English 606: Introduction to the Digital Humanities

Mondays 4:00-6:50 p.m. | Colson G06

Instructor Details: Dr. Erin Brock Carlson, erin.carlson@mail.wvu.edu
Office Hours: Mondays, 2:00-4:00 p.m. or by appointment, Colson 337 or virtually
Course Links: Schedule and Classroom

Overview

There are many different ways to explain the field of Digital Humanities, its value, and its parameters, which leads to an admittedly complex notion of what DH work is and what it isn't. (Spoiler: I have a pretty expansive and flexible understanding of what DH work might entail, so if clear lines and borders regarding concepts are your thing, sorry.) David Berry (2012) offers this (somewhat) concise assessment of how the field has developed:

> ...first-wave digital humanities involved the building of infrastructure in the studying of humanities texts through digital repositories, text markup, and so forth, whereas second-wave humanities expands the notional limits of the archive to include digital works...such as electronic literature, interactive fiction, web-based artifacts, and so forth...a third wave of the digital humanities [might concentrate] around...the digital component of the digital humanities...as a way of thinking about how media(l) changes produce epistemic changes [drawing from software studies, critical code, platform studies, etc.].

Lauren Klein (via a Facebook comment thread on DH; very scholarly) locates the field along three axes: applying humanities thought and methods to digital objects; applying digital methods to humanities objects; and merging digital and humanities to create new objects.

A brief look at this coming year's Digital Humanities Summer Institute offerings reveals clusters related to project/content management, storytelling, data visualization, technofeminism, Geographical Information Systems, sound, games, code, visual design, and social justice concerns. In fact, this last concern is now a central focus of the field. Gold and Klein (2019) pose the following question: "What is the role of the digital humanities in the charged environment of 2019, and how can digital humanists ally themselves with the activists, organizers, and others who are working to empower those most threatened by it?...we are convinced that digital humanists can contribute significantly to a larger technically and historically informed resistance." I don't know about you, but this speaks to me. What are we doing in the academy if we aren't trying to do something outside of it?

While we won't have time to cover every aspect of this expansive field, we have two major tasks for our time together: first, to interrogate the role of digital technologies in the ways we understand our teaching, research, and daily lives; and second, to practice doing digital humanities inquiry, by using digital tools to help us understand how technology mediates thought and action.

At the end of this course, you will possess:
- Familiarity with major debates and ongoing conversations in the field of DH;
- Knowledge of DH research methods and their underlying methodologies;
- Deeper understanding of how your own research and teaching might intersect with the field of DH, broadly defined;
- Practical experience with a range of digital tools that can aid DH work; and
- Consideration of the broad social, legal and ethical questions and concerns surrounding digital media and contemporary culture, including intellectual property concerns, social inequalities, and material considerations of technoculture.

Required Texts
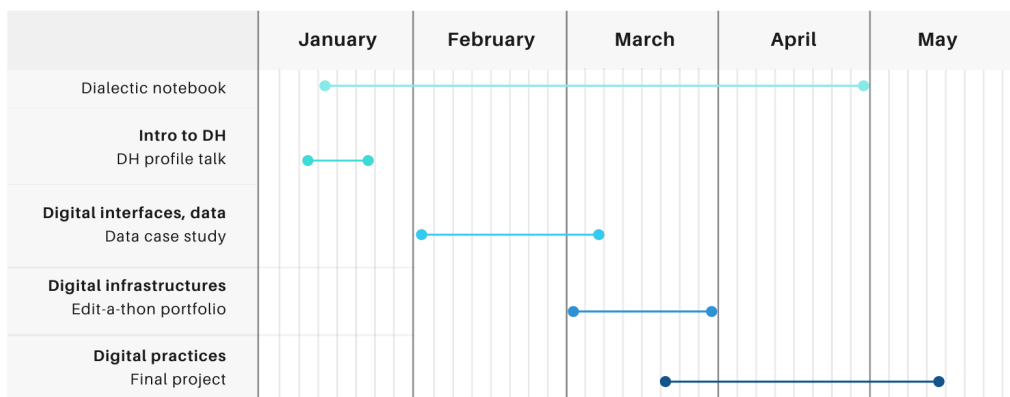In addition to articles and excerpts that I provide, you will need to have access to:
- *Algorithms of Oppression,* Safiya Noble [free from WVU library]
- *All Data are Local,* Yanni Alexander Loukissas [free from WVU library]
- *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2019*, Matthew Gold & Lauren Klein [DDH19]
  - Note: This is also available from the authors for online reading, free.

