

	<b>HIST 470: Digital History</b> Call # 8402 Section 001 Fall 2009	
Class Meetings  Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:00 AM-12:15 PM 638 Oldfather Hall	Professor Douglas Seefeldt University of Nebraska-Lincoln Department of History 606 Oldfather Hall 402-472-3251 dseefeldt2@unl.edu	Office Hours  T 9:00-10:30 AM R 3:30-4:30 PM or by appointment

“Consider a future device for individual use, which is a sort of mechanized private file and library. It needs a name, and, to coin one at random, “memex” will do. A memex is a device in which an individual stores all his books, records, and communications, and which is mechanized so that it may be consulted with exceeding speed and flexibility. It is an enlarged intimate supplement to his memory.

It consists of a desk, and while it can presumably be operated from a distance, it is primarily the piece of furniture at which he works. On the top are slanting translucent screens, on which material can be projected for convenient reading. There is a keyboard, and sets of buttons and levers. Otherwise it looks like an ordinary desk.”

– Vannevar Bush, “As We May Think” (1945)

## Course Objectives

In this four credit course students will study the development of the relationship between the discipline of history and computing tools through a combination of theoretical and hands-on activities. During the first part of the semester, students will read and respond weekly, both in writing and in class, to a number of print and digital materials posted to the course Blackboard site. This course has two objectives: To explore the methods of digital history and to develop your analytic skills as a student of the liberal arts in general, and of history in particular. The assigned readings and required course work reflect these main objectives.

During the second part of the semester, students will focus on producing a digital thematic research collection on a University history topic of their choice. This digital history project will become an enduring contribution to the *Nebraska U* project <<http://unlhistory.unl.edu/>> sponsored by the Archives & Special Collections of the University of Nebraska Libraries. The University’s Archives & Special Collections contain a vast number of sources suitable for digitization and interpretation. Students will be encouraged and supported in their efforts to work with digital texts, audio, video, and images in their projects. Prior experience with new media tools is not required.

## Required Texts

(Please note that many other shorter readings will be posted to the course Blackboard site and are listed in the “Course Schedule” section below):

Daniel J. Cohen & Roy Rosenzweig. *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web*. (U. Pennsylvania Press, 2006). 0812219236 (This book

is available online should you prefer to read it that way:

<<http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/>>

Ted Friedman. *Electric Dreams: Computers in American Culture*. (New York University Press, 2005). 0814727409

Michael J. Galgano, et. al. *Doing History: Research and Writing in the Digital Age*. (Thomson Wadsworth, 2008) 0534619533

Robert E. Knoll, *Prairie University: A History of the University of Nebraska* (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1995) 0803227175

Ian F. McNeely with Lisa Wolverton. *Reinventing Knowledge: From Alexandria to the Internet*. (W. W. Norton & Company, 2008) 0393337715

## Course Requirements

Because this is a 400-level university history course, it will require reading, writing and active participation in class discussions. As a four-credit course, it demands a high degree of self-motivation and self-discipline both in and out of class for successful completion. Plan to spend approximately 9-12 hours per week preparing for, participating in, and developing your final project for this class, but avoid trying to do it all in one sitting. Consistency is key; try not to get behind in the assigned readings and your written reactions for they are the foundation of the course. Late assignments will be marked down one letter grade and I will not accept work that is more than one week late unless there is a legitimate and documented excuse. I know that “stuff happens” and am willing to work with those who act honestly and responsibly. Be aware of due dates as noted in the course schedule below and make sure to allow yourself enough time to complete the readings and meet the assignment deadlines.

This course has four major requirements; detailed assignment instructions will be provided via the course Blackboard site:

### **30% Active Participation (150 points; 10 points each)**

You are expected to regularly attend and actively participate in all facets of the course including face-to-face meetings and out of class work, and compose a self evaluation due at the end of the term. Included here are fifteen (15) brief reading reactions posted to the Blackboard blog in the appropriate folder under the “Assignments” tab before the class discussions as indicated on the course schedule. Reading reactions are to be one concise, well-written sentence for each bulleted item (or group of items) and should effectively convey the most important thing that you gleaned from the assigned readings. Please bring a hard copy of your sentences to class as we will use these to foster our class discussions.

### **10% Research Topic Proposals (50 points)**

Two (2) one-page write-ups on potential topics for your digital history project that reference appropriate pages and secondary and primary sources from Knoll's *Prairie University*. A detailed assignment sheet will be posted.

### **10% Research Bibliographies (50 points)**

Research, compile, and annotate bibliographies of appropriate secondary and primary sources for your digital project using proper citation format.

### **10% Project Progress Report & Text Draft (50 points)**

Each student will prepare and present an oral progress report and hand in a written draft of the text they plan to use in their project containing full bibliographic citations.

