

Digital Public Humanities

Spring 2016

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Course Web Site: tba

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Course Description

What is “digital humanities” and how does it impact and intersect with the field of public humanities? Digital humanities work involves new approaches to reading, writing, research, publication, and curation: digital tools help us examine digital and non-digital material in innovative ways, and digital modes of communication help us reach new and wider ranges of audiences. While many of you are no doubt aware of the ubiquity of digital technology and the massive amounts of time people spend with digital media, my hope is that this course provides students with the opportunity to create digital projects and utilize digital tools to further their academic and professional interests.

In this course, students will:

- Examine the recent (and still developing) history of digital humanities and the uses of digital spaces and tools by cultural institutions, academics, and other parties (artists, activists, community reps) interested in various forms of public engagement
- Consider the place of digital initiatives less as a stand-in for “analog” work and more as projects in conversation with physical archives, exhibits, and events
- Review best practices for the creation, management, publication, promotion, and preservation of digital exhibits and objects
- Complete a project (ideally something you can add to your professional portfolio) designed to circulate publicly that demonstrates your familiarity with digital tools and contexts

Readings will be made available via our course website.

Given the fact that this is a Digital Public Humanities course, we’ll create and use a course hashtag on Twitter to circulate relevant links and other material. We’ll talk more about our use of Twitter early in the semester. We’ll also have a course blog that I’ll be hosting: details below. Important updates about the course will be circulated by me via email.

Required Materials

- Reliable web access. Given the nature of this course, it's essential that you be able to get on the web on a regular basis. Please see me if you have any questions about this requirement or if you'd like to talk about resources here at Brown.
- Digital hosting for your project. You are not required to pay for a web site, but we will discuss the advantages / disadvantages of having server access / using a free site (WordPress, Tumblr, etc.). Do not worry about this requirement on the first day of class: we're going to talk about various content management systems and platforms early in the semester, so you'll want to review your options and think about what works best for you and your work.
- You are not required to bring a laptop, tablet, and/or smart phone to every class, but access to web materials during class discussions may be extremely useful.
- There is no required textbook for the course, but there may be moments when recommended additional readings might point you in the direction of texts available via the library's resources.

Course Readings

The readings for the course come from the following sources:

- Bodenhamer, David J. et al, eds. *The Spatial Humanities: GIS and The Future of Humanities Scholarship*. Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Bolter, Jay David and Grusin, Richard. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. MIT Press, 1998.
- Cohen, Dan and Rosenzweig, Roy. *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.
- Digital Humanities Quarterly*, a peer-reviewed journal and one of the major publications in the field of digital humanities.
- Emerson, Lori. *Reading Writing Interfaces: From The Digital to the Bookbound*. University of Minnesota Press, 2014.
- Gitelman, Lisa, ed. *Raw Data is an Oxymoron*. MIT Press, 2013.
- Howe, Susan. *The Birth-mark: Unsettling the wilderness in American literary history*. Wesleyan University Press, 1993.
- The Journal of Digital Humanities*, the other major, peer-reviewed journal in the field of DH.
- Various blog posts and web writings by prominent figures in the field of digital humanities and the social sciences.
- Various digital projects (used as "case studies" for class discussion and in preparation for your project work)

Details on these readings are outlined in the semester calendar.

Course Policies

I expect that students will regularly attend class sessions, keep up with readings, and submit graded work on time. I also assume that students will participate in class discussions and be respectful of their peers in said discussions. Please contact me ASAP if you have any questions or issues related to the course. I'm also happy to meet with students during office hours or by appointment.

Major Assignments and Grading Breakdown

Blog Posts (40% of total grade)

1. Digital Project Case Study Post: You will write and publish a blog post (750-1000 words) that reviews at least one digital project in-depth. This project doesn't necessarily have to be a model you seek to imitate in your own work, but taking that approach might be useful to you. **(10%)**
2. Social Media Assessment Post: You will discuss some dimension of the role of social media in the field of public humanities. You may also decide to take a more active / participatory role in social media here (and documenting that in your blog post): crowdsourcing information on Twitter, brainstorming the circulation of your own digital project on social media, creating a Twitter bot or Twitter archive, etc. **(10%)**
3. Post about Your Digital Project **(10%)**
4. Contributions to Additional Blog Resources (To be discussed with the class: likely annotations, social media outreach, and/or ancillary materials related to the blog) **(10%)**

We'll also want to collaborate on what we want our class blog to look and sound like. What should it be called? What content management system should we use (WordPress? Medium? Tumblr?)? Who should our primary and secondary audiences be? Consider the blog a collaborative digital project that we're all working on together (though you should also consider me the Project Manager of said project).