Course Tools
We will work with a variety of digital tools over the course of the semester (see Assignment Overviews), but we will use Google Classroom weekly to share resources and complete assignments. You can access the classroom space through this link. **You will need to have access to a computer during many of our class meetings, so bring your own or be prepared to use a lab machine.**

Assignment Overviews
Below are overviews of each major assignment. I will provide more in-depth instructions in class. Please note that the course is split into four sections: intro to digital humanities, digital interfaces and data, digital infrastructures, and digital practices.

	January	February	March	April	May
Dialectic notebook	●——————————————————●				
Intro to DH DH profile talk	●—●				
Digital interfaces, data Data case study		●——————●			
Digital infrastructures Edit-a-thon portfolio			●——————●		
Digital practices Final project				●——————————●	

Brief overview of how major assignments layer during the semester

DH Project Profile (10%)

Our meeting during Week 3 (1/24) will start with brief presentations in the style of PechaKucha (20 slides with 15 seconds of commentary each, for a total of about 5 minutes) on a DH initiative or project of your choice. One of the best ways to understand how others are approaching DH research is to examine established projects and their objectives/outcomes, and you will prepare a review of your project, focusing on its purpose, its contributions, its design, its technologies, and its relationship to the field.

Data Case Study (10%)

In order to continue thinking about the subjective nature of data, you will conduct your own case study on a collection of data (this could be a data visualization or a data source). In addition to providing an overview of what the data seems to be suggesting, you will also interrogate its collection, curation, and distribution processes, as well as its purpose.

Wikipedia Edit-a-thon Portfolio (20%)

We will be participating in WVU's second annual Wikipedia Edit-a-thon, focused on amplifying the stories of under-represented Appalachian communities and creators. You will participate in the edit-a-thon and document that participation, after identifying areas of interest, learning how to edit on Wikipedia, and conducting original research to contribute to specific pages. You will submit a portfolio that includes evidence of your contributions and the preparation work that went into them.

Final Project (40%)

You will have the opportunity to either work on an individual project that helps you investigate a question of interest or that develops other ongoing work, or to participate in a collaborative project with myself and other members of the class (which remains to be determined, but could be focused on doing a usability audit for a local organization).

Because I want this course to help you consider how DH methodologies/methods might support your ongoing work, the final project asks you to take up a question related to the wide field of Digital Humanities. The final project **must** have some sort of digital component: whether it is hosted online to allow for public reception, or uses one of the tools we discussed in class (or you found on your own) to support your argument, or focuses explicitly on digital data or environments (or some combination of these), is up to you. While it is admittedly difficult to draw equivalences between written text and digital projects, think about the effort it takes to research and write 8-12 pages of single-spaced text, and aim for that.

Dialectic Notebook, Discussion Questions, and Related Activities (20%)

You will engage with our readings every week in a collaborative Google Doc. Each week, you will contribute no less than 10 entries to our dialectic notebook about the readings before you come to class. An entry might be a quote/paraphrase of a text (left side of notebook), a response to a

quote/paraphrase (right side of notebook), or a response to a peer's response (a comment in the margin). Please don't hesitate to include ideas from other classes, your life, or things we've discussed in previous class sessions. Here is [an example from a previous semester](). (Note: some weeks we might try something different, just for kicks.)

Once during the semester, you will be responsible for coming up with discussion questions for our weekly readings. You will come up with **two questions**: one that focuses on connections between the readings, and one that helps us delve deeper into a reading of your choice. You can post these on the Stream tab on Classroom.