### **40% Final Project (200 points)**

Students will work outside of class and during indicated class periods to build a digital history project for *Nebraska U* on a topic in University history approved by the instructor.

### **Final Grade Scale**

A+	486-500	B-	400-419	D	320-334
A	470-485	C+	385-399	D-	300-319
A-	450-469	C	370-389	F	000-299
B+	435-449	C-	350-369		
B	420-434	D+	335-349		

### **Classroom Etiquette**

Please respect the time commitments made by the instructor and your fellow classmates by not talking to friends, eating, sleeping, reading the newspaper, text messaging or taking calls during class. In order for everyone to have the opportunity to learn we must strive to create an open, positive, non-threatening classroom atmosphere. Curiosity, honesty, and above all, respect, are characteristics inherent in healthy discourse. A great deal of this class revolves around both small and large group discussions of material that quite often lends itself to subjective aesthetics, contested meanings, and unique observations. No personal attacks or disrespect will be tolerated and proper sanctions will be imposed. Please familiarize yourself with the “Student Honor Code,” published in the “General Information” chapter, and the “Student Code of Conduct,” published in the “Student Rights and Responsibilities” chapter of the Undergraduate Bulletin.

### **Academic Honesty**

Examples of academic dishonesty include the following types of actions and behavior: Cheating, fabrication or falsification, plagiarism, abuse of academic materials, complicity in academic dishonesty, falsifying grade reports, and misrepresentation to avoid academic work. Academic dishonesty is prohibited and has serious consequences including course failure or disciplinary proceedings. See section 4.2, “Academic Dishonesty,” part of the “Student Code of Conduct” published in the “Student Rights and Responsibilities” chapter of the Undergraduate Bulletin.

### **Administrative Deadlines**

The office of Registration and Records has several important deadlines:

Aug 31:	Add Deadline	Oct 16:	“Pass/No Pass” Deadline
Sep 4:	Drop Deadline	Nov 13:	Withdraw Deadline

## Course Schedule & Assignments

Please complete the readings and assignments prior to each meeting as indicated below. We will discuss the material in class as a group. I reserve the right to change the schedule as necessary and will give you notice when I do via group email and by posting announcements to the course Blackboard site.

### Aug 25 & 27: Reinventing Knowledge, Part I

**Assignments:** Familiarize yourself with the course syllabus, complete the Student Information Sheet and bring it to class on Tuesday 8/25. Read the following and bring a copy of your one-sentence reaction statements for discussion on Thursday 8/27:

McNeely and Wolverton, *Reinventing Knowledge*

- Introduction
- Chapter 1

### Sep 1 & 3: Reinventing Knowledge, Part II

**Assignment:** Read the following and bring a copy of your one-sentence reaction statements for discussion on Tuesday 9/1:

McNeely and Wolverton, *Reinventing Knowledge*

- Chapter 2
- Chapter 3
- Chapter 4

**Assignment:** Read the following and bring a copy of your one-sentence reaction statements for discussion on Thursday 9/3:

McNeely and Wolverton, *Reinventing Knowledge*

- Chapter 5
- Chapter 6
- Conclusion

### Sep 8 & 10: A Short History Of Computing, Part I

**Assignment:** Read the following and bring a copy of your one-sentence reaction statements for discussion on Tuesday 9/8:

- Vannevar Bush, “As We May Think”
- Tim Berners-Lee, “Enquire Within upon Everything,” “Mind to Mind,” and “Weaving the Web”

**Assignment:** Read the following and bring a copy of your one-sentence reaction statements for discussion on Thursday 9/10:

Ted Friedman, *Electric Dreams*, Part I

- Introduction
- Chapter 1
- Chapter 2
- Chapter 3

### **Sep 15 & 17: A Short History Of Computing, Part II**

**Assignment:** Read the following and bring a copy of your one-sentence reaction statements for discussion on Tuesday 9/15:

Ted Friedman, *Electric Dreams*, Part II

- Chapter 4
- Chapter 5
- Chapter 6

**Assignment:** Read the following and bring a copy of your one-sentence reaction statements for discussion on Thursday 9/17:

Ted Friedman, *Electric Dreams*, Part III

- Chapter 7
- Chapter 8
- Chapter 9
- Chapter 10
- Conclusion

### **Sep 22 & 24: What Is Digital History? Part I**

**Assignment:** Read the following and bring a copy of your one-sentence reaction statements for discussion on Tuesday 9/22:

- Michael O'Malley and Roy Rosenzweig, "Brave New World or Blind Alley?"
- Carl Smith, "Can You Do Serious History on the Web?"
- Edward L. Ayers, "The Pasts and Futures of Digital History"

**Assignment:** Read the following and bring a copy of your one-sentence reaction statements for discussion on Thursday 9/24:

- *Journal of American History*, "Interchange: The Promise of Digital History"

