

History 9808A (F14)

Assignment #1 Digital Landscaping/Doors Open

This assignment (and the next one) is intended to build cumulatively on your blogging and in-class workshops. (Assignment 2 *may* be on the same general topic/location as assignment.)

Option A: Digital landscaping

Using a combination of historical maps, aerial photographs, landscape paintings, sketches, and/or textual descriptions, digitally recreate an interesting or significant landscape, national historical site, or historic property. Choose a site whose features were historically significant and may have changed demonstrably over time. The landscape or site should be no larger than a few kilometers, but larger sites are also possible. Write 800-1200 words about the historical or personal significance of this place and the methods you chose to research and recreate it.

Option B: Digital doors open

Using a combination of historical floor plans, blueprints, fire insurance maps, photographs, sketches and/or textual sources, digitally reconstruct a historical building or indoor national historic site. Choose either a building that is historically significant for its architecture and design, or for lesser-known structures, choose a building (preferably public) that changed demonstrably over time. Write 800-1200 words about the historical or personal significance of this building and the methods you chose to research and recreate it. (Please note that the building used for History 9800 *cannot* be used for this assignment.)

Process

The first step is to choose a location for your assignment, and use digital tools to “recreate” historical aspects of the site. The point of this assignment is to develop your skills in historical site research, interpretation and visualization. Many employers, grant agencies, and other businesses want to attract the public to sites of interest, and historians need the ability to speak intelligently about change over time in urban and rural heritage settings. Just as [“Doors Open Ontario”](#) allows the public to explore the places they drive by every day, your assignment will let people “step inside” buildings and landscapes and experience historically significant sites in new ways.

The digital components of this assignment are up to you. You can make anything from a photo essay to a podcast, or a compilation of videos or GIS maps. Stretch yourself and attempt something new. We will continue working with new digital tools in class, and if you have requests for help with other tools or techniques please let me know and I'll help you in class, office hours, or by directing you to someone who knows about it.

Feel free to write one of your blog posts about the process; it can be about early fact finding and/or final accomplishments.

Feel free to submit the project in print, on a USB key, or email, as appropriate. You are also welcome to upload the digital recreation to your blog or other public websites (eg. YouTube, Flickr, GeoCommons, etc.).

Proposal (20% of the assignment mark, due October 15 (midnight))

Write a proposal indicating the place you are going to discuss, the historical sources you are going to locate and the digital tools you propose to use. This is a brief document of 500 words, not including maps, images, workflow charts, etc. Feel free to post it on your blog and send me the link (N.B. it does not count as a substantial blog post).

Proposals will be evaluated on three elements:

- 1) Content: Is the site clearly identified and described? What is the historical significance of the site, and what is the intended audience any deliverables that come from this project? Will you focus on the place in only a few periods or over its longer history? What digital tools and techniques are being employed, and how will you format that part of the project (audio/video/text/map, etc.)?
- 2) Feasibility: What steps will it take to complete your objective? (This can be revised, but you need to specify your plan!)
- 3) Professionalism/style: Imagine your proposal will be evaluated by granting agencies – would they be inclined to fund your project based on your presentation, plan, and the historical significance of your project?

Final Product (80%, due 3 November (midnight), online or hard copy)

The final assignment is a longer written piece (800-1,200 words, not including figures (eg. digital maps, photographs, videos, etc)). Evaluation will be based on the same criteria as the proposal, but with a higher threshold. Technical issues will also be considered: are images clear, visible, and fully described/analysed? Is this a creative application of digital history? How did the use of digital tools enhance the project? And don't forget the scholarly aspect: What does the project contribute that historians don't already know about this place? Was the historical literature on places of this nature been consulted? Is it adequately cited and referenced?

REMEMBER

Always feel free to consult me at any time to go over your ideas or to get clarification on assignment details. Late penalties will occur at 2% per day (including weekends).

Good luck and enjoy the assignment!