

ACS 6820/HIST 6820
Spring 2016
Introduction to Digital Humanities

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Course Goals

This course provides introduction to the issues and methods of asking and answering humanities questions in the age of computers. In addition to considering vital questions in the practice of using computerized methods in the humanities (for research, understanding, and dissemination), we will learn some basic digital humanities (DH) skills, play with various digital humanities tools, and work on a digital humanities project. The course will be entirely online.

Rather than being an endpoint, this course is designed to provide a basis for further learning, exploration, and participation in DH as well as to encourage you to incorporate DH methodologies into your own further research. Because of this, while you will be evaluated according to BGSU's standard grading system, the emphasis will be on providing a platform for further growth rather than the final grade as an endpoint to learning.

Learning objectives

By the end of this course, students will demonstrate an ability to:

- discuss critically digital humanities in light of current theories and methods
- explain how a range of digital humanities methods and practices are applied
- conduct basic digital humanities research and research-supporting activities with a variety of tools and methods
- facilitate digital humanities work at various levels and stages

Important Note

Because this class is online, we will not be physically meeting. I will check email, the discussion boards, and Canvas on at least a daily basis during weekdays. However, just because the intergooglewebs is available 24/7, do not expect me to be online 24/7. Read the syllabus and the assignments carefully, so that you can ask questions in advance, rather than waiting to the last minute in the vain hope that I will happen to be on-line at 3AM (I won't be).

Unless otherwise noted, all course participation (blog posts and comments) are to be completed on the course website (<http://intro-dh-2016.andyschocket.net/>). Other assignments are to be turned in through our Canvas site. Work on our group project will be as determined collectively by us over the course of the semester.

Class participation

Goal: Part of the learning experience involves not only the flow of information from teacher to student but also the exchange of ideas between teachers and students and among the students themselves. Each of us brings a unique background and viewpoint to class, and only by engaging in conversation will you be able to benefit from others in the class the way they may

benefit from your presence and participation. Discussion not only requires the articulation of ideas, but also taking into account others' viewpoints.

Requirements:

1. Blog posts. You will write no fewer than two blog posts over the course of the semester, 500-750 words each (about typical for that medium). I will determine the schedule for your posts based upon your preferences, which you will enter by the survey due not later than Wednesday, January 13, at 12 noon. If you do not answer by that time, I'll assign you to whatever weeks are least popular. One post will be concerning one week's reading, due by the Tuesday of the week of that reading. One post will be concerning a tool or methodology, due by Tuesday of the week that tool/methodology is assigned. Finally, one will be concerning the group project, due no later than the date assigned, again based upon the preferences you submit.
2. Discussion. You must not only post, you must also engage with your peers. Every week for which we have blog posts – most of them, actually, you must participate in the Comments area for at least one of the relevant blog posts. You are encouraged to participate regularly. Please post as often as you would like on either discussion thread (and feel free to start your own). The more frequent and more thought-provoking your entries, the better our discussion (and the higher your participation grade will be). Make sure that every time you participate, you must use at least one example from one of the readings or exercises, or – and this is encouraged – from other sources (articles, blog posts, projects, etc.) that you link to.
3. Each entry must be substantive. That is, simply writing “I agree” or “I disagree” is not enough; you must add something in terms of defending your position and addressing others' posts to the discussion board. That is, not just “I agree with her,” but “I agree with Moon Unit when she wrote that Daffy Duck is not as smart as Porky Pig, because Daffy couldn't figure out where Planet X was but Porky Pig did (WB, 12).”
4. Remember that being online is different from being together in a room talking; people cannot tell your tone of voice, at whom you may be looking, your gestures, etc. Thus, when referring to others' posts, make sure to explain to whose post you are referring and exactly what point you are addressing.
5. Be polite! Even though we are online, this is still an academic environment. That means being courteous, using polite language, and respecting your peers and your instructor.

Evaluation: Class participation will count for 30% of your grade. You will be evaluated as much on the quality of your participation—the relevance of your comments, your ability to engage other students, your exhibiting a grasp of the material, and the cogency of your remarks—as the quantity of your participation.

Digital Humanities Project Evaluation

Goal: To become a critical consumer of the digital humanities, as well as get a sense of how work is created and how your work will be evaluated.

Requirements: You will select and study in detail a major DH project. You will compose a 1,000-1,500 word evaluation of this project, considering its virtues and drawbacks, placing it in disciplinary and/or DH context as appropriate, and justifying the criteria you have used to evaluate the project. This will be posted electronically by the date indicated on the course

schedule, and include not only your prose, but also screenshots, snippets of code, or whatever other evidence would be appropriate to help readers follow along. See the relevant page on our course website for more information.

Evaluation: Your evaluation will be evaluated on its application of the criteria, use of specific evidence, its consideration of the project's place in the field, its nuance, and its quality of writing. The project evaluation will constitute 10% of your overall grade.

Content Management System Evaluation

Goal: To become a critical consumer of the digital humanities, as well as get a sense of how work is created and how your work will be evaluated.

