

HIST 290: Exploring the Digital Past: Myth, Memory, and Monuments

(Virtual) Fall 2025

Second Half Short Course

Instructor: Mr. Seabrook

Office Hours: Virtual by appointment

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About the Course:

In this course, students will be introduced to the field of digital history through an examination of memory and memorialization in American history. Methodologically, students will learn how to engage with digital tools and practices including websites, blogs, podcasts, network visualization, mapping, video games, metadata creation, content management systems, and more. Students will discuss what digital history is, how to do it (and do it ethically), and why it matters. On the historical side, students will delve into the history of how Americans have remembered (and forgotten) their past. Topics will include monuments, museum exhibits, films, textbooks, historic preservation, and more. This course will explore this dynamic history in an online, asynchronous academic format.

Learning Objectives:

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the principles of information storage, exchange, security, and privacy and be aware of related ethical issues.
- Consume digital information critically, capable of selecting and evaluating appropriate, relevant, and trustworthy sources of information.
- Use appropriate information and computing technologies to organize and analyze information and use it to guide decision-making.
- Choose and apply appropriate algorithmic methods to solve a problem.
- Learn about and experiment with a variety of digital tools and methods to study history, considering their benefits, drawbacks, and ethical uses.
- Identify how historians use primary and secondary sources to construct historical arguments.
- Identify and understand the key issues surrounding memory and memorialization in U.S. history.

Content Warning:

Some of what you read, listen to, or watch for this course may make you uncomfortable. Engagement with a diversity of viewpoints is an essential part of the historian's craft. In this class, we welcome open, honest debate and we won't shy away from "the hard stuff." I look forward to hearing your valuable and unique perspectives.

Required Materials:

All required materials are posted on Canvas, or links have been provided. No books are required to be purchased for this class. However, all materials listed in the syllabus, including podcasts, videos, films, and graphics, are required.

The only cost to you will be setting up your own website (\$35 for an annual subscription + \$15 for a domain name). See the Scholarly Website assignment on Canvas.

Assignments and Grading:

Discussion Posts (10%)

Each week, you will be responsible for posting a reflection on Canvas. Details about reflection rules will be posted on Canvas.

Reading Quizzes (20%)

One reading quiz is due at the end of every week of the course. You'll take these timed quizzes directly on Canvas. More information will be posted on Canvas.

Virtual Site Visit Review (20%)

This semester, you will "tour" a virtual historic site. After your virtual visit, you will write a reflective review (750-1,250 words) of the site.

In your review, you must:

- Include a vivid description of the site you visited (e.g., what was there to see/do, how easy was it to interact with/navigate, what digital methods were employed, what interpretive resources were available, etc.)
- Share your opinion on how accurate/informative the site visit was, based on your understanding of our course material. What worldviews are on display? Who has power here?
- Share your biggest takeaway or the most surprising thing you learned. How did your visit challenge your assumptions about digital history?
- Explain how you would improve or modify the site/interpretation if given the opportunity.

Scholarly Website (20%)

You will create a scholarly website for yourself, hosted on your own domain. Think carefully about your domain name! I will give you more instructions for how to set this up during our first video lecture.

Examples:

- <https://trseabrook.com/>
- <https://lincolnmullen.com/>
- <https://cblevins.github.io/>

Mini Podcast/Blog (30%)

You will be creating either a mini podcast or a mini blog, hosted on your scholarly website. More details will be posted on Canvas.

Grading Policy:

Late work will be subject to a penalty. The later you submit a required assignment, the lower your grade will be (typically 5% per day). I will not accept work that is more than one week late. **Please note that the final, unmovable deadline for all assignments is Wednesday, December 3.**

Course Schedule:

This is an online, entirely virtual course, meaning that we will not meet face-to-face. You will notice that there is more reading in this course than would typically be assigned for a course where you would also have lectures. The course schedule is one suggestion about how to plan and complete your readings. Be aware that the due dates for quizzes and assignments are final, so you will need to get each relevant assignment completed before that due date passes. You do have a lot of freedom to complete this course on your own time. The course schedule is also a strong recommendation for the order in which you should complete the readings. Getting out of order could be confusing.

WEEK 1 (OCTOBER 13-17)

Watch:

- Week 1 video lecture (Canvas)

What is digital history? What is the internet? Privacy and Safety

Read:

- Cohen and Rosenzweig, “Getting Started: The Web, Websites, and Web Pages” (Canvas)
- Blevins, “Digital History’s Perpetual Future Tense” (Canvas)
- Rosenzweig, “Scarcity or Abundance? Preserving the Past” (Canvas)
- “Evaluating Internet Resources” (Canvas)

Explore:

- Visit <https://whatisdigitalhumanities.com/> and pick your favorite definition to share in this week’s discussion post on Canvas.
- “Internet and Data Privacy Guide”: <https://libguides.pratt.edu/internet-data-privacy/introduction-internet-privacy> (read through all sections)

How do we know about history?

