History 90.01
Topics in Digital History: U.S. History Through Census Data

Emily Klancher Merchant
Winter 2016
Tue/Thu 10am - 11:50 (X-hour Wed 3pm-3:50)

Office Hours: 412 Carson Hall: Wed 10-11am, Thu 12-1pm, and by appointment

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Course Description: This course will teach you how to use individual-level data from historical censuses (1850-2000) to do research on U.S. history.* In addition to utilizing census data to learn about U.S. history, we will discuss the historical role of the census in politics and policy-making, and the history of the census and how its questions and categories have changed over time. We will proceed through four units, each of which represents a domain of historical analysis reflected in the census: race, im/migration, work, and family. For each unit, we will follow the steps of practical inquiry, beginning with a large question, exploring various aspects of the question, integrating historical data and recent scholarship, and reaching resolution through analysis and synthesis. As we proceed through these steps, you will learn how to find, analyze, and visualize census data using R and other software tools, and how to write about quantitative historical analysis in a digital medium. I do not presume that you have any previous experience with historical data analysis or quantitative methods, but I do presume that you are eager to learn.

Course Objectives: By the end of the term, you will be able to:

- **Consider** how quantitative analysis can add insight to our understanding of the past, while **recognizing** its limitations.

- Use R to **analyze** individual-level historical data from the U.S. Census in order to pose and answer questions about change over time in the composition and activities of the U.S. population.

- **Create** data visualizations that effectively communicate the findings of your analysis.

- **Demonstrate** how classification schemes in the Census developed and changed over time, and how these taxonomies structure the information that can be gleaned from the Census.

- **Explain** changes over time in the information collected by the census, and how those changes relate to historical events and policy debates in the United States.

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*All data used in this course will be from anonymized public-use microdata samples available on the internet at `http://www.ipums.org`.

- Combine information from the census with information about the census to **develop** and **communicate** new understandings and perspectives on U.S. history.

Course Structure: This course will include lecture, discussion, and hands-on experience in analyzing data from the U.S. Census. Tuesday and Thursday course sessions will combine lecture and discussion in an interactive format. Readings listed for each class meeting are to be read prior to the beginning of class. These sessions will cover both substantive material and techniques of data management, analysis, and visualization. During the X-hour on Wednesdays, I will supervise an optional lab session to which you may bring your laptop to follow along with demonstrations, work on assignments collaboratively, and seek help if needed with your own projects. Assignments for this class consist of a series of four laboratory activities that you will complete on your own and/or in X-hour (described in greater detail below). These will be posted online on a WordPress site, which you will revise by the end of the term into a coherent portfolio of your work. During the final exam period, you will present your portfolio to the class, discuss what you have learned, and consider how you might utilize historical census data in the future.

Grading: Your grade for the term will be calculated as follows:

Attendance and participation (including collaborative markup of readings)	20%
WordPress assignments (17.5% each)	70%
Portfolio and final presentation	10%

Attendance and Participation: Attendance at all (Tuesday and Thursday) class sessions is required and will help you complete your assignments. Absences will result in a participation grade of zero for the day in question. In the case of an extended illness or emergency, please contact me to work out a solution. A pattern of late arrivals or early departures will reduce your participation grade. All X-hour meetings are optional but highly recommended, especially if you are not familiar with data analysis and visualization. In addition to attending all (Tuesday and Thursday) class sessions, in order to receive full credit for attendance and participation, you must participate in (i) the collaborative markup of course readings between class meetings and (ii) classroom activities and discussions. All course readings have been loaded into a folder on `http://nb.mit.edu`, and you will receive an invitation to read and participate in collaborative markup. As you read, I ask that you highlight important passages, comment on connections you see between a given reading and other readings and/or course lectures and discussions, and pose any questions that arise for you while reading. Classroom participation requires that you arrive prepared to talk about the readings and about your current project and to interact with me and with your classmates. Please let me know privately if you have any concerns about speaking in class so I can help you participate.

