English 606: Introduction to the Digital Humanities

CRN 18041 | Mondays 4:00-6:50 p.m. | Colson G06

Overview

There are many different ways to explain the field of Digital Humanities, its value, and its parameters, which is admittedly dense and thorny and complex. David Berry (2012) offers this (er, 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 medial changes produce epistemic changes [drawing from software studies, critical code, platform studies, etc.]." Lauren Klein (via a Facebook comment thread on DH) 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 the this coming year's [Digital Humanities Summer Institute offerings](#) reveals clusters related to project/content management, databases, data visualization, technofeminism, Geographical Information Systems, sound, games, code, and visual design. We could go on, and on, and on...

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 dive into the meaty methodological questions that digital work requires; and second, to practice **thinking** and **doing** digital humanities inquiry, by articulating how insights from the field might shape our own work, and by using digital tools to see our work differently.

At the end of this course, you will possess:
- Familiarity with major debates in the field of DH;
- Knowledge of DH research methods and their underlying methodologies;
- Understanding of differences, similarities, and disjunctions between DH and other pertinent fields of study, including rhetoric and professional writing;
- Information about different prominent DH centers and their research endeavors;
- Practical experience with a range of digital tools that can aid DH work; and
- Advanced 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.

Instructor: Dr. Erin Brock Carlson
Email: erin.carlson@mail.wvu.edu
Office Location: Colson Hall 337
Office Hours: Mondays 2-4; Wednesdays 9-11; and by appointment

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Required Texts

In addition to articles and excerpts that I provide, you will need to have access to:

- Algorithms of Oppression, Safiya Noble **[AOO]** [WVU Library]
- A Prehistory of the Cloud, Tung-Hui Hu **[POTC]** [WVU Library]
- Debates in the Digital Humanities 2019, Matthew Gold & Lauren Klein **[DDH19]**
    - **Note:** This is 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. The code to join the classroom space is lqjzeh7.

Assignment Overviews

Below are brief overviews of each major assignment. I will provide more in-depth instructions in class.

Project Profile (10%)

Our meeting during Week 3 (1/27) will start with brief presentations (8-10 minutes) on DH projects. 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 detailed review of your project, focusing on its purpose, its contributions, its design, its technologies, and its relationship to the field.

Reading Responses and Dialectic Notebook (20%)

You will engage with our readings every week, but in two different modes. One week you will post a reading response (approx. 500 words) in which you critically engage one of the texts read for that day as well as at least one additional text of your own choice (from that week, from a previous week, or from your own research). The following week, you will contribute 10 – 15 entries to our collaborative double entry notebook about the readings in a shared GoogleDoc. 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). In responding to quotes/paraphrases, you can be guided by the heuristic questions above (though your entries in the notebook will be shorter than your entries in your response journal). And repeat. (I will provide a schedule, so you will know which rotation you are on).

Praxis Projects and Reflections (20%)

Throughout the semester, we will experiment with a range of digital tools that might be used to support DH work. We will begin these projects in class, but you will need to spend some time on them outside of class, as well. All the technologies are free and open source, and it is my aim that they each enhance our understanding of the field, or give you ideas for your final project, or both. You will share each of your "finished" products with me. Additionally, I will ask that you select **any three** of the Praxis Projects and write a brief, informal reflection/analysis (approx. 500 words) on how the tool connects to ideas we've discussed in class, or might enhance your own research or work. (Note: While you can work collaboratively on any of the projects, you must turn in three individual analyses.)

Final Project (50%)

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. Your project **must** have some sort of digital component: whether it is hosted online to allow for public consumption, or uses one of the tools we discussed in class (or you found on your own) to support your argument, or if it 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.

A note on collaboration: you wish, you can collaborate with another person in the class on this final project, since a lot of digital humanities work takes place across institutions, disciplines, and people. In fact, this might be a really valuable experience, if it suits the needs of each collaborator. We'll talk more in class about what this might look like.

The breakdown of the final project is as follows:
- Proposal, 10%
- Annotated Bibliography, 10%
- Draft, 5%
- Final, 25%

Digital Archiving:

Please obtain a USB drive that you will dedicate to collecting the writing, designing, editing, and revising done in this course. Please bring this drive to each class. As you work on your assignments both in and out of class, keep (within reason) progressive versions of all your notes, drafts, outlines, peer reviews, and research materials. Organize and label the documents as you go and it will benefit both of us.

Note: Technology will fail you at some point in the semester. Corrupt files, lost USB drives, or unsaved work are not reasons for work not coming in on time. PLEASE back-up your work.

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. 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 think can be 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.

Student Success:

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.)

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. Furthermore, 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.

Ultimately, I am here as a resource to help you pursue your intellectual and material work, and I'm looking forward to our time together!

English 606: Introduction to the Digital Humanities
Reading and Writing Schedule

Note: This schedule is subject to change, based on the needs of the class. Edits will be directly applied in this document, so be sure to check this regularly.