Read:

- “Primary vs. Secondary Sources” (Canvas)
- “THOMAS: A Useful Mnemonic for Reading Historical Scholarship” (Canvas)
- “How to Gut a Book” (Canvas)

Revolutionary Legacies

Read:

- Hattem, “Introduction,” *The Memory of '76* (Canvas)

Explore:

- Founders Online: <https://founders.archives.gov/>
- Mason Family Account Book: <https://accountbook.centerformasonslegacies.com/>
- Jefferson’s University...the early life: <http://juel.iath.virginia.edu/home>

Due:

- Sign up for your own website at Reclaim Hosting(Personal Plan: <https://www.reclaimhosting.com/shared-hosting/>) and install WordPress: <https://support.reclaimhosting.com/hc/en-us/articles/1500005834082-Installing-WordPress>
- Complete your Week 1 Discussion Post
- Reading quiz due by the end of day Friday

WEEK 2 (OCTOBER 20-24)

Watch:

- Week 2 video lecture (Canvas)

Telling the Story: Websites, Blogs, & Story Maps

Read:

- Cohen and Rosenzweig, “Exhibits, Films, Scholarship, and Essays” (Canvas)
- Rosenzweig, “Can History Be Open Source? Wikipedia and the Future of the Past” (Canvas)
- “Introduction to Blogging” (Canvas)

Explore:

- “How did they make that?”: <https://miriamposner.com/blog/how-did-they-make-that/>
- StoryMap: https://storymap.knightlab.com/?utm_source=syndicate&utm_campaign=onextrapixel-oct2016&utm_medium=post
- ArcGIS StoryMaps: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/>
- The Valley of the Shadow: <https://valley.newamericanhistory.org/>

Death and the Origins of Civil War Memory

Read:

- Faust, “Death and Dying”
- Blight, “Forgetting Why We Remember”

Due:

- Complete your Week 2 Discussion Post
- Reading quiz due by the end of day Friday

WEEK 3 (OCTOBER 27-31)

Watch:

- Week 3 video lecture (Canvas)

Visualizing the Past: Networks, Graphing, & Mapping

Read:

- Broman and Woo, “Data Organization in Spreadsheets” (Canvas)
- Weingart, “Demystifying Networks, Parts 1 & 2” (Canvas)
- White, “What is Spatial History?” (Canvas)
- Theibault, “Visualizations and Historical Arguments” (Canvas)

The First Age of Monuments

Read:

- Ward, “Honoring the Fallen: Among the First Monuments to the Civil War” (Canvas)
- “Ladies’ Memorial Associations” (Canvas)
- Panhorst, “Lest We Forget: Memorial Art and Architecture on Civil War Battlefields” (Canvas)

Explore:

- Monument Explorer: <https://dev.civilwarmonuments.org/services-2/>
- Whose Heritage? Map: <https://www.splcenter.org/whose-heritage-map/>
- Geography of the Post: <https://cameronblevins.org/gotp/>

Due:

- Virtual Site Visit Review due by end of day Friday
- Complete your Week 3 Discussion Post
- Reading quiz due by the end of day Friday

WEEK 4 (NOVEMBER 3-7)

Watch:

- Week 4 video lecture (Canvas)

Digital Storage & Security: Content Management, Metadata, & IP Rights

Read:

- Cohen and Rosenzweig, “Copyright and the Online Historian: Is the Web Different?,” “Protecting Your Intellectual Property,” “Sharing the Property of Others,” “Fair Use,” and “The Future of Our Digital Past” (Canvas)
- Finn and Downie, “What is a Content Management System?” (Canvas)

Watch:

- TEDx: The Power of Metadata: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2a8pDbCabg>

Explore:

- African American Fourth of July: <https://africanamerican4th.omeka.net/>
- DCMI Metadata Terms: <https://www.dublincore.org/specifications/dublin-core/dcmi-terms/>

The Lost Cause in Stone and Ink

Read:

- Nolan, “The Anatomy of the Myth” (Canvas)
- “Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy”: <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/reports/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy-3/> (scroll through the whole story map)

Due:

- Complete your Week 4 Discussion Post
- Reading quiz due by the end of day Friday

