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(or by appointment)

Graduate Seminar:
Digital Methods and Stalin's Great Terror

Course Description:

This is a course in digital history that uses Stalinist policing as a case study for implementing these methods. It has four main goals:

1. Familiarize students with the basics of digital methods of analysis like text scraping, natural language processing, geographical information systems and (to a lesser extent) network analysis.
2. Learn methods of digital presentation of materials through visualizations and venues for online presentation (e.g., blogs or digital exhibits).
3. Analyze the benefits and problems of digital scholarship and the use of big data.
4. Learn something about Stalinism and Stalinist repressive politics.

Of these three goals, the fourth is the least important. I chose it because it is something I study and because there is a wealth of data about Soviet penal institutions available in English translation. In other words, it can provide a base for learning digital methods. The main assignment for this course is a digital analysis, exhibit, or tutorial, accompanied by one or more graphical representations and a detailed explanation. This work can be done on a topic directly related to Stalinist policing but could also be done on a topic that relates more directly to your research interests.

This course does not demand technical expertise and will not make you into an expert on digital history.

Course Assignments:

Final Project (40% including pass/fail 10% for a two-page proposal): The final project is a flexible assignment that can take three forms:

1. An essay (~10 pages or 3000 words) that uses digital analysis (e.g., database analysis or GIS) as its main method.
2. A shorter essay in a blog format or a digital exhibit that uses digital analysis presented as visualizations. For a digital exhibit, at least one of the pieces should be a visualization generated through digital analysis.
3. A plan for a digital assignment for undergraduate students that includes: a description of the assignment; a grading rubric; an example of an exemplary (A-grade) implementation

of the assignment; a short (two-three page) explanation of how the assignment would accomplish pedagogical goals in a course and what an instructor would need to do to overcome any shortcomings of using such an assignment.

The topic for the project does not need to concern Stalinism, although those topics are possible and data will be available. The class will workshop

Issues in Digital History (20%, 6.67% x 3): Three times in the semester, you should choose an essay on a digital humanities issue and present on that issue for the class. I will provide a list of suitable essays but ones beyond the list can also be chosen. The issue should be relevant to the topic for the day. The presentation should summarize the essay, raise questions about it and update it as needed (ie, in the case of older essays). A week after the meeting, you should submit a short (300-500 word) essay review that responds to problems raised during class discussion as necessary. Try to word the response as if you were writing a short response on a blog.

Weekly (more or less) Technical Assignments (15%): Most classes will include a short technical assignment. I am grading these pass/fail based on good faith effort rather than results.

Brainstorming (5%): Following each class (by the Monday before the next class) you should write a quick idea for how to implement an idea we talked about last week. E.g., if we talk about mapping and how repression was spread unevenly, you might make a proposal to make a map that shows where arrests occur in your area of study.

Participation (15%): Students should come to our meetings prepared to discuss the readings/materials for the week. As part of this preparation, students should submit on Canvas two questions for discussion.

Texts:

Our one main text on the history of Stalinism is:

Oleg Khlevniuk, *Stalin: A New Biography of a Dictator* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

On digital history, many of the texts will come from the following sources:

Graham, Milligan and Weingart, *The Historian's Macroscope* (draft version available online here:

http://web.archive.org/web/20160315232134/http://www.themacroscope.org/?page_id=707)

Debates in Digital Humanities (a series of essay collections, available here:

<https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/>)

The Programming Historian (various technical tutorials, available at

<https://programminghistorian.org/>)

Other materials will be available on our Canvas page as PDFs or links.

Required Software:

An important element of this course is learning platforms for doing digital scholarship, some of which require basic coding. I will provide many of the scripts, and classes will include technical tutorials as needed. Here is a list (incomplete) of platforms we may use.

Research Platforms:

Python 3: Python is arguably the most popular coding language in the world. It has the advantage of versatility, having modules (additional programming packages) for almost every conceivable programming use from text analysis to gaming to GIS. Although many researchers in the social sciences and hard sciences prefer the statistical program R, Python is easily the most widely used programming language among digital humanities scholars. With excellent, free classes available on platforms like Programming Historian, Coursera and Udacity, anyone who is serious about digital history should consider investing some time into learning this language (even more than we will invest!).