Digital Project (60% of total grade)

In addition to reading work related to digital and public humanities and examining digital projects, your major project for the course will involve the creation of a digital project. Over the course of the semester, you'll be developing a digital project that reflects both your research / professional interests and your familiarity with digital contexts and tools. You can choose to think of all of the assignments listed below as part of a larger digital project. Conversely, it may help some of you to think of these as mini-assignments that are linked rather than one big project.

I am open to the idea of collaborative work between students as well as external collaborators. I'd like this project to mirror the kind of project development work that is done outside of classroom settings wherever possible. Talk to me early and often about

your ideas, frustrations, etc. Your ideas re: projects can (and most likely should!) change over the course of the semester.

Imagine this project as version 1.0 of work that might develop further beyond the course (supported by collaborations, additional funding, and the luxury of more time and feedback). Ideally, this project will become part of your professional development: something to show prospective employers via a digital portfolio, work that gets further disseminated in conference presentations and/or journal articles, etc.

For the purposes of the course, I expect you to demonstrate:

- A familiarity with best practices re: the development and prototyping of a digital project
- An interest in creating a project that will be of particular use to a clearly defined audience
- The use of a digital tool, platform, and/or content management system that you had not previously used extensively

Digital projects take time and involve lots of resources: for example, the *Our Marathon* digital archive project that I worked on spanned two and a half years. Digital projects are also works in progress: you may not come out of the class with a fully-formed resource or initiative. But you will come out with an awareness of how projects are imagined, planned, executed, and circulated in initial forms to professional and public audiences.

Here's a breakdown of the major components of your digital project:

- Ignite Talk: You'll give a brief presentation to the class on your initial project idea (modeled on the "Ignite" style of rapid-fire presentations) **(10%)**
- Formal Project Proposal: You will write a more formal proposal (inspired in part by the areas highlighted in the NEH's Digital Projects for The Public grant program, but the formatting may vary depending on your project) **(20%)**
- Digital Project 1.0: You will complete the project (or the first iteration of the project). Circulating all or some components of the project itself publicly is not required, but encouraged **(30%)**

We'll also discuss the best venue (digital, physical, or both?) to curate your work for the JNBC community and other interested parties here at Brown (and beyond, depending on the digital components)? More broadly, how might we think of the work we're doing this class as work that impacts the JNBC at-large and student interest in digital work and contexts?

There will be particular points in the semester when you'll have time to work on your digital projects in class: see the schedule for particular dates.

Schedule

Most readings are available online. For readings with page numbers, please consult materials I have placed on reserve in the JNBC's library.

Week 1: Introductions

W 1/27: Overview of course; [“What is Digital Humanities?”](#); [“Why You Shouldn’t Be a Digital Humanist”](#) and [“Why You Should Be A Digital Humanist”](#) (Giuliano);

Backgrounds and Contexts

M 2/1 [“A Digital Humanities Manifesto”](#) and [“The Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0”](#) (Various); [“Digital Humanities As/Is A Tactical Term”](#) (Kirschenbaum); [“Getting Started in Digital Humanities”](#) (Spiro)

W 2/3 [“The Productive Unease of 21st-century Digital Scholarship”](#) (Flanders); [“Why are The Digital Humanities So White? or Thinking the Histories of Race and Computation”](#) (McPherson); [“Hacktivism and the Humanities: Programming Protest in the Era of the Digital University”](#) (Losh)

M 2/8 [“Promises and Perils of Digital History”](#) and [“Exploring the History Web”](#) (Cohen and Rosenzweig); [September 11 Digital Archive](#); [Guantanamo Public Memory Project](#)

Media, Digital Media, and Digital Interfaces

W 2/10 [“Immediacy, Hypermediacy, and Remediation”](#) (Bolter and Grusin pgs. 20-51); [“Indistinguishable from Magic: Invisible Interfaces and Digital Literature as Demystifier”](#) (Emerson; pgs. 1-46); [The Text Encoding Initiative](#) and the [Women Writers Project](#)

M 2/15 [“Digital Dualism and the Fallacy of Web Objectivity”](#) and [“The IRL Fetish”](#) (Jurgenson); [“Pixel Dust: Illusions of Innovation in Scholarly Publishing”](#) (Drucker)

