This course examines issues and theories in the history of screen media, focusing on the production, distribution consumption, and politics of “screened history.” By the end of the semester, students will understand 1. the broad trajectory of and methods in the history of media in the U.S. 2. intersections between public history and history presented via screen—why and how screened histories are made and who they serve 3. the overlaps and divergences between the histories of these different kinds of screen media, and what media platforms are most productive for historians hoping to use screens to present to and work with the public.

In readings, written reflections, class discussion, and semester-long group research assignments, students may consider the following questions:

- How are the meanings of new media determined by users as well as producers? By uses as well as inventions?
- How does or how should accounts of media history take politics into consideration?
- How do or how should we define the objects of media history?
- How has screen media worked centripetally and/or centrifugally?
- How are various types of screen media distinct from one another? What are their inherent biases, strengths, and disadvantages in presenting and representing history?
- How will—how should—the history of digital media be told? With reference to what kinds of agents, influences, occurrences, precursors?
- Is the history of early screen media relevant to today’s digital networks? If so, how? If not, why not?
- How are new media domesticated? How have different media and the domestic sphere helped to articulate one another?
- How have different forms of media and the public sphere helped to articulate one another?
- How has imperialism shaped media history? And how have media helped to shape imperialism?
- How has democratization functioned as a media historical pattern and/or myth?
- How has media history variously involved the interplay of attention and distraction? Of privacy and surveillance or the quantified self?
- How have media variously helped to shape experiences of time and space?
- How is media history necessarily also the history of capitalism? Of human abilities and disability?
- How have different media been differently structured by government regulation and/or ownership in the U.S. and/or elsewhere?

**REQUIRED BOOKS**

- Sam Wineburg, *Why Learn History (When It’s Already on Your Phone)*? (Chicago: 2018)
ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENTS
You will be evaluated through class participation, short weekly assignments, and a semester-long research project. As clear and effective writing is an integral part of the learning process, all work will be evaluated on clarity of presentation, grammar, syntax, and spelling. I do not accept late assignments.

Class Participation (20%)
To earn full marks, you should be present and engaged at all classes and contribute thoughtfully and constructively to class conversation.

Weekly Assignments (30%)
Assignments are designed to assess completion and understanding of readings and discussions; to give you practice in speaking and writing clearly and concisely; and to give you the opportunity to practice formal analysis of various screen media productions and explain how those formal properties relate to or reveal historical and cultural significance.

- Each week, please submit 1) three or four sentence summaries for each of the assigned readings; 2) a paragraph long reflection that explores the relationship between any two of that week's readings or films; 3) three discussion questions related to that week's assignment.
- Weekly assignments are due via Turnitin on Monday by 11:59 p.m.

Research Project (50%)
This project requires you to initiate and develop a substantial digital project chronicling some element of the history of screen media. Podcasts, online oral histories, digital exhibits, data visualizations, and mapping are all acceptable platforms, as are contributions to existing projects. The form and content this will take is up to you, though I am happy to serve as a sounding board or directly suggest particular projects. I encourage you to work in groups, though it is also acceptable to work individually, should you prefer.

5%: 300-500 word proposal for topic and platform.
5%: An annotated bibliography of sources.
5%: Create an architecture for your individual exhibit, or the equivalent, depending upon platform.
10%: Draft and complete text.
10%: Get your exhibit online.
15%: Summative blog post exploring the research and writing, conceptual design, visual layout, and technology decisions you made throughout the process. What was simple, and what was difficult? What did the technology allow you to do, and what did it not allow you to do? What was most helpful in doing your research? Why did you choose your final layout and structure? Where did most of your information and images come from? What would you have changed if you had more time and more resources?

Academic Integrity/Plagiarism
Employing ideas or phrases that are not your own without explicitly and sufficiently crediting their creator will not be tolerated. If you plagiarize, your advisor and department chair will be notified, and appropriate steps will be taken. Please review the University’s policy here:

**Syllabus:**

**January 8:**
**SCREENING HISTORY**
- Visit the [Media History Digital Library](https://digitallibrary.nypl.org/), then locate and send me the link of a single short source that you think pairs well with one of the keywords we discussed.

**January 15:**
**SILENT HISTORY**
- Watch *Birth of a Nation* (1916)
- Poke around the [Domitor](http://domitor.com) and the [Women Film Pioneers Project](http://wfp.org) websites.

**January 22:**
**SCREENING DOCUMENTS**
- Jeffrey Geiger, *American Documentary Film: Projecting the Nation* (Edinburgh: 2011), 1-15, 40-153. (available online at Snell)
- *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936).
- Visit the University of South Carolina’s [Moving Image Research Collection](https://digitalcollections.usc.edu/moving_image/).

**January 29:**
**NO CLASS / WORK ON YOUR PROJECTS**
Topic and platform proposals due.

**February 5:**
**ENTERTAINMENT AS HISTORY**
• Eric Smoodin, Regarding Frank Capra, 2005, TBD.
• Watch Why We Fight: Prelude to War (1942).

February 12:
COLD WAR TELEVISION
• Erik Christiansen, Channeling the Past: Politicizing History in Postwar America (Madison: 2013), pp. 3-20, 53-145. (available online at Snell)
• Visit WGBH’s OpenVault.
• Watch Atomic Café (1982).
• Annotated bibliography due.

February 19:
BLACK AND WHITE TV
• Matthew Delmont, Making Roots: A Nation Captivated (Berkeley: 2016), all.
• Explore the Internet Archive and watch an episode of Roots while there.

February 26:
MASS ENTERTAINMENT, MASS MEMORY
• Alison Landsburg, Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in an Age of Mass Culture, (New York: 2004), 1-48, 111-156. (available online via Snell)
• Visit the American Archive of Public Broadcasting.
• Watch episode 9 of Ken Burns’ Civil War, episode 6 of Eyes on the Prize and Schindler’s List.
• Architecture and wireframe due.

March 12:
TECHNOLOGIES OF HISTORY

Visit the website of the Museum of the Moving Image.

March 19: 
NO CLASS / WORK ON YOUR PROJECTS

March 26: 
EVERYONE A HISTORIAN

Sam Wineburg, Why Learn History When its Already on Your Phone? (Chicago, 2018), all.


Rebecca Onion, “2018 Was the Year Historians Went Viral on Twitter,” Slate, December 11, 2018.

Listen to an episode of Uncivil, an episode of PastPresent, and an episode of Backstory.

Draft of text due.

April 2: 
HOW TO VISUALIZE THE PAST


Brad Baer, Emily Fry, and Daniel Davis. “Beyond the Screen: Creating interactives that are location, time, preference, and skill responsive.” MW2014: Museums and the Web 2014


April 9: 
Class presentations.
Draft projects due online.
April 16:
Final projects and summative blog posts due.