Gephi: A platform for network analysis and visualization. In Gephi, one could analyze, for example, the average degree of separation between Kevin Bacon and other film stars (is this still something people do?).

MALLET: A program that works in the command lines and finds similar themes (topics) in a group of texts (a corpus). The technical term for this is topic modelling. I think there are better, simpler ways of doing this but it is a popular tool, especially among literary scholars.

Presentation Platforms:

JavaScript: Another popular language, JS is the backbone of the internet. Almost every dynamic website you use has some JS working in the background. It is worth knowing a little bit of JS to navigate platforms like TimelineJS. If you want to make a more elaborate web application, it will take a little more JS knowledge. We will not do so much with JS in this class.

ArcGIS Online: ArcGIS is a desktop application for mapping and other GIS and ArcGIS online is the online platform. It has many excellent features for working with geographical data and can embed maps in websites. There is also a presentation software called StoryMaps that it can use.

QGIS: An open-source GIS platform that is less user friendly than ArcGIS but has more features. Especially useful for historians is its TimeManager module, that allows importing data over time.

Twine: A platform for making non-linear stories (in other words, a game). In Twine it is easy to make point-and-click stories (think – Choose Your Own Adventure) but provides a scripting language that can allow games to track decisions.

Omeka: A platform for making online exhibitions. This is a great, easy-to-use alternative to WordPress or Blogger that focuses on visual objects.

Academic Integrity: The University of Florida holds its students to the highest standards, and we encourage students to read the University of Florida Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code (Regulation 4.040), so they are aware of our standards. Any violation of the Student Honor Code will result in a referral the Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution and may result in academic sanctions and further student conduct action. The two greatest threats to the academic integrity of the University of Florida are cheating and plagiarism. Students should be aware of their faculty’s policy on collaboration, should understand how to properly cite sources, and should not give nor receive an improper academic advantage in any manner through any medium.

Lateness Policy: An important part of students’ work is meeting deadlines. Late assignments will be docked three (3) percentage points per day overdue. Under extraordinary circumstances extensions will be granted but every effort should be made to avoid the need to take an extension.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Online Evaluations: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <http://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <http://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Grading Policy:

You can find University of Florida’s grading policies here:
<http://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-gradingpolicies/>

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76

C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62

Recording:

Our class sessions may be audio-visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate verbally are agreeing to have their voices recorded.

If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared.

As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

Course Schedule:

Jan. 10: Introductions

Readings:

Graham et al, *Historian's Macroscope*, front matter (from preface (http://web.archive.org/web/20160315221828/http://www.themacroscope.org/?page_id=583) to “Who are we and how did we get into Digital History?”)

Miriam Posner, “Some things to think about before you exhort everyone to code” (<https://miriamposner.com/blog/some-things-to-think-about-before-you-exhort-everyone-to-code/>).

Miriam Posner, “How Did They Make That?” (<https://archive.org/details/howdidtheymakethat>)

Jason Hepler, *What Is Digital Humanities?* (<https://whatisdigitalhumanities.com/>)

Oleg Khlevniuk, *Stalin: A New Biography of a Dictator*

Assignments:

-Install Python (<https://programminghistorian.org/en/lessons/introduction-and-installation>)

-Install Twine (<https://twinery.org>)

-Explore the Digital Humanities Working Group (DHWG) website:

<https://digitalhumanities.group.ufl.edu/dh-uf/>

-Prepare five-minute talk about yourself and what you think DH could do for you

Tutorial:

Installing BeautifulSoup with Python

Python basics with text (from: <https://programminghistorian.org/en/lessons/working-with-text-files>)

Python modularity (<https://programminghistorian.org/en/lessons/code-reuse-and-modularity>)

Recommended Readings/Viewings:

Miriam Posner, Digital Humanities course syllabus is great:

<http://miriamposner.com/classes/dh201w21/>

Further Reading:

On DH:

From *Debates in Digital Humanities*:

2019: Underwood, “Digital Humanities as a Semi-Normal Thing”

(<https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-f2acf72c-a469-49d8-be35-67f9ac1e3a60/section/ac5fc1c4-abcb-4a04-8a4b-fa5fe763220e#ch10>)

Miriam Posner, Digital Humanities course syllabus is great:

