

## Lab Notebook Assignment Sheet

HST 251, Spring 2017

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In the sciences, a **lab notebook** is a written record of research that details experiments. For this class, your lab notebook will consist of four posts on methodology related to your final project. By **methodology**, we mean the set of steps you take to answer specific research questions with your chosen data set(s) and tools that are appropriate for the task.

The lab notebook must tell us about your **history research** (topics, strategies, sources) as well your **data collection** and the **tools** you use to create the digital component that answers **research questions**. The projects on the [Rice Digital History Methods](#) course site are great examples of this.

A carefully thought out and well-executed methodology will be crucial to the success of your final project. The lab notebook will be a record of everything you've tried, and an explanation of what worked (or what didn't). The ideal audience for the lab notebook should be people who want to create a project that is similar to yours in scope, tools, or research questions.

Your lab notebook entries will live on your WordPress site (in a different section from the reflections blog posts).

### Writing prompts:

**Lab notebook 1** (due Wed, April 5 before class) : Discuss your research thus far. Talk about developing a research question and finding scholarly sources on your topic.

**Lab notebook 2** (due Wed, April 12 before class): Discuss how you've gotten familiar with your chosen dataset and the method(s) you're choosing to interrogate that data.

**Lab notebook 3** (due Wed, April 19 before class): Discuss your process for trying to answer research questions with your chosen dataset.

**Lab notebook 4** (due Wednesday, May 3 before 5 pm): Discuss your final decisions in finishing the research and presenting/disseminating it.

The lab notebook will be worth 15% of your final grade. (It's part of the "Lab notebook and written responses category on the [Assignments](#) page of the website). See the [class schedule](#) for additional information.

### Assessment guidelines:

#### Quality of research:

Ask yourself these questions as you do the research and reflect on it...

- Are you engaging with the readings and methods we discussed earlier in the semester?
- Are you using historical and secondary sources to ground your research?

- Are you thoughtfully reflecting on the process of doing historical research using digital tools and datasets? (This means acknowledging what works and what doesn't in your experiments).

**Writing:** clear, concise, free of errors, structured as an essay (not a list), supplemented with screenshots, images, links, and other media as needed. Imagine that your audience is a fellow researcher who wants to understand your approach to a historical topic.

**Citations:** Every single quote or idea from a source **MUST** be documented with a footnote (and quotation marks, if using someone's exact wording), and a hyperlink, if applicable. Adhere to the [MSU Academic Integrity](#) guidelines.

**Clarity of method:** Be clear about what steps you're taking and why you're taking them. If you are including or excluding data, cleaning or transforming it, focusing on one aspect of it or another, these are methodological decisions that should be documented. Be sure to cite readings that have influenced your decisions.