Requirements: You will select and study in detail a content management system from the list provided. You will compose a 1,000-1,500 word evaluation of this project, considering its virtues and drawbacks, placing it in disciplinary and/or DH context as appropriate, and justifying the criteria you have used to evaluate the project. This will be posted electronically by the date indicated on the course schedule, and include not only your prose, but also screenshots, snippets of code, or whatever other evidence would be appropriate to help readers follow along. See the relevant page on our website for more information.

Evaluation: Your evaluation will be evaluated on its articulation of clear and transferable criteria, use of specific evidence, its consideration of the project's place in the field, its nuance, and its quality of writing. The project evaluation will constitute 10% of your overall grade.

Skill Proficiency

Goal: A significant portion of this class is to gain minimum proficiency in a variety of digital humanities methodologies: basic html/css, elementary coding (we'll be using Python, a popular choice among DH practitioners), topic modeling, mapping, and social networks.

Requirements: You will submit evidence of having completed the necessary exercises as listed on the course website for each of the aforementioned areas by date and time listed on the course schedule. The evidence will vary depending upon the exercise: it may be notification of a badge earned, a screenshot, code, a link to a working website, etc.

Evaluation: Each of these will be evaluated on a pass/fail basis. Your overall skill proficiency will constitute 20% of your overall grade.

Start-up Proposal

Goal: We have too little time in the course of the semester to complete a major project of your own choosing. However, we do have time to conceive of a project in detail, which will give you a sense of having to think through disciplinary issues, DH issues, what a project would look like, how it would fit in the intellectual terrain, how it would work, and how it would be evaluated. By writing a full DH project proposal, you will demonstrate your understanding of the intellectual, technological, and logistical issues involved in the practice of DH.

Requirement: You will write a draft submission for an NEH Office of Digital Humanities Start-Up Grant. It will contain all the necessary elements of a grant application, with the exception that the budget will be assumed to be a rough budget, and there will be no letters of commitment and support. The final version is to be completed and converted to .pdf, and is due no later than Wednesday, May 10, at 5PM, in the Assignments area of the class Canvas site. See our class website for more information.

Evaluation: Your proposal will be evaluated according to how well and how clearly it achieves the above objectives. Your project will constitute 30% of your total grade.

Course Schedule

Below is the schedule for class meetings. The full bibliographical information, links, etc. for the readings and assignments is in our group Zotero library (Intro to DH, BGSU Spring 2016, <https://www.zotero.org/groups/458658>). The only reading not available online, for free, is Jockers, Matthew Lee. *Macroanalysis: Digital Methods and Literary History*. Topics in the Digital Humanities. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013. There is a copy in Jerome on closed reserve; there are also copies through OhioLink, but only a few. Please plan ahead accordingly.

Grades

Evaluations weighting

Participation (including blog posts)	30%
Skill proficiency	20%
DH project evaluation	10%
CMS evaluation	10%
Start-up Proposal or project	30%
TOTAL	100%

Grading scale

A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	<60

Passing

You must earn a passing grade in every portion of this course—participation, skills proficiency, project evaluation, Start-up proposal—to earn a passing grade for the course. Fail any of those categories, and you will not receive a passing grade for the course.

Miscellany

Late papers policy: You will be penalized one letter grade for each day an assignment is due. The clock starts at the beginning of class on the day the paper is due, meaning that if the paper is not handed in at the beginning of that class, it will be considered late.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is bad on many levels. First of all, you're stealing from someone else by taking her or his hard work and passing it off as your own. You're cheapening your degree, and worse yet, those of your peers by getting something (a passing grade) for nothing. You're cheating yourself the opportunity to learn and to develop your thinking and writing skills, presumably the reason you came to BGSU. You are also stealing from your classmates—and, indeed, yourself—by taking up a good deal of your instructor's time on detecting and dealing with plagiarism rather than evaluating other assignments and preparing for class. Last of all, you're insulting your instructors by assuming that we can't tell. You may get away with it this time, but sooner or later, you'll get caught (and you won't be the first or even the second graduate student who has been so insolent in one of my classes). Cheating or plagiarism of any form is a serious offense, will not be tolerated, may result in a failing grade for the entire course and/or disciplinary action, and indeed, only my lawyer's vehement objections prevent me from inflicting 18th-century-style corporal punishment (think pressing or keelhauling) on academic honesty offenders. See the BGSU Graduate Catalog for further information.

Emergencies: John Milton praised the ability “to temper Justice with Mercy.” Should there be some dire and urgent reason that you are unable to complete your responsibilities or turn in an assignment on time (family or medical emergency, for example, not “But Netflix just acquired streaming rights to the second season of *Emergency!*”), contact me as soon as possible so that we may make alternate arrangements for the satisfactory and timely completion of the requirements of the assignment(s). Note that you will still be held responsible for any material read, due, or discussed in class.

Special Needs: If you need special course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or have emergency medical information to share with me, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. I will make strong efforts to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to learn, to participate, and to be evaluated fairly.

Office Hours: Should you have any questions, comments, difficulties, or desire to discuss matters historical or otherwise, please do not hesitate to come to my office hours, make an appointment to see me, or email me.