

HIS 100.02 Digital History: Local & Global

Spring 2024 Tuesday & Thursday 2:30-3:50 pm HSSC S2314

Course website: <https://arcg.is/1Tm1br>

Professor Sarah J. Purcell (she/her)

Open Office Hours: Tuesday 10:00-11:50, Thursday 10:00-10:50, & by appointment

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Please email, call, or text me any time for help with class, or with anything else. Come by my office during open office hours, or make an appointment to see me.

I encourage you to take care of yourself. Let me know what you need, and try to share any concerns before they become severe. I am VERY flexible, and I will always listen to you. Share your triumphs, too.

Please get in the habit of contacting me frequently and of connecting with your classmates.

Life is unpredictable and will not always proceed as we envision it. I expect flexibility from you, and you may expect it from me. Please communicate, so we can help one another adapt.

Please, wear a mask when you are in class and in my office. I have a chronic illness that necessitates protection against COVID.

Course Objectives

Course Focus:

This course provides an introduction to issues of historical causation, argumentation, and evidence and will particularly introduce students to digital methods of historical inquiry. With a special focus on U.S. history in a local and global context, students will create and study existing digital projects to see how history and the digital humanities intersect. Course topics will include: archives, digital storytelling, mapping, working with humanistic data, computational analysis of text, and more. No prior technical skills are necessary.

Along the way, we will think a lot about how to do good history. What makes a good historical question? How can we use digital tools to analyze primary and secondary

sources to help us answer historical questions? How do digital technologies change or help the communication of historical narratives and interpretations?

Skills Objectives:

We will develop skills in reading, writing, and speaking—as well as some level of skill in various digital platforms and data methods. We will also think critically about data and data analysis, ethics, and applications. All this, while also learning to be better historians.

History 100 is a course designed to make students familiar with how history works as a professional practice. As we learn about digital history methods, we will develop skills in five key areas:

- Textual Analysis and Conceptualization
 - Using key historical concepts such as cause/effect, unintended consequences, truth v. interpretation, “the past as a foreign country,” and reading against-the-grain.
- Historiographical Dialogue and Debate
 - Identifying different historiographical and methodological approaches for thinking about the past and framing historical inquiry (i.e. local, intellectual, political, diplomatic, social, economic, cultural, gender, global)
- Writing
 - Crafting short essays that provide a clear thesis, appropriate evidence, and a sense of the larger historical context of their topics.
- Research
 - Formulating a viable research question and produce an annotated bibliography that investigates it using appropriate primary and secondary sources.
- Presentation
 - Delivering formal oral presentations of historical research with attention to clear argumentation, successful use of supporting evidence, self-positioning in relevant secondary scholarship, and engaging style.

Student Responsibilities:

- To be a good part of the peer community in this course, you must be present and participate.
- Connect to the course hub on PioneerWeb to stay on top of readings and assignments. P-web will also feature course announcements and other required material.
- Join in all small-group work, online discussion posts, online activities, and live discussions.
- Communicate with Prof. Purcell frequently.
- Read your email daily, and be sure to respond to any requests (such as requests to fill in surveys) from Prof. Purcell and your peers.
- Turn in your assignments by the deadlines, but if you need extensions or other flexible arrangements, do NOT be afraid to ask for them. Prof. Purcell expects you to ask for help, and she will give it. We do have some collaborative projects, and you'll need to stay accountable to your partners.
- Consult and follow the rules for Academic Honesty in the Grinnell College Student Handbook and the college catalog. You can see the academic catalog policies on academic honesty here: [https://catalog.grinnell.edu/content.php?catoid=32&navoid=5208#Honesty in Academic Work](https://catalog.grinnell.edu/content.php?catoid=32&navoid=5208#Honesty_in_Academic_Work)
- If you use ChatCPT or any other AI technology for this class, you must acknowledge it in citations. We will be studying applications of AI and critiquing it, but I recommend that you avoid trying to use AI technology to help you draft writing assignments.
- Follow University of Chicago (17th Edition) style citations in footnotes or endnotes for all assignments in this course, unless the assignment directs you explicitly to do something else. You may consult the *Chicago Manual of Style* online through the Grinnell College Library catalog here: <https://www-chicagomanualofstyle-org.grinnell.idm.oclc.org/book/ed17/frontmatter/toc.html>
- Engage respectfully and vigorously with your classmates. We will *certainly* disagree many times over the semester as we debate primary and secondary sources (and even current events), but keep in mind our common goal of advancing group knowledge. Be respectful and well prepared.
- Engage with the material, and be ready for controversy and difficult subjects. Take care of yourself as you learn to engage with difficult topics from the past that are, nonetheless, vital to understanding the world.