### **Sep 29 & Oct 1: What Is Digital History? Part II**

**Assignment:** Read the following and bring a copy of your one-sentence reaction statements for discussion on Tuesday 9/29:

- Daniel Cohen & Roy Rosenzweig, "Promises and Perils of Digital History," Introduction to *Digital History*

- Daniel Cohen & Roy Rosenzweig, “Exploring the History Web,” Chapter 1 of *Digital History*

**Assignment:** Read the following and bring a copy of your one-sentence reaction statements for discussion on Thursday 10/1:

- Peter N. Stearns, “Why Study History?” American Historical Association
- Galgano, et. al., “What is History?” chapter 1 of *Doing History*

### **Oct 6 & 8: Project Planning**

**Assignment:** Read the following and bring a copy of your one-sentence reaction statements for discussion on Tuesday 10/6:

- Daniel Cohen & Roy Rosenzweig, “Getting Started,” chapter 2 of *Digital History*
- Carole L. Palmer, “Thematic Research Collections”

\*\*\*No class meeting on Thursday 10/8 (professor at WHA conference)

### **Oct 13 & 15: Data Gathering, Part I**

**Assignment:** Bring two (2) one-page write-ups on possible topics for your digital history project that reference appropriate pages and sources from Knoll's *Prairie University*. Each write-up should conclude with a statement of why you find the topic to be interesting and why you think it would make a contribution to the UNL Library's *Nebraska U* project. Due at the beginning of class on Tuesday 10/13.

**Assignment:** Read Galgano, et. al., “Locating the Sources,” chapter 2, and “Tools for Analysis—Secondary Sources,” chapter 3 of *Doing History*, for discussion on Thursday 10/15.

### **Oct 20 & 22: Data Gathering, Part II**

\*\*\*No class meeting on Tuesday 10/20 (Fall Semester Break)

**Assignment:** Read Galgano, et. al., “Primary Evidence,” chapter 4 of *Doing History*, for discussion on Thursday 10/22.

\*\*\*We will meet at the Special Collections in Love Library on Thursday 10/22

### **Oct 27 & 29: Digital History Project Topic Presentations**

**Assignment:** This week each student will present his/her digital history project topic to the class for feedback and discussion and will hand in bibliographies of secondary and primary sources.

## Nov 3 & 5: Scanning & Digital Imaging

**Assignment:** Read the following and bring a copy of your one-sentence reaction statements for discussion on Tuesday 11/3:

- Daniel Cohen & Roy Rosenzweig, “Becoming Digital,” chapter 3 of *Digital History*
- Marilyn Deegan and Simon Tanner, “Conversion of Primary Sources”

**Assignment:** Read the following and bring a copy of your one-sentence reaction statements for discussion on Thursday 11/5:

- Daniel Cohen & Roy Rosenzweig, “Owning the Past?” chapter 7 of *Digital History*

## Nov 10 & 12: Design, Navigation & Writing for Digital Media

**Assignment:** Read the following and bring a copy of your one-sentence reaction statements for discussion on Tuesday 11/10:

- Daniel Cohen & Roy Rosenzweig, “Designing for the History Web,” chapter 4 of *Digital History*

**Assignment:** Read the following and bring a copy of your one-sentence reaction statements for discussion on Thursday 11/12:

- Stephen Robertson, “Doing History in Hypertext”
- Excerpts from Andrew Bonime and Ken C. Pohlmann, *Writing for New Media*

## Nov 17 & 19: Work On Projects

**Assignment:** No class meetings this week. Each student will schedule a 10-minute meeting with the instructor during class time on either Tuesday or Thursday to discuss project progress and challenges.

## Nov 24 & 26: The Future of the Digital Past

**Assignment:** Read the following and bring a copy of your one-sentence reaction statements for discussion on Tuesday 11/24:

- Daniel Cohen & Roy Rosenzweig, “Preserving Digital History,” chapter 8 of *Digital History*

\*\*\*No class meeting on Thursday 11/26 (Thanksgiving Break)

### **Dec 1 & 3: Progress Reports and Project Troubleshooting**

**Assignment:** This week each student will present an oral progress report, explaining to the rest of us the nature of the digitized historical source materials and the scholarly interpretation they are presenting along with objects. Each student will hand in a written draft of the text they plan to use in their project along with complete bibliographic citations (using the best practices gleaned from the *Writing for New Media* readings).

### **Dec 8 & 10: Work On Projects & Public Presentations**

\*\*\*No class meeting on Tuesday 12/8. Work on your projects

**Assignment:** Group presentations of completed projects to the UNL digital community (place TBA) Thursday 12/10.

### **Dec 14: Finals Week**

**Assignment:** Final revised projects completed and self-evaluations due (via email attachment) by 5:30 p.m. on Monday 12/14.