

University of Manitoba – Faculty of Arts – Department of History

Regular Session: Fall 2015

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

When: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30-12:45

Where: 115 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: Fridays 10:00-12:00, 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 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 UM Learn. Participation in class discussions and on the course website is essential to understanding course content.

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 includes 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 Ace	10%	5-10 mins presentation	Beginning of Thursday class for your week.
Discussion Report	10%	500-1,000 words	By noon of Monday following your week as Discussion Ace
UM Learn Profile & My Digital Life	10%	500-1,000 words	By noon of Friday, Sept 25
History of a Website Proposal	--	250 words	By noon of Friday, Oct 9
History of a Website Research Paper	20%	1500-2000 words	By noon of Monday, Nov 23
Take home exam	30%	--	By noon of Friday, Dec 11

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

Evaluative feedback will be provided prior to the voluntary withdrawal (VW) date of November 18, 2015.

Participation (20%)

Like contemporary digital culture, this course is structured around participation. Classes provide opportunities for discussion, online on UM Learn as well as during class meetings in pairs, in small groups and with the class as a whole. 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. They can also 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 always respectful of others. Evaluation of participation will consider, in particular:

- Frequency of participation
- Interaction with others (for example: building on points raised by others, responding to others respectfully and "voting up" other postings)
- Whether contributions address the readings and are on-topic.

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

Each member of the class will sign up to be the UM Learn **Discussion Ace** for one week of the course. The Ace is responsible for shaping and guiding the online discussion for the week. To do this, the Ace will need to do the readings early and kick the discussion off with an early posting that explores the readings in a provocative and insightful way. The Ace will want to follow the discussion closely, responding as comments are posted and working to ensure that the online discussion stays respectful, relevant and focussed. The Ace may also want to link to short alternative readings (videos, blogs or news articles) that explore specific themes or issues.

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.

By noon of the Monday following, 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?

UM Learn Profile & My Digital Life (10%)

Part One: UM Learn Profile. For the first part of this assignment you are asked to review the readings discussed in class on September 15 (Digital Identity). In light of the argument 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.

Part Two: My Digital Life. The second part of the assignment asks: how would you characterize yourself in relation to digital culture? A participant? A producer? Outside looking in? How do the readings from the classes on September 15 (Digital Identity) and September 17 class (Information Society) contribute to how you understand your identity?

You are asked to **write a brief (500-1,000 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 that seem relevant to a discussion of how you use digital technologies and interact online. You are encouraged to identify the tools (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. Your essay **must make reference** to the readings from the September 15 and September 17 classes.

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 will 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 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, 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 (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. It will be due on December 11th.

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 to allow that week's Discussion Ace sufficient time to review and analyze all of the postings. 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 two days 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. They are available on the Libraries page at this link:
<http://libguides.lib.umanitoba.ca/content.php?pid=219304>

My approach to teaching

Prior to July 2011 I was a digital archivist at Library and Archives Canada, 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 on-going 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 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 UM Learn and in class. Completing the readings, logging into the UM Learn discussion forum 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 UM Learn 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 UM Learn. 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.