WordPress Assignments: Each unit will begin with a large framing question. At the end of each unit, you will post to your WordPress site an essay of approximately 1200 words in which you pose and answer a small question or develop a case study relevant to the large framing question. You will post your proposed question or case study, along with your plan for analysis, to Canvas by 5pm on the Fridays indicated below. Over the weekend, you will respond to your fellow students' posts, and I will provide feedback on your proposals by the beginning of the following week. I will help you tailor each assignment to your interests,

your prior experience, and the skills you hope to gain. In your essay you will discuss the data you use, your approach to analyzing them, your results (including data visualizations), and their implications. Completing the assignment effectively will require that you grapple with such questions as how the census collected information and classified individuals, why certain questions were asked at some points in time and not others, and how the data themselves shape your approach to your question or case study. The essay should draw on course readings, lectures, and discussions to explore the historical relationship between the census, its questions and categories, and the topic in question. You will also post the code you use to analyze your data either on your WordPress site or on GitHub Gists (and link to it from your site). Each assignment is given a due date listed in the calendar of readings and assignments. However, I will not issue a grade for any assignment until the end of term, giving you a chance to revise your work over the course of the term in light of the feedback you receive from me and subsequent lectures and class discussions. On the indicated due date, submit your assignment in whatever state it is in by 5pm. I will let you know what the grade would be if I were grading at that time and will provide written feedback that you may use to revise your work before I issue the grade. We can also meet to discuss further revisions.

Final Presentation: During our final exam period (11:30am on March 12), you will present your portfolio to the class, discuss what you have learned, and consider how you might use the skills and knowledge gained in this course in the future. Your portfolio consists of your entire WordPress site, which will include your four revised assignments and an introductory page in which you package the assignments as a coherent unit for your audience and briefly describe what a reader will encounter in each post.

Late Assignments: Your final grade will be based on your participation over the course of the term, your final presentation, and all work posted to your WordPress site by the time of the final presentations (11:30am on March 12). No work will be accepted after that point. Individual assignments submitted after the due dates indicated below for each assignment may not receive written feedback (depending on how late they are) but will not be otherwise penalized.

Communication: The best way to get in touch with me is by email. Please put the course number in the subject line of the email. I will make every effort to get back to you within 24 hours. If you are writing to consult about an assignment, please get in touch well before it is due.

Technology: Use of cell phones, tablets, laptops, and other electronic devices is not permitted during class, with the exception of supervised lab time during X-hour or in the case of accommodation for a disability. Although this course requires heavy use of computers outside of class, studies have shown that students learn better taking notes by hand during class. I will also provide handouts containing information on the technical topics we cover in class.

Honor Principle: Dartmouth College's Academic Honor Principle (`http://student-affairs.dartmouth.edu/resources/student-handbook/standards.html#honor`) specifies that all work you submit must be your own. In this course, you are permitted and even encouraged

to work collaboratively on issues of data management, analysis, and visualization, and to seek guidance from the internet on these issues (for example, from such sites as Stack Exchange and GitHub). However, all code that you submit must be **commented in your own words that indicate your understanding of what it is doing**, all data visualizations you post to your WordPress site must be your own, and all written work must be **composed exclusively by you**. All sources you use in your writing must be properly documented; please take care to avoid committing plagiarism as defined by the Dartmouth College Committee on Sources (see `http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/sources`). A useful tip for preventing inadvertent plagiarism is to avoid reading other students' work until you have submitted your own. If you are unsure about these regulations or about how to cite a source, please consult with me **before** submitting the assignment in question.

Accommodations: If you need any academic accommodations or adjustments, please let me know as soon as possible, either in person or by email. All communication will remain confidential, with the exception of consultation with the Student Disabilities Coordinator if necessary in cases involving documented disabilities.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments: Readings have been posted to our course folder on `http://nb.mit.edu` and are also available on Canvas. Additional books you may wish to consult have been placed on reserve in the Baker-Berry Library, and you are also welcome (but not required) to consult and cite works that are neither on the syllabus nor on reserve. Please note that this course has a lighter reading load than other history courses you may have taken, as you will also be spending considerable time outside of class on data analysis and visualization (including coding). However, the reading load is not even — some class meetings will require more advance reading than others. For each Tuesday/Thursday class meeting, I have indicated the approximate page count to help you manage your time and get the reading done. There is no reading for X-hour meetings.