Note: Some of our primary sources may contain extremely offensive language and imagery. To quote literary scholar Dr. Koritha Mitchell, we are scholars, “not re-enactors, so we need not let the text dictate what we *give life to* in the classroom (korithamitchell.com).” The same goes for our discussion. We can’t eliminate all racist, sexist, and other offensive language in our sources—but we always need to remember the historical context. Some slurs are too much. I, for one, do not ever say “the N-word” out loud (or typed in a discussion board), and I expect no one to do so in this class. If you want to read a quotation out loud (or type one) with the word in it, just say “N” or “N-word,” instead. Please be sensitive to other slurs, also, and feel comfortable

substituting a similar short-hand substitution in our discussions. We have to grapple with these concepts, but we do not have to give voice to hatred.

Student Support:

- You can expect support from Prof. Purcell for any kind of need (personal or academic) in this class. Feel invited to call, text, or email her at any time. If you have any questions or need help of any kind, you can always start by asking Prof. Purcell.
- You may consult with the Grinnell College Writing, Speaking, and Reading Lab on any assignment in this course, unless specifically prohibited on the assignment. Make an appointment [here](#).
- Not everyone in this class (including the instructor) will have the same level of expertise with all the digital tools we are experimenting with this semester. What is expected is that we all *engage* with the tools and try very hard to learn new things. Perfection is not expected. You should try to achieve some level of mastery in *some* areas that interest you, but that can take many forms. Valiant efforts will be rewarded, and you will have lots of chances to prove yourself by commenting on process as well as demonstrating products.
- You will have the opportunity to meet many staff/faculty members in class who are collaborating with Prof. Purcell and who can help you with projects, platforms, etc. Some of them will have extra office hours to help you with projects. Watch for information in class and on P-Web.
- If you experience any tech problems at all, please let Prof. Purcell know, and she will help you contact the relevant Grinnell College office to get help solving your issues.
- For health needs (physical and mental), please consult with Student Health and Wellness [here](#),
- If you require accommodation for any diagnosed disability, please speak with Prof. Purcell during the first few days of class. Grinnell College (and Prof. Purcell) provide reasonable accommodations. Students must also arrange their accommodations with Accessibility and Disability Services; contact Jae Baldree at 641-269-3710 or email [baldreej]. Information available [here](#).

If you have other needs not addressed above, please let me know soon so that we can work together for the best possible learning environment. In some cases, I will recommend consulting with the Academic Advising staff. They are an excellent resource for developing strategies for academic success and can connect you with other campus resources as well: <http://www.grinnell.edu/about/offices-services/academic-advising>. If I notice that you are encountering difficulty, in addition to communicating with you directly about it, I will also likely submit an academic alert via Academic Advising's SAL portal. This reminds you of my concern, and it notifies the Academic Advising team and your adviser(s) so that they can reach out to you with additional offers of support.

Illness & Attendance Policy:

Attendance is important to this class, so please attend if at all possible. That being said, we all know that illness can/will happen, **and you should NOT attend class if you are ill**. Please email Prof. Purcell (if possible) if you are ill, and we will make arrangements for how you can keep up with course work on a flexible schedule (according to how ill you are). You don't need to provide a doctor's note, or to give Prof. Purcell details about your health challenge, just reveal that you need to be out of class, and we will adjust.

If you need to miss class for a religious holiday, athletics, or other co-curricular activity, please tell Prof. Purcell in advance, and she will support you.

Books: All required books are for sale/rent at Pioneer Bookshop and on 2-hour reserve at Burling Library. Talk with Prof. Purcell if you need help accessing books.

Robert Allison, ed. *Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano: Written by Himself* 3rd Ed., Bedford/St. Martin's (2016)

John Arnold, *History, A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford UP (2000)

Lynn Hunt, *History: Why It Matters*, Wiley (2018)

Jenny L. Presnell, *The Information-Literate Historian: A Guide to Research for History Students*, 3rd Ed., Oxford UP (2019)

*Articles for this class can be linked to directly from this syllabus and/or found on e-reserve through P-web "Library Resources" or "Documents" tabs.

