NEW COURSE PROPOSAL
Undergraduate Programs

FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

Department History

College DFSCAL

*(To obtain a course number, contact **coursenumbers@fau.edu**)*

UUPC Approval 10-12-2026
UFS Approval _____
SCNS Submittal _____
Confirmed _____
Banner Posted _____
Catalog _____

Prefix HIS

Number 3164

(L = Lab Course; C = Combined Lecture/Lab; add if appropriate)

Lab Code

Type of Course: Lecture

Course Title: The Digital Past

Credits *(See Definition of a Credit Hour)*: 3

Effective Date *(TERM & YEAR)*: Fall 2027

Grading *(Select One Option)*

Regular ●

Sat/UnSat ☐

Course Description *(Syllabus must be attached; see Template and Guidelines)*

In this course, students will learn how to use and critique use of digital tools to study the past. Students will learn the fundamentals of information technology and apply them to practical historical problems.

Prerequisites, with minimum grade*

Corequisites

Registration Controls *(Major, College, Level)*

***Default minimum passing grade is D-.** **Prereqs., Coreqs. & Reg. Controls are enforced for all sections of course**

Writing Across Curriculum (WAC) Course

☐ **Yes** ☑ **No**

WAC criteria must be indicated in syllabus and approval attached to proposal. See WAC Guidelines.

General Education Requirement *(Select One Option)*

None

General Education criteria must be indicated in the syllabus and approval attached to the proposal. See General Education Guidelines.

Minimum qualifications to teach course

Ph.D. in History

Faculty Contact/Email/Phone

Douglas Kanter/dkanter1@fau.edu/7-3841

List/Attach comments from departments affected by new course

SCMS

Approved by	***Date***
Department Chair	9/18/26
College Curriculum Chair	9/29/2026
College Dean	10/01/2026
UUPC Chair Korey Sorge	10-12-2026
Undergraduate Studies Dean Dan Meeroff	10-12-2026
UFS President	
Provost	

Email this form and syllabus to mjenning@fau.edu seven business days before the UUPC meeting.

FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

HIS 3164

The Digital Past

Date: Tuesday, Thursday 11:00 AM - 12:20 PM

Building: College of Education Bldg Boca Room: 124

3 Credit(s)

Fall 2027 - 1 Full Term

Instructor Information

Laura Fretwell

Email: lfretwell@fau.edu

Office: Arts & Letters (AL) Building 150

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2-3, Thursdays 2-3, & Zoom appointment scheduled via email Phone: 561-297-2687

Course Description

In this course, students will learn how to use and critique use of digital tools to study the past. Students will learn the fundamentals of information technology and apply them to practical historical problems.

Using a variety of digital tools and software for analysis and visualization, students will learn how to engage with primary sources and put them into conversation with secondary sources to make historical arguments presented on the web. In class, students work on a series of small workshops to experiment and evaluate how to use digital methods to study the past. Students will also practice and apply skills of historical research, digital literacy, and project management to create and publish a digital history project by the end of the semester.

Instructional Method

In-Person
Traditional concept of in person. Mandatory attendance is at the discretion of the instructor.

Required Texts/Materials

All readings and technology will be open access and provided to students by the instructor.
No course materials are required for purchase.

Recommended Readings and Materials

No course materials are required for purchase. All readings and technology will be open access and provided to students by the instructor.

Course Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes

- Students will compare and analyze the different theories and methods of digital history and be introduced to the public history dimensions of digital history work.
- Students will critique and use technology and digital tools in the field of history, such as researching and finding trustworthy sources of information and using algorithmic methods to organize and analyze information to guide decision making.
- Students will apply technology and digital tools, software, and platforms, to analyze primary sources and make historical arguments presented on the web.
- Students will create and publish a digital history project that engages primary sources with secondary sources.

Faculty Rights and Responsibilities

Florida Atlantic University respects the rights of instructors to teach and students to learn. Maintenance of these rights requires classroom conditions that do not impede their exercise. To ensure these rights, faculty members have the prerogative to:

- Establish and implement academic standards.
- Establish and enforce reasonable behavior standards in each class.
- Recommend disciplinary action for students whose behavior may be judged as disruptive under the Student Code of Conduct University Regulation 4.007.

