

This past year in HIST 4511 and HIST 4570, students had an added digital component to their traditional research assignments.

In 4511, which focused on the History of Science, Medicine, and the Environment in Canada, the theme for the final research project was “inventing Canada.” This theme was designed to get students to analyse the ways in which new technologies and increased landscape change was employed to create an idea of what could be termed, “modern Canada.” Inspiration for this project was taken from Suzanne Zeller’s *Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation*, which was an assigned reading in the class. Researching subjects like communities formed around nuclear power plants, Frederick Banting’s global renown, and even the construction of the TTC’s subway lines, the class enthusiastically threw themselves into this assignment, creating podcasts, websites, and short documentaries to showcase their work. One student, Elissa Chu, created a comic strip that analysed Sir Sandford Fleming and the making of standard time. This comic is an excellent example of how vigorous academic research can be combined with whimsy in order to disseminate complex ideas to a diverse audience. Please take a look at Elissa’s great work here:
<http://timingfleming.wordpress.com/>

In addition to this, students in HIST 4570 were given a similar digital component to their major research assignments this year. Because this course focuses on Canada between 1911-1951, the theme for their final projects was agreeing or disagreeing with the theory that the world wars were Canada’s “war of independence,” where it finally asserted its independent nationhood on a global scale. Having readings and debates focused on this topic throughout the course of the year, students developed a diverse range of perspectives on this theme, and were able to articulate them in new ways, including via podcasts, websites, and documentaries. From the Chanak Crisis, to War Brides, to prohibition. One student, Shafi Khan, learned a great deal about the role of First Nations soldiers during the First World War—and about copyrights for photographs as well!—and created an incredibly detailed short graphic novel on the subject, which can be found here: ***

Students in both classes found this blend of traditional written assignments and new, digital work both refreshing and challenging in their own way, and I have been delighted and impressed with their ability to learn new academic and technological skills and develop to help them develop new methods for the dissemination of historical knowledge. Great job, everyone!