University of Manitoba – Faculty of Arts – Department of History
Regular Session: Fall 2017

History 1260: New Directions in History:
Inquiries into the Cultural Basis of the Modern World (3 CH)

Play: Interactive Computing from the 1940s to the 1990s

When: Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:00-2:15
Where: EITC E2 Room 155

Instructor: Prof. Greg Bak (you can call me Greg, Professor Bak or Dr. Bak as you prefer)
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Phone: 204-272-1578
Email: greg.bak@umanitoba.ca (this is my preferred way for you to contact me)
Office hours: Mondays, 11:00-1:00, after class, or contact me by email to set up an appointment.

Course Information

Course Description: Interactive computing is a normal and inevitable part of using any computer today, although this has not always been the case. Word processors, spreadsheets and databases are examples of common interactive computer programs, as are social networking services and the World Wide Web. More complex examples include video games, immersive virtual worlds and all manner of augmented and virtual reality programs.

This course will explore the historiography and history of interactive computing with an emphasis on its cultural impact rather than its technological development.

You are not required to have a technical understanding of computers to take this course. Experience using digital technologies such as desktop and laptop computers, smart phones, social media and computer games will help.

Our class meetings will blend lecture with discussions in small groups and with the class as a whole. Class discussions can be extended on the course website (UM Learn). Participation in class discussions and on the course website is essential to understanding course content.

Course Objectives: My objective for this course is for you to see history as a relevant way of understanding digital technologies and other aspects of our daily lives and material culture. By the end of the course, I hope that you can look at a computer or other digital device and see that it has a history, carrying with it the influences of its culture of creation and use. I hope that when you leave the course you will share my passion for how history enriches our daily lives.

W Requirement: This course meets the University of Manitoba's written English, or W, requirement. All assignments must receive a passing grade for you to pass the course.

Course Overview: With a focus on the 1940s through to the 1990s, we will explore the roots of digital computing in the Second World War in the United Kingdom and the United States, its

growth and spread in the 1950s and 1960s and the rise of personal computing in the 1970s through the 1990s. We will consider the multiple ways interactivity was woven into the culture of personal computing, from spreadsheets and word processors to the World Wide Web. Throughout, we will think about the importance of games in the history of computing and digital culture, both as a convenient and compelling challenge for computer designers, and as a "killer application" that drove sales of computer systems and brought computing to the general public. We will consider international dimensions of our digital culture, including key contributions from Japan and Russia.

When you complete this course, the course **content** will allow you to:
- Understand that history consists of competing interpretations and debates that change over time rather than a single story;
- Discuss digital technologies as rooted in culture and historically variable;
- Understand the history of digital culture in relation to the development of computing during the Second World War and Cold War; and through the spread of consumer technologies thereafter;
- Know where to find and how to use historic software such as obsolete video games.

You will develop the following **skills**:
- Formal academic writing, including citation skills;
- Digital writing including formal social media postings and email;
- The ability to work effectively in small groups and contribute to larger group discussions;
- Historiographical skills including an understanding of the differences between primary and secondary sources, periodization and historical analysis.

There is no required textbook for this course.

Readings and recordings will be drawn from University of Manitoba Libraries holdings and the open Internet. Locating these readings may require that you develop your search skills with the help of UM Libraries staff in person or online.

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

In this course you may encounter unfamiliar terminology. There are many resources available to help with this, including this very good glossary and dictionary:

Computer Terms, Dictionary and Glossary. Computer Hope, Salt Lake City, 2017. Available:
  https://www.computerhope.com/jargon.htm

Wikipedia has good coverage of technical topics as well.

Evaluation

Assignment	Value	Length	Due
Participation	10%	--	Ongoing throughout term - In class and on UM Learn - UM Learn postings by **noon** of every Wednesday and Friday
Experiencing a Computer Game as a Primary Source	10%	750 words	**Noon on Monday** September 25
Term Paper Topic and Bibliography	5%	2 primary sources 3 secondary sources	**Noon on Monday** October 16
Using Computer Ads as a Primary Source	15%	750 words	**Noon on Monday** October 30
History of Computer Games Term Paper	30%	1,500 words	**Noon on Monday** November 20
Final exam	30%	--	During the Exam period.

Assignments must be uploaded to the course dropbox on UM Learn. All work must be submitted as an MS Word file, unless other arrangements are made with the instructor.

You are responsible for ensuring that your files are readable by the instructor. Files that cannot be read due to file format or any other cause are considered not to have been submitted.

Evaluative feedback will be provided prior to the voluntary withdrawal (VW) date of November 17, 2017.

Participation (10%: 5% for participation in class, 5% for participation on UM Learn)

Like interactive computing, 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.

All students are required to post comments regularly on the course's UM Learn discussion forum. UM Learn postings should explore themes, questions and critiques arising from the readings and the discussions in class. Postings should be about 100 words each, or more. 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 about the readings in advance of class meetings. You can also post comments after the class meeting that further explore issues raised in the class. Postings can start new threads or respond to someone else's thread. Personal reflections on the readings and discussions are welcome. 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.

Experiencing a Computer Game as a Primary Source (750 words; 10%; Due Sept 25)

In this assignment you will read an article about the game *The Oregon Trail* and play the game as it is made available at the Internet Archive. Based on reading the article and playing the game, you will write an essay that explores how computer games may be used as primary sources in writing history.

Using Computer Ads as a Primary Source (750 words; 15%; Due Oct 30)

In this assignment you will read an article analyzes pictures of computer users from old computer ads to discuss how these ads depict computer users. You will look at several computer ads from the 1970s and 1980s and write an essay that explores what kinds of historical research might be based on the ads as primary sources.

Term Paper on the History of Computer Games

Term Paper Topic and Bibliography (statement of topic AND minimum of 2 primary and 3 secondary sources; 10%; Due Oct 16)

In this assignment you will identify the topic of your term paper and list at least two primary sources and three secondary sources that will support your research.

History of Computer Games Term Paper (1,500 words; 30%; Due Nov 20)

You will research and write the term paper based on the topic and the primary and secondary sources identified in your bibliography assignment. As you conduct your research, don't be surprised if you find that you need to conduct additional research to find other secondary sources.

Final Exam (30%)

The final exam will ask you to reflect back over the entire course. It will test your knowledge of course themes and content, including specific readings, discussions, assignments and in-class activities.

Grade Scale:

A+	90% and above	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 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 may be penalized by up to 5% for each week or part of a week that it is late. If you think that you may not be able to meet any deadline, discuss it with me before the deadline.

Academic integrity, including plagiarism

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. A simple Google search will turn up a multitude of resources to guide you in creating Chicago-style citations. 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, Cody Fullerton, 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).

Finally, UM Libraries – the actual buildings, as well as the website – can help you in many, many ways, from finding course readings, to searching for library resources for your assignments, to providing advice on citation support. Don't hesitate ask for help from the library staff in person or through their "Ask Us" chat service online.