Disability Policy

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and follow all SAS procedures. SAS has offices across three of FAU's campuses – Boca Raton, Davie and Jupiter – however disability services are available for students on all campuses.

If you encounter any barriers to learning or participation, please let me know. I welcome conversations at any time to ensure you have the appropriate access.

For more information, please visit the SAS website at www.fau.edu/sas/.

Course Evaluation Method

Attendance, Participation, & Digital Tasks (20%)

Participation includes attendance and engagement in class discussions and workshops (10%), posting five reading reflections of their choice (5%), and completion of digital tasks (5%). You are expected to complete five short reflections over the semester via Slack posts before the class day the reading is posted. Digital tasks are short, completion-based activities designed to help you set up and experiment with tools such as WordPress, Zotero, Tropy, Omeka S, and AI tools before class.

I understand not everyone is comfortable speaking up during class, so if you feel that way, let me know and we can devise a plan of participating in other informal ways such as attending office hours or posting more in the #reading channel. Attendance is mandatory for every class session, with the

exceptions of two unexcused absences. Family, life, and medical emergencies are excused, but if these occur often, I will let you know if I require documentation. Please contact me in advance via email if you must be absent. Because the class is so hands-on and practical, you are expected to catch up on the content learned during the class session you missed and expected to catch up on the digital tasks required before the class on your own time. (20% total - 10% attendance and participation, 5% reading reflections, 5% digital tasks)

Course Website (WordPress Portfolio) (10%): You will establish a personal WordPress website that functions as a space to present your Digital Tool Studio assignments and the Final Research project. Evaluation focuses on clarity, organization, and effective presentation of historical work rather than design sophistication. You must post the URLs to your post in the beginning of the semester in the #Website Slack channel. (10% Total).

Digital Tool Studios (30%): You will engage in a guided, hands-on workshop-style assignment to experiment with and then reflect on three core digital history tools over the course of the semester:

• Studio I: Omeka S – collections, metadata, and digital public history

• Studio II: StoryMaps – spatial narrative and historical argument

• Studio III: AI and visualization tools – interpretation, mediation, and ethics

Each studio includes a small digital artifact and a short methodological reflection. Each studio is worth 10%. (10% each = 30% Total)

Final Research Project (40%): You will complete a portfolio-based final project focused on a historical place, event, or theme. Projects must draw on primary and secondary sources managed with Zotero and Tropy and incorporate at least one digital method studied in the course published on your WordPress website. The final project includes a proposal (5%) and a completed portfolio (40%).

The instructor reserves the right to modify the course schedule or assignments as the course progresses, and this syllabus may be updated as necessary.

Code of Academic Integrity

Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see University Regulation 4.001.

Attendance Policy Statement

Students are expected to attend all their scheduled University classes and to satisfy all academic objectives as outlined by the instructor. The effect of absences upon grades is determined by the instructor, and the University reserves the right to deal at any time with individual cases of non-attendance. Students are responsible for arranging to make up work missed because of legitimate class absence, such as illness, family emergencies, military obligation, court-imposed legal obligations, or participation in University-approved activities. Examples of University-approved reasons for absences include participating on an athletic or scholastic team, musical and theatrical performances, and debate activities. It is the student's responsibility to give the instructor notice prior to any anticipated absences and within a reasonable amount of time after an unanticipated absence, ordinarily by the next scheduled class meeting. Instructors must allow each student who is absent for a University-approved reason the opportunity to make up work missed without any reduction in the student's final course grade as a direct result of such absence.

If you are unable to attend one of the class meetings for medical or university-related reasons, you should contact me right away to provide possible documentation and to arrange an alternate form of participation.

