

## FINAL SYLLABUS

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This course will investigate the ways that humanists are using digital tools and digital techniques in their research, and the relationship between those tools and techniques and the information sciences. Not only will the course address the major theoretical themes present in the study of the digital humanities today, it will also give the students the opportunity to gain experience curating, manipulating and visualizing digital data from the humanities and allied social sciences. We will then also investigate different approaches to engaging with data-intensive projects in these fields, including the potential applications of such resources in the educational, library and archival environments.

### Instructor

Alison Langmead

### Teaching Assistant

Chelsea Gunn

*"Learning is at direct odds with content. In fact, learning does battle with content. If content wins, learning loses. We do, instead, in the best learning environments, grapple with content — we kill it on the road when we meet it there."*  
—[Jesse Stommel](#)

### Course Learning Objectives

- Upon completion of this course, students will have successfully created an original argument—one that contains a thesis and an evidence-based conclusion—in the domain of the humanities and allied social sciences whose construction relies on the use of analytic digital technologies.
  - Students will leave this course with a personally-useful understanding of the ways in which digital technologies are used in disciplines across the humanities and allied social sciences. Such domains include, but are not limited to, music, art and architectural history, anthropology, media studies, modern language studies, English literature studies, history, sociology, education and linguistics.
- NOTE:** Each student will be asked to define "personally-useful" on the first day of class, and will assess their own progress towards their own goal at intervals during the term.

### Course Expectations

- This course is discussion-based and making-intensive. Students will come to class prepared for the session by having read/watched/written/done all that is requested of them by the syllabus.
- Students will participate to the fullest of their abilities in each and every class session. "Participation" is not restricted to "speaking publicly in front of a group."
- I expect the group to focus on being problem-driven rather than tool-driven. This is to say that, in this class, we are practicing the study of the humanities. First, we discover an interesting problem, or an idea brewing, or a desire to reproduce someone else's results, or some other form of engagement. Data collection and tool selection come next.
- We will bring our process into view and learn how it both changes us and our relationship to the problems that we address. We should reasonably expect our ideas to change as we implement our argument with our tools.

### Notes on the Typical Class Session

Every class will meet for the entire time allotted, although this will not be spent doing only one thing. The main purpose of this strategy is to give us the maximum amount of time to work on our individual projects, together. Class time is our community's irreplaceable opportunity to interact face-to-face. For some of the time, we will discuss, seminar-style, the readings/viewings for the week. For some of the time, we might also share our knowledge about tools, methodologies, and approaches to problems that we have discovered. For some of the

time, we might work on our individual projects or receive peer-review. Every class, I would like to enable you to become more and more *attuned* to the problems and conflicts inherent in using digital technologies in the humanities and allied social sciences.

### Note on Digital Workflow

Using digital methods in the humanities and allied social sciences does not have a familiar, traditional workflow associated with it in the same way that, say, producing a five-paragraph essay does. Over the years, I have begun to develop my own workflow, and have noted that others seem to benefit from it, and so I offer it here in that spirit. I use a word in the workflow, "**capta**," that may not be familiar to you, but it is part of the contemporary conversation about what constitutes the "data" that humanists use. Whereas "data" means "things given" in Latin, "capta" means "things taken." For a more detailed discussion of capta and data in the humanities, feel free to read Johanna Drucker, "Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (2011): <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/5/1/000091/000091.html>. We will also be reading this article for class.

1. **BE CURIOUS.**
2. **FIND CAPTA** that respond to your curiosity.
3. **ASK A QUESTION** that your capta can help you examine.
4. **LOCATE/BUILD TOOLS** and further resources that help you investigate that question.
5. **PRODUCE ITERATED DELIVERABLES** as you work to address your curiosity (question → capta → tools → product → question → capta → tools → product).
6. **REFLECT** as you go on your successes and struggles with the process.

These steps very well may not seem all that foreign, as well they should not. Producing an original argument that incorporates the analytic power of digital technologies is, in fact, like any other academic research enterprise. There is one crucial part of the process, however, that these newer methods of academic production bring crucially to the fore, that of *iteration* (Step 5).

### COURSE DELIVERABLES

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It is my plan that these projects will be flexible enough that each one of you will walk away with a product personally useful to you. I would like for us all to work consistently towards this goal.

### Asking Questions and Preparing to Answer Them

Talk about what makes you curious and then explain how that curiosity leads you to engage with a question in the humanities. Generate or find a dataset/captaset that responds to your question. This collection of capta needs to be complex enough that it can be used throughout the term. Ask for feedback from the instructors if you are not sure about your choice. Describe your captaset so that others can understand its shape and complexity. Also answer the following questions: Why do you think your question would be well-served by the application of digital analytical tools? What benefit will your captaset draw from the use of such tools? Which type(s) of digital tools do you think will best serve it and why?