Tuesday, Jan 5: Course overview and introduction to the U.S. Census

Wedesday, Jan 6: Lab: Getting started with Wordpress

Thursday, Jan 7: Using census data as a historical resource
 Reading (70pp):
 – Margo Anderson, "Using National Census Data to Study Change" in *Handbook of Longitudinal Research*, ed. Scott Menard (Oxford: Elsevier, 2008), pp. 13-32.
 – Margo Anderson, "Quantitative History" in *The Sage Handbook of Social Science Methodology*, ed. William Outhwaite and Stephen P. Turner (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2007), pp. 246-264.
 – Short articles from *Historical Methods* 28:1 (1995)
   * Steven Ruggles and Russell R. Menard, "The Minnesota Historical Census Projects," pp. 6-9.
   * Diana L. Magnusson, "Who and What Determined the Content of the U.S. Population Schedule Over Time," pp. 11-25.
   * Diana L. Magnusson and Miriam L. King, "Comparability of the Public Use Microdata Samples: Enumeration Procedures," pp. 27-32.

* Steven Ruggles, J. David Hacker, and Matthew Sobek, "General Design of the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series," pp. 33-39.

Unit 1: Race

Tuesday, Jan 12: Big Question: How has the census reflected and/or participated in racial formation in the United States?
Reading (63pp):
– Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "Chapter 4: The Theory of Racial Formation" in *Racial Formation in the United States* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2014), pp. 105-136.
– Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, "Chapter 6: The Case of Race Classification and Reclassification Under Apartheid" in *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), pp. 195-225.

Wednesday, Jan 13: Lab: Getting started with R and reading in IPUMS data

Thursday, Jan 14: Exploring: Census race categories
Reading (89pp):
– Kenneth Prewitt, *What Is Your Race? The Census and Our Flawed Efforts to Classify Americans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).
  * "Chapter 2: Classification Before Counting: The Statistical Races," pp. 14-28.
  * "Chapter 3: The Compromise that Made the Republic and the Nation's First Statistical Race," pp. 31-44.
  * "Chapter 4: Race Science Captures the Prize, the U.S. Census," pp. 45-60.
  * "Chapter 6: Racial Justice Finds a Policy Tool," pp. 83-104.
  * "Chapter 8: Pressures Mount," pp. 129-150.

Friday, Jan 15: Post your proposal for Assignment #1 to Canvas by 5pm; respond to your classmates' posts over the weekend

Tuesday, Jan 19: Integrating: Working with census racial categories (no reading)

Wednesday, Jan 20: Lab: Aggregating and visualizing racial categories

Thursday, Jan 21: Resolution: Race and immigration
Reading (37pp):
– Kenneth Prewitt, *What Is Your Race? The Census and Our Flawed Efforts to Classify Americans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).
  * "Chapter 5: How Many White Races Are There?" pp. 61-79.
  * "Chapter 9: The Problem of the Twenty-first Century Is the Problem of the Color Line as It Intersects the Nativity Line," pp. 151-168

Monday, Jan 25: Assignment #1 due by 5pm.

Unit 2: Im/Migration

Tuesday, Jan 26: Big Question: How has the census tracked and/or shaped im/migration patterns over time?
Reading (70pp):
– Matthew Frye Jacobson, "Chapter 2: The World's Peoples as American Workers" in *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), pp. 59-97.
– James N. Gregory, "Chapter 1: A Century of Migration" in *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), pp. 11-42.

Wednesday, Jan 27: Lab: Birthplace variables and geography variables

Thursday, Jan 28: Exploring: The census and immigration restriction
Reading (71pp):
– Mae M. Ngai, "The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924," *Journal of American History* 86:1 (1999), pp. 67-92.
– Donna R. Gabaccia, "Chapter 4: Immigration and Globalization, 1965 to the Present" in *Foreign Relations: American Immigration in Global Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 176-221.