Religious Accommodation Policy Statement

In accordance with the rules of the Florida Board of Education and Florida law, students have the right to reasonable accommodations from the University in order to observe religious practices and beliefs regarding admissions, registration, class attendance, and the scheduling of examinations and work assignments. University Regulation 2.007, Religious Observances, sets forth this policy for FAU and may be accessed on the FAU website at www.fau.edu/ regulations.

Any student who feels aggrieved regarding religious accommodations may present a grievance to the executive director of The Office of Civil Rights and Title IX. Any such grievances will follow Florida Atlantic University's established grievance procedure regarding alleged discrimination.

Time Commitment Per Credit Hour

For traditionally delivered courses, not less than one (1) hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction each week for fifteen (15) weeks per Fall or Spring semester, and a minimum of two (2) hours of out-of-class student work for each credit hour. Equivalent time and effort are required for Summer Semesters, which usually have a shortened timeframe. Fully Online courses, hybrid, shortened, intensive format courses, and other non-traditional modes of delivery will demonstrate equivalent time and effort.

Course Grading Scale

Course Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	**100 - 94%**
A-	**< 94 - 90%**
B+	**< 90 - 87%**
B	**< 87 - 83%**
B-	**< 83 - 80%**
C+	**< 80 - 77%**
C	**< 77 - 73%**

Letter Grade	Percentage
C-	< 73 - 70%
D+	< 70 - 67%
D	< 67 - 63%
D-	< 63 - 60%
F	< 60 - 0%

Grade Appeal Process

You may request a review of the final course grade when you believe that one of the following conditions apply:

• There was a computational or recording error in the grading.

• The grading process used non-academic criteria.

• There was a gross violation of the instructor's own grading system.

University Regulation 4.002 of the University Regulations contains information on the grade appeals process

Policy on Make-up Tests, Late work, and Incompletes

Late work will not be accepted. Issues that keep you from completing the written assignments or tests must be discussed with the instructor in advance with legitimate documentation if possible. In the event of an unavoidable emergency, you should contact me right away to discuss arrangements for making up assignments where possible. Be prepared to provide documentation if possible for proof of emergency.

Any written or makeup assignments are due at the time listed on the syllabus. Students are responsible for ensuring that their assignments have been formally submitted before the deadline. It is strongly recommended that students take screenshots of their submitted assignments in case of technical issues. If you are ever concerned that a submission has not gone through, you should also email or Slack a copy of the assignment to me.

Special Course Requirements

It is required to bring a laptop everyday to class. FAU Libraries offers semester-long laptop loans at no cost to students through the Library Laptop Loaner Program, subject to availability and eligibility: https://library.fau.edu/technology-student-success. If this is an issue, please let me know and we can work something out.

Policy on the Recording of Lectures

Students enrolled in this course may record video or audio of class lectures for their own personal educational use. A class lecture is defined as a formal or methodical oral presentation as part of a university course intended to present information or teach students about a particular subject. Recording class activities other than class lectures, including but not limited to student presentations (whether individually or as part of a group), class discussion (except when incidental to and incorporated within a class lecture), labs, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving student participation, test or examination administrations, field trips, and private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the lecturer, is prohibited. Recordings may not be used as a substitute for class participation or class attendance and may not be published or shared without the written consent of the faculty member. Failure to adhere to these requirements may constitute a violation of the University's Student Code of Conduct and/or the Code of Academic Integrity.

Artificial Intelligence Preamble

FAU recognizes the value of generative AI in facilitating learning. However, output generated by artificial intelligence (AI), such as written words, computations, code, artwork, images, music, etc., for example, is drawn from previously published materials and is not your own original work.

FAU students are not permitted to use AI for any course work unless explicitly allowed to do so by the instructor of the class for a specific assignment. [Policy 10.16 Artificial Intelligence]

Class policies related to AI use are decided by the individual faculty. Some faculty may permit the use of AI in some assignments but not others, and some faculty may prohibit the use of AI in their course entirely. In the case that an instructor permits the use of AI for some assignments, the assignment instructions will indicate when and how the use of AI is permitted in that specific assignment. It is the student's responsibility to comply with the instructor's expectations for each assignment in each course. When AI is authorized, the student is also responsible and accountable for the content of the work. AI may generate inaccurate, false, or exaggerated information. Users should approach any generated content with skepticism and review any information generated by AI before using generated content as-is.