WEEK 5 (NOVEMBER 10-14)

Watch:

- Week 5 video lecture (Canvas)

Digital Public History: Podcasts & Exhibitions

Read:

- Mullen, “How to Listen to a Podcast for Class” (Canvas)
- “Starting Your Podcast: A Guide For Students” (Canvas)
- Wingo et al., “Introduction,” *Digital Community Engagement* (Canvas)

Listen:

- Memory Wars: A Prologue: <https://www.wvtf.org/2022-06-09/a-prologue>

Explore:

- Given, “Going Narrative”: <https://transom.org/2021/going-narrative/> (read the article and listen to the clips)

Historic Preservation & Museums

Read:

- Page and Mason, “Rethinking the Roots of the Historic Preservation Movement” (Canvas)
- Schulman, “What is the job of a culturally-specific museum?” (Canvas)
- Simon, “Participatory Design and the Future of Museums” (Canvas)

Watch:

- Whyte, “Indigeneity in Museums”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HjFR8vLnfo>

Explore:

- Histories of the National Mall: <https://mallhistory.org/>
- Smithsonian 3D: <https://3d.si.edu/>
- National Museum of Natural History Virtual Tours: <https://naturalhistory.si.edu/visit/virtual-tour>
- Audacity: <https://www.audacityteam.org/> (optional, but useful for making a podcast)

Due:

- Complete your Week 5 Discussion Post
- Reading quiz due by the end of day Friday

WEEK 6 (NOVEMBER 17-21)

Watch:

- Week 6 video lecture (Canvas)

Using & Abusing Video Games & Social Media

Read:

- Chapman, “Introduction,” *Digital Games as History* (Canvas)
- Boom et al., “Teaching through Play: Using Video Games as a Platform to Teach about the Past” (Canvas)
- Newport, “Can ‘Indie’ Social Media Save Us?” (Canvas)

Explore:

- Walden, A Game: <https://www.waldengame.com/>

Remembering the World Wars

Read:

- Spencer, “Virtual Reality Depiction Of Trench Warfare Opens at Kansas City’s WWI Museum And Memorial” (Canvas)
- Kohn, “History and the Culture Wars: The Case of the Smithsonian Institution's Enola Gay Exhibition” (Canvas)
- Breit, “How One of the Internet’s Biggest History Forums Deals With Holocaust Deniers” (Canvas)
- Moreno, “Do New Generations View WWII as a ‘Good’ War?” (Canvas)

Explore:

- The National WWI Museum and Memorial Interactive Timeline:
<https://www.theworldwar.org/interactive-wwi-timeline>
- Experiencing War: A Project to Preserve and Make Accessible Oral Histories of World War II: https://digitalgallery.bgsu.edu/exhibits/show/wwii_oral_histories

Due:

- Mini Podcast/Blog due by the end of day Friday
- Complete your Week 6 Discussion Post
- Reading quiz due by the end of day next Friday (11/28)

WEEK 7 (NOVEMBER 24-28)

NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK

No reading quiz, discussion post, or additional assignments this week, but feel free to read ahead for next week! Note that your Week 6 reading quiz, however, is due by the end of day this Friday (11/28).

WEEK 8 (DECEMBER 1-3)

Watch:

- Week 8 video lecture (Canvas)

Accessibility, Ethics, & AI

Read:

- “Cognitive Accessibility” (Canvas)
- *Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights* (excerpt) (Canvas)
- Noble, “Introduction: The Power of Algorithms,” *Algorithms of Oppression* (Canvas)
- Caplan, “Algorithmic Accountability: A Primer” (Canvas)

Explore:

- Generative AI exists because of the transformer: <https://ig.ft.com/generative-ai/> (scroll through the whole story map)
- A Guide to AI Enhanced Learning: <https://biggio.auburn.edu/programs/artificial-intelligence/how-to-ai>
- Generative AI in Teaching and Learning: <https://teaching.virginia.edu/galleries/generative-ai>

Modern Remembering & Prosthetic Memory

Read:

- Groce, “History, Memory, and the Struggle for the Future” (Canvas)
- Landsberg, “Epilogue: Toward a Radical Practice of Memory,” *Prosthetic Memory* (Canvas)
- Marino, “Digital archives of the COVID-19 pandemic: research notes” (Canvas)

Listen:

- “The Push to Revise American History at the Smithsonian”: <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/03/podcasts/the-daily/smithsonian-trump.html>

Explore:

- 9/11 Memorial and Museum Online Resources: <https://www.911memorial.org/learn/resources>
- Coronachive: <https://chd.ifch.unicamp.br/en/node/9>

Due:

- Reading quiz due by the end of day Wednesday (12/3)
- Complete your Week 8 Discussion Post by the end of day Wednesday
- Final version of your Scholarly Website due by the end of day Wednesday
- Wednesday is the deadline for turning in late or missing work

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Honor Code:

“I have neither given or received, nor have I tolerated others’ use of unauthorized aid.”

