

Digital Methods for Historians: Data Management, Text Analysis and Statistics (A006706)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0

Study time 150 h

Course offerings in academic year 2026-2027

A (Year)

Dutch

Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Collijs, Martijn	LW03	staff member
Ducatteuw, Vincent	LW03	staff member
Hacha, Tom	LW03	staff member
Vercruysse, Bas	LW03	staff member
Devos, Isabelle	LW03	lecturer-in-charge
Birkholz, Julie	LW03	co-lecturer
Verbruggen, Christophe	LW03	co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

	crdts	offering
Bachelor of Arts in History	5	A
Linking Course Master of Arts in History	5	A
Preparatory Course Master of Arts in History	5	A
Elective Set History	5	A

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

Data management, text analysis, statistics, history

Position of the course

This course offers an introduction to the digital methods that historians can use to manage and analyse historical data. It builds on the course "Introduction to Historical Research" from BA1, in which students were introduced to a wide range of information skills and the application of Large Language Models in historical research. Students learn how historical sources are digitized, how they can be managed and cleaned up, and which analytical techniques exist to examine historical trends and patterns. Special attention is paid to historical statistics. Students not only work on concrete applications, but also learn to think critically about the tools and methods used.

Contents

This course consists of three parts.

Part 1: from source to data. This module covers the transition from analogue sources to digital datasets. Students will learn how physical or digitised historical sources (such as documents, photos, maps) can be converted into a usable digital format using a data model. This process also includes setting up metadata standards and choosing the right methods for digitising historical documents and heritage objects. Students will be introduced to AI models and tools for processing documents such as OCR and HTR.

Part 2: databases and data cleaning. This module focuses on setting up and managing historical databases. Students will learn to work with historical datasets and develop insight into the structure and functionalities of relational and non-relational databases. Attention is paid to Linked Open Data (LOD) and connecting historical data to broader networks of information via ontologies and semantic web

technologies. Students also learn how to clean up datasets for research purposes using the Open Refine program.

Part 3: analyzing data. This module introduces various methods for analyzing historical data. Students learn to work with statistical tools and techniques to discover historical trends, patterns and connections. They explore network analysis to visualize connections between historical actors and text and data mining techniques to identify patterns in large amounts of textual data.

Initial competences

Secondary education final objectives. A few hours of mathematics in the final years of secondary education is a sufficient starting level for the statistics part.

Final competences

- 1 The student has insight into the methodology of history.
 - 2 The student has the ability to initiate problem-oriented historical research.
 - 3 The student has the ability to set up a simple historical research strategy in the form of a roadmap.
 - 4 The student has the ability to use software packages independently in a correct and critical manner.
 - 5 The student has the ability to indicate the most appropriate type of sources (for this subject: digital methods) relative to a specific historical question
 - 6 The student is able to interpret, evaluate and report on digital research and on one's own initial research or research plans
 - 7 The student is conscious of the importance of scientific integrity.
 - 8 The student has an inquiring attitude with an aptitude for historical critique and creativity, and with a positive attitude towards lifelong learning.
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- 9 The student has the ability to summarize their own historical digital research, using an adequate critical apparatus, in a coherently structured, scientific text, written in clear and academically correct language.
 - 10 The student has the ability to cooperate with peers on a project basis.
 - 11 The student has insight into the way in which historical digital research functions and is organised.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

Teaching methods

Seminar, Lecture, Independent work

Study material

Type: Handbook

Name: B.Blondé, I.Devos, J.Hanus en W.Ryckbosch, Trend en Toeval. Derde herziene 1 druk, Leuven, 2019.

Indicative price: € 35

Optional: no

Language : Dutch

Author : B.Blondé, I.Devos, J.Hanus and W.Ryckbosch

Number of Pages : 132

Online Available : No

Available through Student Association : Yes

Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : intensive

Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : regularly

Type: Syllabus

Name: Syllabus Digital Methods

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : Dutch

Available on Ufora : Yes

References

Course content-related study coaching

Directly in class
Via Ufora
Via consultation hours

Assessment moments

continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period**Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period****Examination methods in case of permanent assessment**

Oral assessment, Peer and/or self assessment, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible

Extra information on the examination methods

NPA: 100%
Students must pass all parts of the NPA to pass this course.

Calculation of the examination mark

NPA: 100%
Students must pass all parts of the NPA to pass this course.

Facilities for Working Students

1. Possibility of exemption from class attendance.
2. Possibility of taking the exam at another time during the academic year
3. Possibility of feedback at an alternative time