If you are unclear about whether or not the use of AI is permitted, ask your instructor before starting the assignment.

Failure to comply with the requirements related to the use of AI may constitute a violation of the Florida Atlantic Code of Academic Integrity, Regulation 4.001.

Proper Citation: If the use of AI is permitted for a specific assignment, then use of the AI tool must be properly documented and cited. For more information on how to properly cite the use of AI tools, visit https://fau.edu/ai/citation

AI Language Specific To This Course

AI Flexible: The use of AI to assist in work assigned in this specific course is permitted only for specific assignments as indicated by the instructor. Use must be properly documented and cited per instructor guidelines (https://fau.edu/ai/citation).

The use of AI to assist in written work, such as reading reflections, digital tool studio reviews, or the historical writing in the final project is prohibited.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center

Life as a university student can be challenging physically, mentally and emotionally. Students who find stress negatively affecting their ability to achieve academic or personal goals may wish to consider utilizing FAU's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center. CAPS provides FAU students a range of services – individual counseling, support meetings, and psychiatric services, to name a few – offered to help improve and maintain emotional wellbeing. For more information, go to http://www.fau.edu/counseling/

Student Support Services and Online Resources

- Center for Learning and Student Success (CLASS)
- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- FAU Libraries
- Office of Information Technology Helpdesk
- Center for Global Engagement
- Office of Undergraduate Research and Inquiry (OURI)
- Student Accessibility Services

- Student Athlete Success Center (SASC)
- Testing and Certification
- Test Preparation
- University Academic Advising Services

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

The CTL has a variety of FREE TUTORING and other academic support services to help you succeed in your courses. You are encouraged to build your academic support team early in the term and meet with your team regularly. At the CTL, you can practice difficult course content, develop skills, and learn academic success strategies -- in person and online. Learn more about FAU academic support at www.fau.edu/ctl.

Course Topical Outline

All readings will be posted through links or PDFs on Canvas. There is no textbook to purchase for the course. It is required to bring a laptop everyday to class. FAU Libraries offers semester-long laptop loans at no cost to students through the Library Laptop Loaner Program, subject to availability and eligibility: https://library.fau.edu/technology-student-success. If this is an issue, please let me know and we can work something out..

WEEK 1

· Tuesday, August 25 – Course Introduction: What is Digital History?

- Class introduction

- Overview of course tools, assignments, and portfolio structure

- Read: Jason Heppler, 'Defining Digital Humanities'

- Explore: https://whatisdigitalhumanities.com/

- Tasks before class: GoogleForm survey; set up Slack and post introduction

· Thursday, August 27 – Introduction to Digital History

- Discussion of digital history definitions

WEEK 2

· Tuesday, September 1 – How Does the Internet Work?

- Read: CERN, A Short History of the Web

- Watch: Hypertext Pioneers

- Task before class: Establish Reclaim Hosting account and sign into WordPress

- In-class: WordPress walkthrough (portfolio pages and navigation)

· Thursday, September 3 – Search Engines and Algorithms

- Watch: Cathy O'Neill, The Truth About Algorithms

- Read: Safiya Umoja Noble, Introduction

- Discussion: algorithms, bias, and historical authority

WEEK 3

· Tuesday, September 8 – Primary and Secondary Sources

- Read: Ian Milligan, The Transformation of Historical Research in the Digital Age, pp. 1–29

- Watch: Using the Library Catalog

- Task before class: Download Zotero

· Thursday, September 10 – Finding Sources Online

- Read: Milligan, Archives and Access, pp. 29–44

- Watch: Using Journal Databases

- In-class: Zotero exercise (saving and organizing sources)

WEEK 4

· Tuesday, September 15 – Managing Digital Sources

- Read: Tropy Documentation

- Watch: Getting Started in Tropy

- In-class: metadata basics and descriptive practice

· Thursday, September 17 – Researching Primary Sources in Tropy

- In-class workshop: importing sources and applying metadata

- Practice task: begin building a small primary source corpus

WEEK 5

· Tuesday, September 22 – Artificial Intelligence and Historical Research -

Read: What Is Generative AI and How Does It Work?