Grading

Grades will be assigned in the course according to the following formula:

Document Analysis Paper	10%
Mapping Grinnell Assignment	10%
Equiano Reflection Assignment	5%
Mid-term Take-home Exam	15%
Annotated Bibliography	5%
Final Reflection Paper	15%
Group work/peer support	10%
Digital Story	15%
Class Contribution/Participation	15%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Please introduce yourself online to the rest of the class by **10:00 am on Tuesday, January 23** using the Flip platform: <https://flip.com/3b812e41> (if it prompts you to login, click on the “Microsoft” login button and type in your Grinnell credentials). Click on “Class Introductions.” Be sure to pronounce your first and last name, and share your pronouns (if you wish to). Tell us something interesting you did over Winter Break and anything you’re looking forward to in this class. Flip is simple to use, and it would be great if you would record a video (but if you don’t want to, you can use audio only for your introduction).

UNIT ONE: History, Sources, Data, Truth

Tuesday, January 23 Course Introduction: Local & Global

Readings: Grinnell: Local History

- Browse: Dan Kaiser “Grinnell Stories” blog
<http://www.grinnellstories.blogspot.com/>
- “Browse: Edith Renfrow Smith: Through the Eyes of a Pioneer,”
<https://edithrenfrowsmith.sites.grinnell.edu/>

Thursday, January 25 History: Truths, Sources, Arguments

Readings:

- Jenny L. Presnell, *Information-Literate Historian*, pp. 1-13 & 108-112
- Lynn Hunt, *History: Why It Matters*, Chapters 1-4

Tuesday, January 30 What is Digital History?

Readings:

- “Digital History,” *The Inclusive Historian’s Handbook*, June 4, 2019,
<https://inclusivehistorian.com/digital-history/>
- Jenny L. Presnell, *Information-Literate Historian*, pp. 191-192
- Moira Donovan, “How AI is Helping Historians Better Understand Our Past,” *MIT Technology Review*, April 11, 2023,
<https://www.technologyreview.com/2023/04/11/1071104/ai-helping-historians-analyze-past/>

Thursday, February 1 True Stories: Archives & Digitization

Tour of Grinnell College archives with college archivist Chris Jones, library assistant Allison Haack. Walk through digitization process of Digital Grinnell.

Readings:

- John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, Chapter 4
- Jenny L. Presnell, *Information-Literate Historian*, pp. 108-117

- Society of American Archivists, “What Are Archives?”
<https://www2.archivists.org/about-archives>

Listen to:

- “Doing History” Podcast (part of “Ben Franklin’s World” podcast series) Episode 75: Peter Drummey, How Archives Work (54:16)
<https://benfranklinworld.com/episode-075-peter-drummey-archives-work/>

Tuesday, February 6 Metadata

Meet with Libby Cave, Digital Humanities and Instruction Librarian

Readings:

- Anne J. Gilliland, “Setting the Stage,” *Introduction to Metadata*, ed. Murtha Baca, Third Edition (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2016):
<http://www.getty.edu/publications/intrometadata/setting-the-stage/>
- Michael J. Kramer, “Going Meta on Metadata,” *Journal of Digital Humanities* 3 (2014): <http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/3-2/going-meta-on-metadata/>

Thursday, February 8 Structuring and Visualizing Data

Meet with Libby Cave and/or Tierney Steelberg, Digital Liberal Arts Specialist

Readings:

- Karl W. Broman & Kara H. Woo, “Data Organization in Spreadsheets,” *The American Statistician* 72 (2018): 2-10,
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00031305.2017.1375989>
- Jenny L. Presnell, *Information-Literate Historian*, Chapter 11
- Visualizing Abolition: <http://visualizingabolition.org/>
- Explore this site: “Historical Data Visualization,” Harvard Business School:
<https://www.hbs.edu/businesshistory/courses/resources/historical-data-visualization/Pages/default.aspx>

Tuesday, February 13 Data and History

Due today: Document Analysis Paper Due on P-web by 5:00 pm

Thursday, February 15 Artificial Intelligence and the Practice of History

Readings:

- Selections from “Artificial Intelligence and the Practice of History: A Forum” *American Historical Review* 128 (September 2023), edited by R. Darrell Meadows and Joshua Sternfeld: pp. 1344-1359, 1372-1377

UNIT TWO: HISTORY AND MAPPING

Tuesday, February 20 Spatial History

Readings:

- Jenny L. Presnell, *Information-Literate Historian*, Chapter 9
- Anne Kelly Knowles, “GIS and History,” in *Placing History* (Redlands, CA: ESRI Press, 2008), 1-26.
- Geoff Cunfer, “Scaling the Dust Bowl,” in *Placing History* (Redlands, CA: ESRI Press, 2008), 95-122
<http://downloads2.esri.com/ESRIpress/images/133/knowles.pdf>

In-class we will watch the first **30 minutes** of this documentary: *Ken Burns: The Dust Bowl*, Episode I “The Great Plow Up,” dir. Ken Burns, 2012 (1:53)

