be submitted on Canvas.

Course Content: Class material falls under copyright law; recording and posting course content without the permission of the instructor is against university policy.

Our Classroom Community:

WWU is situated on the ancestral homelands of the Indigenous Peoples of the Salish Sea basin and the North Cascades watershed. I acknowledge the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe communities, their elders both past and present, as well as future generations, and commit to the process of working to dismantle the ongoing legacies of settler colonialism. I am committed to establishing and maintaining a classroom community that is inclusive, equitable, and respectful for all students. In this community we will engage in mindful, reflective, and accountable dialogue on many difficult topics. Learning includes being able to explore a variety of perspectives—while students’ expressed ideas may vary and/or be opposed to one another, it is important for all of us to listen and engage respectfully. Please remember to be empathetic and to prioritize respect and consideration in any context in which your views could damage the well-being of someone else. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to me.

Schedule of Classes (be aware that the schedule may be subject to change):

Week 1	Sept 26	<p>Introduction to the Class</p> <p>1. Read through the Syllabus</p>
Week 2	Oct 1	<p>Digitization and Digital Literacy</p> <p>1. Complete the module readings (Tuesday):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crymble, The Origin Myths of Computing in Historical Research • Ali, A Brief Introduction to Decolonial Computing • Crawford, Generative AI is Guzzling Water and Energy • O’Brien, Data Center Emissions
	Oct 3	<p>Digitization and Data Ethics</p> <p>1. Complete the module readings (Thursday):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Klein, The Image of Absence • D’Ignazio and Klein, Introduction: Why Data Science Needs Feminism

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Listen to the podcast “Access for Who: Episode 1, Digital from an African Perspective” 2. Select Archive / Dataset
Week 3	Oct 8, 10	<p>Navigating Digital Archives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete the module readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nicholson, The Digital Turn • Enoch and VanHaitsma, Archival Literacy • Ginés, Navigating Libraries and Archives for Investigators • Putnam, The Transnational and Text-Searchable • Chamelot et al., Archives, the Digital Turn, and Governance in Africa <p style="text-align: center;">**Archive Worksheet Due Oct 13**</p>
Week 4	Oct 15, 17	<p>Linguistic and Textual Analysis</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete the module readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bamman and Crane, Latin Dependency Treebank in a Cultural Heritage Digital Library • Dunning et al., Freeing Up Digital Content with Text Mining • Gordin et al., Reading Akkadian Cuneiform using Natural Language Processing • Guldi, Revolution in Text Mining for Historical Analysis 2. Explore the EpiDOC Website and read through the site description (especially “About EpiDOC”) 3. Watch the Video EpiDOC Tutorial: Latin Inscription Example with Irene Vagionakis
Week 5	Oct 22, 24	<p>Social Networks and Prosopography</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete the module readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cline and Cline, The Small World of the Amarna Letters • Gómez and Verdú, Network theory and the Black Death pandemic • Haggerty and Haggerty, Visual Analytics of an 18th c. Business Network • Jauhiainen and Alstola, Social Network of the Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire • Tyner, Visualizing Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade of Africans, 1514–1866 2. Watch the Video From Historical Sources to Network Data with Claire Lemercier

		<p>3. Explore the Six Degrees of Francis Bacon network</p> <p>4. Explore the Orbis Geospatial Network and read through the site description (Home, Introduction, Understanding, etc.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">**Network Worksheet Due Oct 27**</p>
Week 6	Oct 29, 31	<p>Spatial Thinking and Mapping</p> <p>1. Complete the module readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adelusi-Adeluyi, Africa for the Africans? Mapmaking, Lagos, and the Colonial Archive • Monmonier, Lying with Maps • Perez, Interview with Samantha Wesner: Electricity and Revolutionary Energy • Vergara et al., GIS and the Eastern Tyrol Front <p>2. Watch the Video Counter-Mapping (you can read more HERE)</p> <p>3. Explore the Native Land digital map</p>
Week 7	Nov 5, 7	<p>Data Collection and Analysis</p> <p>2. Complete the module readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huff, How to Lie with Statistics (Ch. 9; skim through) • Nobel, Algorithms of Oppression (Introduction) • Curtis, Was Plague an Urban Phenomenon • Risi et al., Diversifying History <p>3. Watch the Video Text and Image Mining for Historians with William Turkel</p> <p style="text-align: center;">**Data Analysis Worksheet Due Nov 10**</p>
Week 8	Nov 12, 14	<p>DH and Public History – Digital Archives and Exhibits</p> <p>1. Complete the module readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battle et al., Digital Public History in the Library • Marsh, Chickens, Aprons, Markets, and Cans • Platt, Oregon Women During WWI, a Digital Exhibit • Sibaja, Building a Digital Repository of Research on Argentine Soccer • <i>Optional: Arrigoni and Galani, Recasting Witnessing in Museums</i> <p>2. Explore at least one of the Online Exhibits available through the National Archives website</p> <p>3. Explore one of the History Museums available for Virtual Tour</p> <p>4. Watch one of the 3D reconstructions / flythroughs - London Before the Great Fire, St. Peter's Acoustic Model, Ancient Athens 3D, Digital Karnak, Tomb of Nefertari</p> <p style="text-align: center;">**Digital Exhibit Worksheet Due Nov 17**</p>