<http://miriamposner.com/classes/dh201w21/>

Weingart, “What’s under the Big Tent?” (<https://www.digitalstudies.org/article/id/7312/>)

Programming:

Programming Historian (<https://programminghistorian.org/>)

Codecademy (<https://www.codecademy.com/>)

Jan. 24: Planning and Collectivization + Web Scraping

Readings:

- Viola, “The Aesthetics of Stalinist Planning and the World of Special Villages”
- Scott, *Seeing Like a State* (excerpt)
- Lewin, “Society and the Stalinist State in the Period of the Five-Year Plans”
- Graham et al, *Historian’s Macroscope*, chapters 1-2

Assignment:

Based on our tutorial from last time, write a Python script that saves a short (one paragraph) reaction to your computer. You can upload the file or write the script directly to Canvas.

Tutorial:

- Web scraping (<https://programminghistorian.org/en/lessons/working-with-web-pages>)
- Automated transliteration (<https://programminghistorian.org/en/lessons/transliterating>)
- Application: Ukraine’s arrest database (<http://www.reabit.org.ua/nbr/>)

Further Reading:

David M. Berry, M. Beatrice Fazi, Ben Roberts, and Alban Webb, “No Signal without Symbol: Decoding the Digital Humanities” (<https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-f2acf72c-a469-49d8-be35-67f9ac1e3a60/section/687d2d32-0ec6-4158-b776-ee5cb989ef8b#ch05>)

Jan. 31: Class and Marginals + Databases and Categorization

Readings:

Fitzpatrick, "Ascribing Class"

Shearer, *Policing Stalin's Socialism* (excerpts)

Posner, "Humanities Data: A Necessary Contradiction"

(<https://miriamposner.com/blog/humanities-data-a-necessary-contradiction/>)

Marche, "Literature Is not Data" (<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/literature-is-not-data-against-digital-humanities/>)

Assignment:

Write a Python script that downloads and saves entries from the *Henry A. Wallace Police Crime Database* (<https://policecrime.bgsu.edu/>). Hint: The database is cataloged as a series that goes <https://policecrime.bgsu.edu/Cases/Details/XXXXXX> where XXXXX goes from 00001 to 12703.

A less sophisticated version of the script will just download the pages. A more sophisticated version will also create a catalog from the pages.

Tutorial:

-Cross tabulation analysis

Further Reading:

Katie Rawson and Trevor Muñoz, "Against Cleaning"

(<https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-f2acf72c-a469-49d8-be35-67f9ac1e3a60/section/07154de9-4903-428e-9c61-7a92a6f22e51#ch23>)

McGillivray et al, "The Challenges and Prospects of the Intersection of Humanities and Data Science" (Alan Turing Institute)

Feb. 7: Subjectivity in Terror and War + Texts

Readings:

Hellbeck, "Stepan Podlubny"

Edele, *Stalin's Defectors* "Motivations"

Historian's Macroscope, chapter 3

Assignment:

Based on the last meeting, write a script in Python that finds the number of people who are X in population Y from our transliterated Ukrainian database.

Install nltk kit.

Tutorial:

-Easy tools (Voyant)

-Loading text in Python

-Create a bag of words with nltk

-Use topic modeling

Further Reading:

Historian's Macroscope, chapter 4

Schmidt, "Words Alone" (<http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/2-1/words-alone-by-benjamin-m-schmidt/>)

Moretti, "The Slaughterhouse of Literature" (on canvas)

Feb. 14: Terror in the Party + Network Analysis + Social Media

Readings:

Alexopolis, “Stalin and the Politics of Kinship”

Vatlin, *Agents of Terror* (excerpts)

Painter, Daniels, and Jost, “Network Analysis for the Digital Humanities: Principles, Problems, Extensions”

Or

Historian’s Macroscope, Chapter 6

Assignment:

Take your writing and create a bag of words in Python

Install Gephi (<https://gephi.org/>)

Tutorial:

-What is a network?