Archives and Digital Archives

W 2/17 Introduction to [The Birth-Mark: Unsettling the Wilderness in American Literary History](#) (Howe; pgs. 1-23); [“facts and FACTS: Abolitionists’ Database Innovations”](#) (Garvey; pgs. 89-102); [“The Image of Absence: Archival Silence, Data Visualization, and James Hennings”](#) (Klein)

M 2/22 NO CLASS (LONG WEEKEND)

W 2/24 [“Animating the Archive”](#) (Schnapp); [“The .txtual Condition: Digital Humanities, Born-Digital Archives, and The Future Literary”](#) (Kirschenbaum); [“Archives in Context and As Context”](#) (Theimer); [“We’re All Digital Archivists Now”](#) (Schaefer and Owens)

M 2/29 [“Towards Generous Interfaces for Archival Collections”](#) (Whitelaw); [Omeka](#) and Digital Archives

Blog Post due: Case Study of Digital Project

Analog and Digital Crowdsourcing

W 3/2 [“Engaging the Public: Best Practices for Crowdsourcing Across the Disciplines”](#) (Crowd Consortium); [“Crowdsourcing and Community Engagement”](#) (Peaker); [“How an Ecosystem of Machine Learning and Crowdsourcing Could Help You”](#) (Ridge)

M 3/7 [“Postcolonial Digital Humanities: The Rewriting Wikipedia Project”](#) (Koh and Risam); [“The News on Wikipedia in 2014”](#) (Keegan)

W 3/9 Wikipedia Edit-A-Thon Session

Social Media

M 3/14 [“What is an @uthor?”](#) (Kirschenbaum); [Selfie City](#); [Interview with Patricia Lockwood](#) (HTMLGIANT); [Mark Sample’s Twitter Bots](#); [“A Call for Bots of Conviction”](#) (Sample); [Every Three Minutes](#)

W 3/16 [TAGS and Twitter Data](#); [“History Hashtags: Exploring a Virtual Network of Twitterstorians”](#) (Varin); [“The Design of an International Social Media Event: A Day in the Life of the Digital Humanities”](#) (Various); [We Choose The Moon](#)

Mapping: Data, Design, and Curation

M 3/21: [“The Potential of Spatial Humanities”](#) (Bodenhamer; pgs. 14-29); [“Digital Maps and Social Data”](#) (Long); [The Roaring Twenties](#); [Mapping Titian](#); Select ArcGIS Projects
Blog Post Due: Social Media

W 3/23: [“Mapping the Digital Empire: Google Earth and the Process of Postmodern Cartography”](#) (Farman); [Neatline](#), Google Maps, and [HistoryPin](#): Comparing Methodologies and Uses

SPRING BREAK

M 3/28 NO CLASS

W 3/30 NO CLASS

Project Development

M 4/4 [“Ten Rules for Humanities Scholars New to Project Management”](#) (Nowviskie); [“12 Basic Principles of Project Management”](#) (Croxall); [“Building Digital Humanities Projects for Everyone”](#) (Reut); [“Project Management for Humanists”](#) (Leon)

W 4/6 [NEH Grant Proposals](#) and Project Case-Studies; Examples of Scaling Up Projects; Examples of Specs and User Stories

M 4/11 Ignite Pitches (Day 1)

W 4/13 Ignite Pitches (Day 2)

M 4/18 [“How did they make that?”](#) (Posner); [“What Ever Happened to Project Bamboo?”](#) (Dombrowski) **Formal Proposal DRAFTS Due**

W 4/20 [“Foundations of Data Curation: The Pedagogy and Practice of ‘Purposeful Work’ with Research Data”](#) (Various); [“Digital Preservation’s Place in the Future of the Digital Humanities”](#) (Owens)

M 4/25 Discussion of Proposal Drafts; Revision Session

W 4/27 Workshop Session (Digital Project 1.0)

M 5/2 [“Published Yet Never Done: The Tension Between Projection and Completion in Digital Humanities Research”](#) (Various); [“The Eternal September of the Digital Humanities”](#) (Nowvskie); [“Done: Finishing Projects in the Digital Humanities”](#) (Kirschenbaun)

W 5/4 Digital Project 1.0 and Final Drafts of Formal Proposals Due

M 5/9 Last Day of Class; Blog Post Dissemination Due