Week 9	Nov 19 (no class Nov 21)	<p>DH and Public History – Timelines, Storymaps, and Story Telling</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the module readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Howland et al, Integrating Digital Datasets into Public Engagement Jayawardene, StoryMap(ping) Black Urban Experiences Sharpe and Powell, Making DH Tools More Culturally Specific and Sensitive Explore Kā Huru Manu, The Ngāi Tahu Cultural Mapping Project (both the atlas and the mapping stories) Explore the A Tribute to Aboriginal Women art piece Explore at least one storymap in the ESRI Collections HERE Watch the Video Timeline JS Tutorial
Week 10	Nov 26 (no class Nov 28)	<p>Project Lab Day</p> <p>Tuesday class time will be set aside for project work in the computer lab</p> <p>**Bibliography and Outline Due Nov 27**</p>
Week 11	Dec 3, 5	<p>DH and Public History – Digital Publishing and Wikipedia</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the module readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nawrotski and Dougherty, Writing History in the Digital Age (introduction) Rosenzweig, Can History be Open Source? Wikipedia and the Future of the Past Graham et al., Digital Divisions of Labor and Information Magnetism Shaw and Hargittai, The Pipeline of Online Participation Inequalities <p>**Wiki Article Review Due Dec 8**</p>
Finals Week	Dec 9 – 13	<p>**Research Paper and Visualizations Due Dec 11**</p> <p>**Project Timeline / Storymap Due Dec 12**</p>

Bibliography of Course Readings

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Ali, Syed Mustafa. 2016. “A Brief Introduction to Decolonial Computing.” *XRDS: Crossroads, The ACM Magazine for Students*, 22(4): 16–21.

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Technical Support

If you experience technical difficulties, please contact the WWU Academic Technology and User Services (ATUS) Help Desk—you can call, chat, or email. Helpful information is also available on the ATUS Canvas Help webpage.

ATUS Help Desk: <https://atus.wvu.edu/help-desk>

ATUS Canvas Help: <https://atus.wvu.edu/learning-systems/canvas-help>

Accommodation:

Western is committed to equal opportunity and non-discrimination in all programs and activities. Student accommodations or services are determined on an individual basis and are modified to meet the unique needs of the student and their academic experience. Requests for accommodation should be established within the first week of class and arranged through disAbility Resources for Students: telephone 360-650-3083; email drs@wwu.edu; and at <http://www.wvu.edu/disability/>. Please provide notification within the first two weeks of class for expected absences due to holidays/activities for reasons of faith or conscience (further information on accommodation can be found here:

<https://syllabi.wwu.edu/>).

Western encourages students to seek assistance and support at the onset of an illness, difficulty, or crisis.