Accessibility

I strive to make my courses as accessible and accommodating to all persons as I can. If you require any specific accommodations, please send me an email within the first week of the term in order to discuss any necessary adjustments, or as needed throughout the course. For more information, consult the [Office of Accessibility Services]().

Community

I take seriously the need to provide a respectful and supportive environment in our course—a space that I hope can be generative or even transformative for all of us. You are expected to treat everyone in our community with kindness and respect. I have a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination and harassment in all forms.

COVID-19 and community health

WVU is committed to maintaining a safe learning environment for all students, faculty, and staff. In our face-to-face class, we will be adhering to public health guidelines and guidance by the University. **Do not attend class if you feel sick. Really.** While in class, students will sit in assigned seats when applicable and wear the required PPE. Regardless of [WVU guidelines](), which are subject to change, my commitment to keeping all of us safe leads me to **request that you wear a mask in class**, given that there are a number of people in our community who are high-risk or in contact with high-risk individuals; and that if you are testing positive, please do not attend. We will figure out how to catch you up.

If you become sick or are required to quarantine during the semester, you should notify me immediately via email. You will work with me to develop a plan to receive the necessary course content, activities, and assessments to complete the course learning outcomes. **I am here to support you however I can.**

Student success, mental health, and basic needs

WVU has a number of resources and offices dedicated to student success. Of special note, when it comes to writing, is the [Eberly Writing Studio](), located here in Colson Hall. (On a personal note: I was a writing center consultant during my BA and MA, and wouldn't have been able to write my dissertation without visiting the writing center each week, from prospectus to final edits. It's a wonderful space and I encourage you to take advantage of it.)

Being a student is really hard, and it's often a big adjustment from whatever you were doing in your previous life. WVU does have resources available on campus, and most are available at no-charge. [The Carruth Center for Psychological and Psychiatric Services](#) (CCPPS) offers consultations, short-term individual therapy, group therapy, and various mental health-related workshops. Virtual and in-person (outside of pandemic situations) services are available. Crisis services are also available 24/7/365: you can text "WVU" to 741741 for support from a trained Crisis Counselor.

However, I do want to acknowledge that the stressors of being a graduate student, instructor, and scholar are different from the pressures that most undergraduate students face. The mental health of graduate students is [deeply overlooked,](#) so I want to encourage you to be cognizant of your own wellness and to advocate for yourself in every space, including this class. I am a resource to help you work through the difficulties of balancing these different roles.

Further, any student who faces challenges securing their food, housing, or other elements of wellbeing, and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Student Advocacy Center for support. Please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources that I may possess and to try and connect you to others.

English 606: Introduction to Digital Humanities **Schedule**

Unit 1 | Digital Humanities! (Or, Digital Humanities!? Or, Digital Humanities?!)

Week 1: Introduction to Digital Humanities   Monday, January 10

Reading	Kirschenbaum, "What is DH and what's it doing in English departments?"
Writing	
In-Class	Introductions

Week 2: MLK Jr. Day   Monday, January 17

Reading	
Writing	Sign up for Discussion Questions (1 week each)
In-Class	

Week 3: Roots of DH   Monday, January 24

Reading	Hayles, "How we think" (PDF) Various, "Digital Humanities manifesto" Alvarado, "The Digital Humanities situation" Wing, "Computational thinking" Wing, "Computational thinking 10 years later"
Writing	Dialectic Notebook
In-Class	DH Project profile presentations Topic modeling and computational analysis Discussion Questions:

Unit 2 | Digital Data & Interfaces

Week 4: Data   Monday, January 31

Reading	*All Data are Local,* introduction and chps. 1, 2, 5 Rawson & Muñoz, "Against cleaning" Coleman, "Domestic disturbances: Precarity, agency, data"
Writing	Dialectic Notebook

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In-Class	Tableau
	Discussion Questions: Terra