Thursday, February 22

Geographic Information Systems

Meet with Tierney Steelberg, Digital Liberal Arts Specialist [Prof. Purcell out of town, please contact her via email]

Tool: ArcGIS online

Readings:

- Iowa Township Project DASIL blog posts:
 - <https://dasil.sites.grinnell.edu/2019/04/land-census-and-digital-humanities-the-iowa-township-project/>
 - <https://dasil.sites.grinnell.edu/2019/04/the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly-data-collection/>
 - <https://dasil.sites.grinnell.edu/2019/06/close-encounters-with-oral-history-uncovering-womens-history/>
- Iowa Township data code book: https://grinco-my.sharepoint.com/:f/g/personal/purcelsj_grinnell_edu/EgD2cwDwv0BGovjgEoh-aLoBWaU3fbkPioRoC3YVd6ZKMA?email=steelber%40grinnell.edu&e=s2Ejuq

Tuesday, February 27 Mapping Grinnell

Meet with Tierney Steelberg [Prof. Purcell out of town, please contact her via email]

Work on mapping exercise

- Explore: “Railroads and the Making of Modern America,” University of Nebraska at Lincoln: <http://railroads.unl.edu/>
- Explore: Civil War Washington: <http://civilwardc.org/>
- Explore: Mapping Slavery in Detroit: <http://mappingdetroitslavery.com/>
- Explore: “Exploring Chronicling America Newspapers,” Library of Congress, <https://loc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/media/index.html?appid=3c6a392554d545bdb1c083348ef56458¢er=-97.5126;39.6376&level=3/&loclr=eacam>

Thursday, February 29

Meet with Tierney Steelberg [Prof. Purcell out of town, please contact her via email]

Work on mapping exercise

Due Today: Mapping Grinnell Assignment due by 5:00 pm on P-web

UNIT THREE: HISTORY AND TEXT ANALYSIS

Tuesday, March 5 Text Analysis Tools: Techniques and Visualizations working with newspaper sources

Tool: Voyant

Readings:

- Ben Blatt, *Nabokov's Favorite Word is Mauve*, Introduction
- Jenny L. Presnell, *Information-Literate Historian*, pp. 193-195
- Leen-Kiat Soh, Elizabeth Lorang, Chulwoo Pack, and Yi Liu, "Applying Image Analysis and Machine Learning to Historical Newspaper Collections," *American Historical Review* 128 (September 2023): 1382-1389
- Timothy Shortell, "The Rhetoric of Black Abolitionism: An Explanatory Analysis of Antislavery Newspapers in New York State," *Social Science History* 28 (2004): 75-109, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40267834>

Thursday, March 7 Text Analysis, Image Analysis, and Topic Modeling

Tool: Digital Scholar's Lab Meet with: Libby Cave and/or Tierney Steelberg

Readings: Topic Modeling and Newspaper History

- Megan R. Brett, "Topic Modeling: A Basic Introduction," *Journal of the Digital Humanities* 2 (2012) <http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/2-1/topic-modeling-a-basic-introduction-by-megan-r-brett/>
- Robert K. Nelson, "Of Monsters, Men—and Topic Modeling," *New York Times*, May 29, 2011: https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/05/29/of-monsters-men-and-topic-modeling/?_r=0
- Explore: Mining the Dispatch: <http://dsl.richmond.edu/dispatch/pages/home>

Tuesday, March 12 *A Midwife's Tale*

Film Discussion: "A Midwife's Tale"

Before class Watch: "A Midwife's Tale," dir. Richard Rogers, 1997 (90 min.) Watch the film here: https://fod-infobase-com.grinnell.idm.oclc.org/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=44085

Readings:

- Cameron Blevins, “Review: A Midwife’s Tale,”
<http://www.cameronblevins.org/posts/review-a-midwives-tale/>
- John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, Chapters 5-7

Thursday, March 14 **Work on Take-Home Midterm**

Friday, March 15 **Take-Home Midterm due by 5:00 pm on P-web**

March 16-31 Spring Break

UNIT FOUR: DIGITAL EQUIANO--GLOBAL

Tuesday, April 2 Olaudah Equiano’s World: Global History

Readings:

- Robert J. Allison, ed., *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Written by Himself*, Third Edition (Boston: Bedford, 2016).

Thursday, April 4 Discussing Equiano’s Narrative

Readings:

- Robert J. Allison, ed., *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Written by Himself*, Third Edition (Boston: Bedford, 2016).