- In the case of a medical concern or question, please contact the Health Center: 360-650-3400 or visit http://www.wwu.edu/chw/student_health/.
- In the case of an emotional or psychological concern or question, please contact the Counseling Center: 360-650-3400 or visit <https://counseling.wwu.edu/students>.
- In the case of a health and safety concern, please contact the University Police: 360-650-3555 or visit <http://www.wwu.edu/ps/police/index.shtml>.
- In the case of a family or personal crisis or emergency, please contact the Dean of Students: 360-650-3450 or visit <https://wp.wwu.edu/students/>.
- For food or shelter assistance WWU and Bellingham have a number of resources available:
http://www.finaid.wwu.edu/client_services/pages/resources/food_and_shelter.php
- To seek confidential support related to sexual violence, please contact http://www.wwu.edu/pws/about_casas.shtml (360-650-3700), the Student Health Center, and/or the Counseling Center. To report sexual violence, please contact University Police, Bellingham Police, and/or the <https://wp.wwu.edu/sexualviolence/> in Western's Equal Opportunity Office (360-650-3307). Faculty are responsible employees who are required to report sex discrimination, including sexual violence that they learn about to the Title IX Coordinator.
- Individuals who believe they have been subject to discrimination are encouraged to contact the Equal Opportunity Office (Old Main 345): 360-650-3307 (voice) or eo@wwu.edu. The Vice Provost, EO, is the University's Title IX and ADA Coordinator.
- Associated Service (AS; <http://as.wwu.edu/>) has a number of communities of support on campus. The AS encourages a fulfilling academic experience through the services, facilities and programs it offers. Some available communities are:
 - The Ethnic Student Center (Viking Union 420): <http://as.wwu.edu/esc/>
 - The Queer Resource Center (Viking Union 515): <http://as.wwu.edu/qrc/>
 - The Women's Center (Viking Union 514): <http://as.wwu.edu/womxn/>
 - Veteran Outreach Center (Old Main 280): <http://as.wwu.edu/voc/>
 - Social Issues Resources Center (Viking Union 512):
<http://as.wwu.edu/socialissues/>
 - Resource and Outreach Programs (Viking Union 511): <http://as.wwu.edu/rop/>

Academic Integrity:

Integrity applies to all of the principles, values, and behaviors that contribute to good character, including, for example, honesty, fairness, respect, courage, and responsibility. We exhibit integrity within the classroom by taking credit only for work we have done and crediting the work of others. Similarly, we demonstrate integrity by treating one another

with fairness and respect regardless of the setting. We, the faculty, students, administration, and staff of Western Washington University, are deeply committed to integrity as a fundamental principle of education. This can only be achieved when we commit to integrity throughout all of our activities at the University, including our work, academics, and campus life. To this end, each of us has a responsibility to be fair and honest. As a community of students, faculty, staff, and administrators, we recognize that our actions reflect on each of us as individuals, and on Western as a whole. As such, we honor integrity as vital to our community and the ideals of liberal education.

A more detailed description of academic integrity, including the University's policies and procedures, may be found at <http://www.wwu.edu/integrity/>.

Plagiarism:

** Before you begin, be sure that you understand the assignment. If you have any questions, please ask the instructor **

For WWU's citation guide, see: http://libguides.wwu.edu/citation_style. WWU supports the use of the open-source software Zotero for research management and citation building: <http://libguides.wwu.edu/zotero>

1. Be sure you understand the university's definition of *plagiarism*:

Plagiarism is presenting as one's own in whole or in part the argument, language, creations, conclusions, or scientific data of another without explicit acknowledgement. If you submit or present as your own the written or oral work of someone else you are guilty of plagiarism. This also includes the resubmission of a student's own work in identical or similar form (a student may use the same or substantially the same work for assignments in two or more courses only with written permission from the instructors of all the classes involved). For more information, please see the WWU guide on plagiarism:

<http://libguides.wwu.edu/plagiarism>.

In this course, the submission of work prepared using generative AI and similar technologies (e.g., ChatGPT) represents an academic honesty violation.

2. Many course assignments may require that you consult and incorporate the words and ideas of other writers.

If you are unsure about how to credit other authors properly, ask or check a writing guide (i.e. MLA, APA, Chicago) or the WWU Writing and Style Manual (<http://libguides.wwu.edu/c.php?g=308303&p=2056069>).

3. Be sure that you understand the consequences of plagiarism:

a) Plagiarism is the theft of intellectual property, just like shoplifting is theft of merchandise.

b) Plagiarism diminishes the quality of the learning experience of yourself and your

classmates.

c) Plagiarism serves to undermine the value of a degree from WWU.

d) When you plagiarize you will most likely be caught. Instructors are required by the university to report cases of suspected plagiarism. Academic misconduct can result in a failing grade and a notation of academic discipline on the student's record. Repeated acts of plagiarism can lead to dismissal from the university.

4. If at any point if you feel unable to complete an assignment, please:

a) Visit the WWU Research and Writing Studio (360-650-3219; <http://library.wvu.edu/rws>). The Writing Studio can help with all stages of paper writing (topic selection and development, paper organization, grammar, etc.).

b) Make an appointment to discuss your situation with me during office hours. Your professors are invested in helping you successfully complete the course while maintaining academic integrity.