This statement is written on all homework, quizzes, and exams at Valparaiso University. Every student must write out the Honor Code in full and sign it for all work submitted for academic credit. The Honor Code expresses the promise of the student not to cheat through either action or inaction. The use of these words expresses the faith of the faculty in the student body.

<https://www.valpo.edu/honor-council/>

AI Policy:

As part of each written assignment for the course, you will be **required to disclose** any use of generative AI tools, including (but not limited to) ChatGPT. In addition to **citing** the specific tool used, you will need to add an **appendix** that includes the prompts you used to get the desired results. Be aware that generative AI tools can produce incorrect or biased outputs. It is your responsibility to ensure that any content you use from AI tools is correct, unbiased, and not harmful.

Writing and Additional Resources:

I encourage you to make use of the Judith L. Beumer Writing Center located on the lower level of the Christopher Center. It is free for undergraduate and graduate students. The Writing Center offers individual peer consultations and workshops on writing to support your growth as a writer. Make an appointment at any time by going to valpo.mywconline.com. The sessions provide strategies and guidance on writing assignments from any discipline, at any stage in the writing process, and for writers at all skill levels. Their goal is for you to become a credible, more confident writer who is able to make the best choices in any writing situation.

For a good website that includes instructions and links on how to correctly cite in multiple formats, go to <https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/publichealth/style>.

If you have questions about improving your writing or desire extra feedback to grow as a writer, please let me know and I will assist as time allows.

Emergencies:

To stay informed in case of emergency, students are strongly encouraged to enroll in Valpo's emergency text message notification system and download the Valpo SAFE app. To enroll in text messaging, go to getrave.com/login/valpo, select your Valpo email, approve terms of use, and add your cell phone number. The Valpo SAFE app is available in both the Google Play and Apple App stores. Familiarize yourself with valpo.edu/vupd/safety-on-campus/emergency-information/ for more information about Valpo's emergency response systems, instructions in case of emergency, and SAFE app functions.

Access and Accommodations:

Valpo seeks to ensure all students receive the support they deserve to attain their education goals. As such, the institution is responsive to the needs of students who have disabilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Students with documented disabilities who believe their diagnoses will create barriers to course success are encouraged to reach out to the Access and Accommodations Resource Center (AARC) to determine eligibility for reasonable accommodations. To begin the process of establishing accommodations, go to valpo.edu/aarc for more details and contact information.

University Counseling Center:

The University Counseling Center is located on the Northwest side of Alumni Hall. This is a wonderful resource that is available to all VU students. Students may use the counseling center to enhance their current functioning or wellbeing as well as receive help with any issues they are facing. Individual counseling is available free of charge for full-time undergraduate, graduate or law students. Intake appointments can be arranged by going in person to the Counseling Center in Alumni Hall or by calling 219-464-5002.

Academic Support Services:

To get help in this course, the best place to start is to come talk to me during office hours. The next step is to use the Academic Success Center (ASC) online directory (valpo.edu/academicsuccess) or contact the ASC (academic.success@valpo.edu) to help point you in the right direction for academic support resources for this course. Valpo's learning centers (Writing Center, Language Resource Center, Hesse Learning Resource & Assessment Center and Academic Success Center) offer a variety of programs and services that provide group and individual learning assistance for many subject areas.

Title IX Support:

Valparaiso University endeavors to provide an environment free of discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual violence, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking). If you have been the victim of sexual misconduct, we encourage you to report the incident. See valpo.edu/titleix/ for a list and contact information for confidential reporting and support services, a list of non-confidential resources, emergency service information, and more information about Title IX response at Valpo.

Diversity and Inclusion:

Valpo strives to be a welcoming, inclusive community. Our values as a university community do not support language or behavior that demeans members of our campus based on identity. Actions and behaviors based on positions or perspectives that inherently marginalize, oppress, or deny full dignity to all are not tolerated. See valpo.edu/about/mission-values/ to understand how inclusion fits into Valpo's foundational mission and values.

This syllabus is my contract with you during our time together this semester. While I reserve the right to change parts of the syllabus or schedule at any time, I will always communicate these changes with you and provide an updated copy of the syllabus on Canvas.