- Task before class: Create AcademicCloud account

· Thursday, September 24 – Artificial Intelligence and Ethics

- Read: Defining and Demystifying AI", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1tyGdjVRy8 (start at 4:30)

- Discussion: authority, bias, and automation in historical research WEEK 6

· Tuesday, September 29 – Digital Public History

- Read: A Guide to Creating a Digital Public History Project

– Read: What Is Open Source?

- Discussion: audiences, access, and public history

· Thursday, October 1 – Digital Storytelling

-Read: Read: John Theibault, Visualizations and Historical Arguments

Read: Miriam Posner, "How did they make that?"

- Introduction to Twine

WEEK 7

· Tuesday, October 6 – Introduction to Metadata and Omeka S -

Watch: What Is Metadata and Why Does It Matter?

- Overview of items, collections, and sites

- In-class Omeka S practice: items, metadata, and collections

· Thursday, October 8 – Omeka S Pages and Interpretation

- In-class workshop: building Omeka pages

- Discussion: metadata, authority, and public audiences

WEEK 8

· Tuesday, October 13 – Studio I (Omeka S) due

-Discussion: public history, collecting, and metadata

· Thursday, October 15 – Introduction to Spatial History

- Read: Richard White, What Is Spatial History?

- Discussion: place, movement, and interpretation

WEEK 9

· Tuesday, October 20 – Historical Studies of Space and Place

- Read: Martina Löw's article

- Read: Franck and Paxson, Women and Urban Public Space

· Thursday, October 22 – StoryMaps Workday

- Hands-on introduction to StoryMaps

- Creating spatial historical narratives

WEEK 10

· Tuesday, October 27 – StoryMaps Studio Due

- Studio II (StoryMaps) due

- Discussion: spatial argument and digital methodology

· Thursday, October 29 – Podcasting and Digital History

- Listen: The Green Tunnel Podcast

- Discussion: narrative, sound, and public engagement

WEEK 11

· Tuesday, November 3 – Audacity Editing Workshop

- Hands-on audio editing

- Podcasting as an optional method for final projects

· Thursday, November 5 – Data Visualization and History

- Read: Abby Mullen, How to Read a Visualization

- Watch: David McCandless, The Beauty of Data Visualization

WEEK 12

· Tuesday, November 10 – Visualizations and Historical Arguments

- Read: John Theibault, Visualizations and Historical Arguments

- Discussion: abstraction, evidence, and argument

· Thursday, November 12 – AI, Excel, and Visualization

- Workshop on AI-assisted analysis, charts, and timelines

WEEK 13

· Tuesday, November 17 – Voyant and Text Analysis

- Hands-on workshop using Voyant Tools

· Thursday, November 19 – Studio III Due

- Studio III (AI & Visualization) due

- Discussion: ethics and interpretation

WEEK 14

· Tuesday, November 24 – Final Project Check-In

Thursday November 26 - Thanksgiving No Class

WEEK 15

· Tuesday, December 1 – Final Project Check-In

- Draft portfolio review and peer feedback

· Thursday, December 3 – Final Class Wrap-Up

- Course reflection

- Digital history takeaways

- Final Digital History Portfolio due during finals period

Title IX Statement

In any case involving allegations of sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report the matter to the University Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX (OCR9). If University faculty become aware of an allegation of sexual misconduct, they are expected to report it to OCR9. If a report is made, someone from OCR9 and/or Campus Victim Services will contact you to make you aware of available resources including support services, supportive measures, and the University's grievance procedures. More information, including contact information for OCR9, is available at https://www.fau.edu/ocr9/title-ix/. You may also contact Victim Services at victimservices@fau.edu or 561-297-0500 (ask to speak to an Advocate) or schedule an appointment with a counselor at Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) by calling 561-297-CAPS.