Friday, Jan 29: Post your proposal for Assignment #2 to Canvas by 5pm; respond to your classmates' posts over the weekend

Tuesday, Feb 2: Integrating: Tracking people over space
Reading (96pp):
– Ira Rosenswaike, "The Utilization of Census Mother Tongue Data in American Jewish Population Analysis," *Jewish Social Studies* 33:2/3 (1971), pp. 141-159.
– Reynolds Farley, "The New Census Question About Ancestry: What Did It Tell Us?" *Demography* 28:3 (1991), pp. 411-429.
– Stewart E. Tolnay et al., "Distances Traveled During the Great Migration: An Analysis of Racial Differences Among Male Migrants," *Social Science History* 29:4 (2005), pp. 523-548.
– Brian Gratton and Emily Merchant, "Immigration, Repatriation, and Deportation: The Mexican-Origin Population in the United States, 1920-1950," *International Migration Review* 47:4 (2013), pp. 944-975.

Wednesday, Feb 3: Lab: Immigration variables (nativity, citizenship, arrival)

Thursday, Feb 4: Resolution: Im/migration, race, and labor
Reading (102pp):
– David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White - The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs*

– "Chapter 5: 'A Vast Amount of Coercion': The Ironies of Immigration Restriction,"
pp. 133-156.
– "Chapter 6: Finding Homes in an Era of Restriction," pp. 157-198.
– "Chapter 7: A New Deal, an Industrial Union, and a White House: What the New
Immigrant Got Into," pp. 199-234.

Monday, Feb 8: Assignment #2 due by 5pm.

Unit 3: Work

Tuesday, Feb 9: Big Question: How have census categories reflected (or not) changes over
time in the character and organization of work in the United States?
Reading (64pp):
– Merritt Roe Smith and Robert Martello, "Taking Stock of the Industrial Revolution
in America" in *Reconceptualizing the Industrial Revolution*, ed. Jeff Horn, Leonard N.
Rosenband, and Merritt Roe Smith (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), pp. 169-200.
– Bruce Laurie, "Chapter 1: Household to Factory" in *Artisans Into Workers: Labor in
Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), pp. 15-46.

Wednesday, Feb 10: Lab: Working with occupation variables

Thursday, Feb 11: Exploring: Who does the dirty work?
Reading (68pp):
– Mignon Duffy, "Doing the Dirty Work: Gender, Race, and Reproductive Labor in
Historical Perspective," *Gender and Society* 21:3 (2007), pp. 313-336.
– Tera Hunter, "Domination and Resistance: The Politics of Wage Household Labor in
New South Atlanta," *Labor History* 34:2-3 (1993), pp. 205-220.
– Neil Foley, "Chapter 3: The Whiteness of Cotton: Race, Labor Relations, and the Ten-
ant Question, 1900-1920" in *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in
Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 64-91.

Friday, Feb 12: Post your proposal for Assignment #3 to Canvas by 5pm; respond to
your classmates' posts over the weekend

Tuesday, Feb 16: Integrating: Occupational categories and their standardization
Reading (96pp):
– Short articles from *Historical Methods* 28:1 (1995)
* Matthew Sobek, "The Comparability of Occupations and the Generation of Income
Scores," pp. 47-51.
* Matthew Sobek and Lisa Dillon, "Interpreting Work: Classifying Occupations in the
Public Use Microdata Samples," pp. 70-73
– Matthew Sobek, "New Statistics on the U.S. Labor Force, 1850-1990," *Historical Meth-
ods* 34:2 (2001), pp. 71-87.
– Otis Dudley Duncan, "Properties and Characteristics of the Socioeconomic Index," in
Albert J. Reiss, *Occupations and Social Status* (New York: Free Press, 1961), pp. 139-

161.

– Robert M. Adelman and Stewart E. Tolnay, "Occupational Status of Immigrants and African Americans at the Beginning and End of the Great Migration," *Sociological Perspectives* 46:2 (2003), pp. 179-206.