-How to make a network with Gephi

Further Reading:

Moretti, “Network Theory, Plot Analysis”

Feb. 21: The Gulag + Mapping I

Reading:

David-Fox, "Introduction" in *The Soviet Gulag: Evidence, Interpretation, and Comparison*

Khlevniuk, "The Gulag and the Non-Gulag as One Interrelated Whole" in *The Soviet Gulag*

Barenberg, "Prisoners without Borders: Zazonniki and the Transformation of Vorkuta after Stalin"

Mattern, "Gaps in the Map: Why We're Mapping Everything, and Why not Everything Can, or Should, Be Mapped"

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20151208035349/http://www.wordsinspace.net/wordpress/2015/09/18/gaps-in-the-map-why-were-mapping-everything-and-why-not-everything-can-or-should-be-mapped/>)

Assignment:

Draw or write code for a network of two connected cases (e.g., by the from the Vatlin reading).

Tutorial:

-What is geography?

-Basic map production

Further Reading:

The Spatial Humanities (eds. Bodenhamer, Corrigan, Harris) (any essay)

Feb. 28: Stalinist Population Politics and War + Mapping II

Reading:

Shearer, "Stalin at War, 1918-1953: Patterns of Violence and Foreign Threat," *Jarbucher*

Kate Brown, "Gridded Lives: Why Kazakhstan and Montana are Nearly the Same Place," *AHR*

Giesecking, "Where Are We? The Method of Mapping with GIS in Digital Humanities" *American Quarterly* (<https://jgieseking.org/new-publication-where-are-we-the-method-of-mapping-with-gis-in-digital-humanities/>)

Assignment:

-Use Geojson.io to map a part of the Gulag

Tutorial:

ArcGIS Online + StoryMaps

Further Reading:

The Spatial Humanities (eds. Bodenhamer, Corrigan, Harris) (any essay)

Mar. 14: World War II: Repression and Aftermath + Gaming

Reading:

Exeler, “Ambivalent State”

Coltrain and Ramsay, “Can Video Games Be Humanities Scholarship?”

(<https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-f2acf72c-a469-49d8-be35-67f9ac1e3a60/section/10c2899a-d78c-40d2-b293-f828d3a1b3e9#ch03>)

Assignment:

Make a heat map and make a quick presentation about it in a story map

Tutorial:

-Using Twine

-Game based on the “Ambivalent State”

Further Reading:

Wainwright, “Teaching History Theory through Video Games,” *The History Teacher*

Mar. 21: De-Stalinization + Digital Museums

Reading idea:

Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer* (excerpts)

Rehberger, "Getting Oral History Online: Collections Management Applications," *Oral History Review*

Rozenzweig and Cohen, *Digital History* ("Designing for the History Web" and "Collecting the Past")

Assignment:

Twine book recommender for students that gives one of five options and sends the user to a library record.

Tutorial:

-Content Management Systems

-Introduction to Omeka

Further Reading:

Marsh, "Omeka in the classroom: The challenges of teaching material culture in a digital world"

Mar. 28: Stalinism Today + Visualization (Timelines)

Reading:

Bernstein, “Remembering War, Remaining Soviet,” *Memory Studies*

Edele, “Who won the Second World War and why should you care? Reassessing Stalin’s War 75 years after victory,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*

Historian’s Macroscope, chapter 5

Assignment:

Make an Omeka exhibit with five items and a description, either in Soviet history or in your own field.

Tutorial:

-What makes a good visualization?

-Timeline.js

-Plotly

Further Reading:

Schmidt, “The History of Looking at Data Visualizations”

(<http://sappingattention.blogspot.com/2017/04/the-history-of-looking-at-data.html>)

****Proposal due

Apr. 4: Digitization and OCR + Professional Discussions

Reading:

Putnam, "The Transnational and the Text-Searchable: Digitized Sources and the Shadows They Cast" *AHR*

Schmidt, "OCR Failures in 2016" (<http://sappingattention.blogspot.com/2016/12/ocr-failures-in-2016.html>)

Assignment:

Make a timeline with ten entries and with some images or videos embedded.

Tutorial:

-OCR (Akhlaghi, "OCR and Machine Translation")

<https://programminghistorian.org/en/lessons/OCR-and-Machine-Translation>)

Apr. 11: Workshop + Extra Time

Here we are reserving time for extra discussions of methods and history if necessary.

Come prepared to discuss project and any issues you are having with it.

Apr. 18: Presentations and Summary

***Projects due

***Presentations

***Final discussion