Week 1: Introduction to DH   Monday, January 13

Readings	Kirschenbaum, What is DH and what's it doing in English departments? ([Link](#)) Gold & Klein, Introduction: A DH that matters ([Link](#))
Writings	
In-Class	Introductions

Week 2: No Class, MLK Jr. Day on 1/20

Week 3: DH, Applied   Monday, January 27

Readings	Schnapp, Lunenfeld, Presner, The DH manifesto ([Link](#)) Alvadaro, The DH situation ([Link](#)) Kill, Teaching Digital Rhetoric: Wikipedia, Politics (PDF) Currie, The feminist critique: Mapping controversy in Wikipedia (PDF) Gruwell, Wikipedia's politics of exclusion (PDF)
Writings	Group A, Reading Responses; Group B, Dialectic Notebook DH Project Profile
In-Class	DH Project Profile Presentations Praxis: Wikipedia

Week 4: Interface, Information, & Data Politics   Monday, February 3

Readings	Selfe & Selfe, Politics of the interface (PDF) Selber, Reimagining computer literacy (PDF) Rawson & Muñoz, Against cleaning ([Link](#)) Boyles, Making and breaking: Teaching information ethics through curatorial practice ([Link](#))
Writings	Group A, Dialectic Notebook; Group B, Reading Responses
In-Class	Praxis: Wikipedia (continued)

Week 5: Computational Thinking   Monday, February 10

Readings	Berry et al., No signal without symbol: Decoding DH ([Link](#)) Hayles, How we think: Transforming power and digital technologies (PDF) Wing, Computational thinking (PDF) Wing, Computational thinking 10 years later ([Link](#))
Writings	Group A, Reading Responses; Group B, Dialectic Notebook *Reflection on Wikipedia
In-Class	Praxis: Topic Modeling, Computational Analysis (J-Stor Labs, Voyant)

Week 6: Coding and Programming Monday, February 17

Readings	Manovich, Introduction to *Software Takes Command* [pp.1-50] (link) Vee, Understanding computer programming as literacy (PDF) Brock, Introduction & Chp. 1 of *Rhetorical Code Studies* (PDF) Ballentine, Procedural literacy and the future of the digital humanities (PDF)
Writings	Group A, Dialectic Notebook; Group B, Reading Responses
In-Class	Praxis: Twine

Week 7: Borne-Digital Methods Monday, February 24

Readings	Rieder & Röhle, Digital methods (PDF) McNely & Teston, Tactical and strategic: Qualitative approaches to DH (PDF) Manovich, How to compare one million images? (PDF) Gries, Mapping Obama Hope (Link) Da, The digital humanities debacle (Link)
Writings	Group A, Reading Responses; Group B, Dialectic Notebook
In-Class	Praxis: Twine or Topic Modeling (continued, based on class interest)

Week 8: Embodiment and Digitality Monday, March 2

Readings	McPherson, Why are the digital humanities so white (Link) Chun, Race as technology (PDF) Gouge & Jones, Wearables, wearing, and the rhetorics that attend to them (PDF) Hannon, Gender and status in VUIs (PDF) AOO, Intro and Chps. 1-3
Writings	Group A, Dialectic Notebook; Group B, Reading Responses *Reflection on Twine or Topic Modeling
In-Class	Praxis: Sentiment Viz

Week 9: Visualizing Data Monday, March 9

Readings	Sorapure, Text, image, data, interaction: Understanding information viz (PDF) Kennedy & Long, The trees within the forest (PDF) Loukissas, Excerpt from *All Data Are Local* (PDF) Hannon, Topologies of discourse in Faulkner (PDF)
Writings	Group A, Dialectic Notebook; Group B, Reading Responses *Reflection on Sentiment Viz Proposal for Final Project
In-Class	Guest Speaker, Dr. Charles Hannon Praxis: Tableau

Week 10: ~Spring Break~

Week 11: Algorithms and Privacy Monday, March 23

Readings	AOO, Chps. 4-6 and Conclusion Brock, Rhetoric and the algorithm (PDF) Beck et al, Writing in an age of privacy, surveillance, and net neutrality ([Link](#))
Writings	Group A, Reading Responses; Group B, Dialectic Notebook
In-Class	Praxis: Tableau (continued)

Week 12: Subversive Possibilities   Monday, March 30

Readings	Sherratt, Unremembering the forgotten ([Link](#)) Losh, Hacktivism and the humanities: Programming protest in the era... ([Link](#)) Coltrain & Ramsay, Can video games be Humanities scholarship? ([Link](#)) Ballentine, Hacker ethics... ([Link](#))
Writings	Group A, Reading Responses; Group B, Dialectic Notebook Annotated Bibliography *Reflection on Tableau
In-Class	

Week 13: Mapping Spaces and Places   Monday, April 6

Readings	Drucker, Humanities approaches to graphical display ([Link](#)) de Sá Pereira, Mixed methodological DH ([Link](#)) Loukissas, "Market, Place, Interface" from *All Data are Local* (PDF) Crider & Anderson, Disney death tour ([Link](#)) POTC, Intro and Chp. 1
Writings	Group A, Dialectic Notebook; Group B, Reading Responses *Reflection on Twine
In-Class	Praxis: Google Maps

Week 14: Digital-Environmental? Humanities   Monday, April 13

Readings	Cubitt, excerpt from Finite Media (PDF) Ruiz et al., Radicalizing DH: Reimagining environmental justice research and teaching (PDF) POTC, Chp. 2 and Interlude Stone, "The Planet Needs a New Internet" ([Link](#))
Writings	Group A, Reading Responses; Group B, Dialectic Notebook
In-Class	Praxis: Google Maps (continued)

Week 15: Ethical Interventions in DH   Monday, April 20

Readings	POTC, Chps. 3-4, and Conclusion TBD, based on class interest
Writings	Group A, Dialectic Notebook; Group B, Reading Responses *Reflection on Google Maps

In-Class	

Week 16: Workshop and Mini-Talks   Monday, April 27

Readings	Eyman & Ball, DH scholarship and electronic publication (PDF)
Writings	Draft of Project
In-Class	Workshop Session Mini-Talks on Projects

Finals Week
Final Projects Due on Monday, May 4