Wednesday, Feb 17: Lab: Occupational metrics

Thursday, Feb 18: Resolution: Work and family
Reading (56pp):
– David A Cotter, Joan M. Hermsen, and Reeve Vanneman, "Women's Work and Working Women: The Demand for Female Labor," *Gender and Society* 15:3 (2001), pp 429-452.
– Margo A Conk, "Accuracy, Efficiency and Bias: The Interpretation of Women's Work in the U.S. Census of Occupations, 1890-1940," *Historical Methods* 14:2 (1981), pp. 65-72.
– Nancy Folbre and Marjorie Abel, "Women's Work and Women's Households: Gender Bias in the U.S. Census," *Social Research* 56:3 (1989), pp. 545-569.

Monday, Feb 22: Assignment #3 due by 5pm

Unit 4: Family

Tuesday, Feb 23: Big Question: How has the census reflected and/or promoted changes in family structure over time?
Reading (70pp):
– Nancy Shoemaker, "The Census as Civilizer: American Indian Household Structure in the 1900 and 1910 U.S. Censuses," *Historical Methods* 25:1 (1992), pp. 4-11.
– Daniel Scott Smith, "The Meanings of Family and Household: Change and Continuity in the Mirror of the American Census," *Population and Development Review* 18:3 (1992), pp. 421-456.
– Emily Skop, Brian Gratton, and Myron P. Gutmann, "*La Frontera* and Beyond: Geography and Demography in Mexican American History," *The Professional Geographer* 58:1 (2006), pp. 67-92.

Wednesday, Feb 24: Lab: Household-level variables

Thursday, Feb 25: Investigating: Debates in family history
Reading (42pp): (for each debate, half of the class will read one article and the other half will read the other article)
  1. Multigenerational households
     * Steven Ruggles, "Multigenerational Families in Nineteenth-Century America," *Continuity and Change* 18:1 (2003), pp. 139-165.
     * Emily Merchant et al., "A Sudden Transition: Household Changes for Middle-Aged U.S. Women in the Twentieth Century," *Population Research and Policy Review* 31:5 (2012), pp. 703-726.
  2. African American families
     * Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, "Chapter 4: The Shaping of the Afro-American

Family" in *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York: Free Press, 1988), pp. 67-82.

* Steven Ruggles, "The Origins of African-American Family Structure," *Sociological Review* 59:1 (1994), pp. 136-151.

Friday, Feb 26: Post your proposal for Assignment #4 to Canvas by 5pm; respond to your classmates' posts over the weekend

Tuesday, Mar 1: Investigating: Individual vs. household level analysis
 Reading (44pp):
 - Tamara K. Hareven, "The Family as Process: The Historical Study of the Family Cycle," *Journal of Social History* 7:3 (1974), pp. 322-329.
 - Steven Ruggles and Susan Brower, "Measurement of Household and Family Composition in the United States, 1850-2000," *Population and Development Review* 29:1 (2003), pp. 73-101.
 - Steven Ruggles, "Family Interrelationships," *Historical Methods* 28:1 (1995), pp. 52-58.

Wednesday, Mar 2: Lab: Analyzing household structure

Thursday, Mar 3: Resolution: The politics of the family
 Reading (41pp):
 – Harriet B. Presser, "Decapitating the U.S. Census Bureau's 'Head of Household': Feminist Mobilization in the 1970s," *Feminist Economics* 4:3 (1998), pp. 145-158.
 – Lynne M. Casper, "How does POSSLQ Measure Up? Historical Estimates of Cohabitation," *Demography* 37:2 (2000), pp. 237-245.
 – Dan Black et al., *The Measurement of Same-Sex Unmarried Partner Couples in the 2000 U.S. Census,* California Center for Population Research, 2007 (url: `https://escholarship.org/uc/item72r1q94b`).
 – Ben Casselman, "The Census Still Doesn't Know How Many Same-Sex Couples There Are," *Five Thirty Eight* November 25, 2014 (url: `http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-census-still-doesn't-know-how-many-same-sex-couples-there-are/`).

Monday, Mar 7: Assignment #4 due by 5pm.

Tuesday, Mar 8: Wrap up and discuss portfolios.

Wednesday, Mar 9: Lab: Assistance with portfolios available as needed.

Saturday, Mar 12 (scheduled final exam period): Final presentations. **All written work due by 11:30am.**