Week 5: Interfaces   Monday, February 7

Reading	*All Data are Local*, chps. 3, 4, 6 [7 optional, it's a v. short conclusion]
	Selfe & Selfe, "Politics of the interface"
	Shivener & Edwards, "Environmental unconscious of digital composing"
Writing	Dialectic Notebook
In-Class	Google Maps
	Discussion Questions:

Week 6: Archives   Monday, February 14

Reading	Graban et al., Chp. 17 in *Rhetoric and the Digital Humanities*
	Schofield et al., "Archival liveness: Designing with collections…"
	Kim, "Building pleasure and the digital archive"
	Manovich, "How to compare one million images?" (PDF)
Writing	Dialectic Notebook
In-Class	Discussion Questions: Nibal

Week 7: Coding and programming   Monday, February 21

Reading	Vee, Understanding computer programming as literacy (PDF)
	McPherson, "Why are digital humanities so white?…histories of race + computation"
	Brock, Chp 1. From *Rhetorical Code Studies*
	Arola, "The design of web 2.0: The rise of the template, the fall of design"
Writing	Dialectic Notebook
In-Class	Twine
	Discussion Questions: Katie Saucer

Unit 3 | Digital Infrastructures

Week 8: Identity and technology   Monday, February 28

Reading	*Algorithms of Oppression*, introduction and chps. 1-3 Gruwell, "Wikipedia's politics of exclusion" Ruberg, Boyd, & Howe, "Toward a queer digital humanities"
Writing	Dialectic Notebook Data Case Study
In-Class	Wikipedia Wikipedia Stub/C-List List Discussion Questions: Olivia Wertz

Week 9: Privacy and data mining   Monday, March 7

Reading	*Algorithms of Oppression* , chps. 4-6 and conclusion/epilogue Beck, "Invisible digital identity: assemblages in digital networks" Kerr et al., "Visualization and rhetoric: Case study of vaccination discourses"
Writing	Dialectic Notebook Wikipedia topic memo and sources
In-Class	Wikipedia Discussion Questions: Cody Grey

Week 10: Spring Break   Monday, March 14

Reading	
Writing	
In-Class	

Week 11: Wikipedia Edit-a-thon   Monday, March 21

Reading	
Writing	

In-Class	Edit-a-thon!

Week 12: Experience architecture (usability, UX, etc.)   Monday, March 28

Reading	Norman, excerpt from *The Design of Everyday Things* (PDF) Alexander, <u>"The usability of print and online video instructions"</u> Geisler, "Analyzing activity for experience design" (PDF) Morris, "Relocations: Reenvisioning rhetoric" (PDF)
Writing	Dialectic Notebook
In-Class	Usability testing Discussion Questions:

Unit 4 | Digital Practices

Week 13: Planning projects   Monday, April 4

Reading	
Writing	Wikipedia portfolio
In-Class	No in class meeting; **set up meeting with Erin about final project** so we can talk

Week 14: The Digital and beyond   Monday, April 11

Reading	**Choose any 3:** Sano-Franchini, Chp. 4 in *Rhetoric and the Digital Humanities* Chatelain, <u>"Is Twitter any place for a [Black] academic lady?"</u> Carlson, <u>"Metis as embodied, technofeminist intervention…"</u> Crider & Anderson, <u>"Disney death tour"</u> Coltrain & Ramsay, <u>"Can video games be humanities scholarship?"</u>
Writing	Dialectic Notebook
In-Class	Post your reading of choice to the Classroom site by Tuesday 4/12 a.m. Discussion Questions: Discussion Questions:

Week 15: Digital literacies   Monday, April 18

Reading	TBD
Writing	Technology logs
In-Class	Final project workshop

Week 16: Conclusions   Monday, April 25

Reading	Earhart, "Can we trust the university? DH collabs with exploited communities" Mann, "Paid to do but not to think: Reevaluating the role of graduate student…"
Writing	
In-Class	Conclusions Informal presentations on final projects

Week 17: Finals   Monday, May 2

Final projects due to Erin via Classroom on Monday, 5/2