Tuesday, April 9 Digital Equiano

Explore Digital Equiano:

- Slave Voyages, <https://www.slavevoyages.org/>
- Runaway Slaves in Britain: Bondage, Freedom, and Race in the Eighteenth Century: <https://www.runaways.gla.ac.uk/>
- The Equiano Project: <https://equiano.uk/>
- Equiano’s World: <http://www.equianosworld.org>
- Matthew McClellan, The Talking Book:
<http://dighist.fas.harvard.edu/courses/2015/HIST1993/exhibits/show/modeling-equiano/equiano--historical-context>
- Visualizing Abolition: <http://visualizingabolition.org/>

Thursday, April 11 Digital Equiano experiments

Meet with Tierney Steelberg

Friday, April 12 **Equiano reflection assignment due by 5:00 pm on P-web**

UNIT FIVE: DIGITAL STORYTELLING--LOCAL

Tuesday, April 16 Digital Storytelling as History

2:30 p.m. Visit the Grinnell College archives to examine primary sources.

Readings:

- Jenny L. Presnell, *Information-Literate Historian*, Chapter 12
- Listen to podcast: “Episode 101: John Demos, How Historians Write about History,” *Ben Franklin’s World Doing History*, <https://www.benfranklinworld.com/episode-101-john-demos-historians-write-history/> (45 minutes)
- Listen to podcast: “Episode 66: Simon P. Newman, How Historians Find Their Research Topics,” *Ben Franklin’s World*, <https://www.benfranklinworld.com/episode-066-simon-p-newman-how-historians-find-their-research-topics/> (44 minutes)

Thursday, April 18 Producing Digital Grinnell Stories: Narrative, Storytelling, and History

In class meet with Gina Donovan, Instructional Technologist, to talk about production process

Readings:

- Jill Lepore, “Historical Writing and the Revival of Narrative,” Nieman Narrative Journalism Conference, NiemanReports: <http://niemanreports.org/articles/historical-writing-and-the-revival-of-narrative/>
- Jenny L. Presnell, *Information-Literate Historian*, Chapter 11
- Stephanie Kingsley, “Making Digital History Accessible,” *AHA Perspectives on History*, May 1, 2017, <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/may-2017/making-digital-history-accessible>

Optional resources:

- TEDtalk playlist: “How To Tell a Story” https://www.ted.com/playlists/62/how_to_tell_a_story
- Carolyn O’Hara, “How To Tell a Great Story,” *Harvard Business Review*, July 30, 2014: <https://hbr.org/2014/07/how-to-tell-a-great-story>
- Storycenter *Digital Storytelling Cookbook*; *Digital Storytelling: Form and Content* (online book in PDF form)

Tuesday, April 23 Defining a topic & Story research

Consultation time available with Instructional Technologist Gina Donovan & Librarians

Due at end of class to Prof. Purcell: Preliminary story topic selection turn in “Digital Story Pre-Assignment Questions sheet”

Readings:

- Daniel Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, “Owning the Past,” *Digital History*, Center for History and New Media, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/copyright/> (Be sure to read all the sections of this chapter down to “Will You Get Sued?”)
- Jenny L. Presnell, *Information-Literate Historian*, pp. 17-27 & Chapter 10

Thursday, April 25 Researching Digital Stories & Putting them in context

Readings:

- SKIM: Jenny L. Presnell, *Information-Literate Historian*, pp. 28-188

In-class: Work on research and scripts

Monday, April 29 5:00 pm Script Draft Due to Prof. Purcell and your peer group partners via email

Tuesday, April 30 Producing Digital Grinnell Stories

In class: peer support on scripts, work on projects

Thursday, May 2 Producing Digital Grinnell Stories

In class: work on projects Instructional Technologist Gina Donovan & Librarians available

Monday, May 6 5:00 pm ITEMS DUE: Draft of Digital Story due on OneDrive (one copy per group—your collective work) AND **Individual draft of annotated bibliography due** on P-web (one copy per person—your own individual work)

Tuesday, May 7 Producing Digital Grinnell Stories

In class: peer support on digital story drafts, work on projects

Thursday, May 9 Producing Digital Grinnell Stories

In class: work on projects

Friday, May 10 FINAL DIGITAL STORY VIDEO DUE on OneDrive by 5:00 pm

FINALS WEEK: Thursday, May 16 9:00 am Final Project Showcase (everyone must attend—this is our final exam equivalent) This event takes place in our classroom.

- Group presentations of final digital story videos
- Turn in individual reflection paper with full and revised annotated bibliography to Prof. Purcell under “Assignments” tab on P-web by 9:00 pm