### First Iteration

Produce a digital project with your captaset using a tool (or set of tools) especially chosen by you to help you investigate your particular question. This project will put forward a thesis, it will also provide evidence to support that thesis, and it will have a clearly-presented conclusion (even if that conclusion is, "I failed to support my thesis for the following reasons..."). Also answer the following questions: What did you learn about your question and your captaset by doing this iteration? What did you learn about digital tools by doing this iteration? Given what you have learned, what are your plans for the next iteration?

### Second Iteration

Iterate your work and produce a second digital project, *perhaps* using a different tool (or set of tools) with your captaset. This project will put forward a thesis, it will also provide evidence to support that thesis, and it will have

a clearly-presented conclusion (even if that conclusion is, “I failed to support my thesis for the following reasons...”). Also answer the following questions. What were the similarities between your processes in the first and second iterations? The differences? The joys? The frustrations? What were the ways that the technological affordances and restrictions of each tool interacted with the capta to produce something unique?

### Presenting Product and Process

Present both your projects *and* your process to the class, and receive feedback from the group. Each student will be given 20 minutes of time, at least 10 minutes of which should be discussion and questions from the group.

### Midterm and Final Self-Reflections

As noted in the “Course Learning Objectives” section above, one of the goals of this course is to give you the opportunity to acquire a personally-useful understanding of the ways in which digital technologies are used in disciplines across the humanities and allied social sciences. For this to be worthwhile, of course, you must decide what “personally-useful” means for you in this context. We will be spending time during the first session, but also throughout the term, thinking about and discussing our different needs, approaches and goals.

You will be responsible for submitting two assessments of your own progress and practice (of at least 250 words each; 2 minutes spoken), once at mid-term and then again at the end of the course. This report should address what your struggles have been, and also your strengths. What are you finding easy? What are you finding difficult? What has been unexpected? What is going right to plan? What might you have done differently? What are you going to do next? The midterm reflection should also include thoughts and responses to the session you attend at the Keystone DH 2016 conference. How did the ideas presented in that session change your mind about your work, if at all? What did you learn about your own practice from listening to the practice of others?

### ASSESSMENT

I would like to make sure that the criteria for the assessment of your work aligns with learning experiences that we value. One of the things that I value most in a course like this is seeing that you all improve in your ability to confront new and/or unknown tools in order to solve problems important to you. To this end I have asked you to create your own question, engage with different tools, and then reflect on that process. Another thing that I value is your ability to successfully produce interpretive storytelling of the type that humanists do on a daily basis. But, above all, what is of great value to me is that you demonstrate a continuous engagement with the process of doing this interpretive work. Finally, I believe that your final grade should also contain assessment *from you* about your work in the course.

This all said, scoring the efforts of twelve intense weeks with a single letter is reductive at best. To enrich this process, I would like to use the following three methods of evaluation so that the grade might end up being the least important piece of feedback that you receive:

1. Self-evaluations. As you move towards the goal of acquiring a “personally-useful” understanding of the digital humanities, you will pause and reflect on your progress.
2. Peer evaluations. We will not work solely in isolation. We will give feedback to our colleagues.
3. Professional evaluations. The instructors will comment on the work of the class deliverables.

DELIVERABLE	DUE DATE	WEIGHT
Asking Questions and Preparing to Answer Them	Friday, June 10 <sup>th</sup> , noon, CourseWeb	20%
Midterm Self-Reflection	Friday, June 24 <sup>th</sup> , noon, CourseWeb	10% (A or F)
First Iteration	Friday, July 1 <sup>st</sup> , noon, CourseWeb	20%
Presenting Product and Process	Wednesday, August 3 <sup>rd</sup> , class time	10%

<b>Second Iteration</b>	Friday, August 5 <sup>th</sup> , noon, CourseWeb	30%
<b>Final Self-Reflection</b>	Friday, August 5 <sup>th</sup> , noon, CourseWeb	10% (A or F)

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

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### Academic Integrity

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

### Disability Services

If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, you need to notify both the instructor and Disability Resources and Services no later than the second week of the term. You may be asked to provide documentation of your disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify Disability Resources and Services, call (412) 648-7890 (Voice or TTD) to schedule an appointment. The Disability Resources and Services office is located in 140 William Pitt Union on the Oakland campus.

### Copyright Notice

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### Statement on Classroom Recording

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

## WEEK-BY-WEEK PLAN

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### Week 1 (May 18)

*Course Introduction*

*Data and Tools in the Humanities I*

#### Discussion Seeds

What is a classroom? What is the relationship between content and learning? What makes one a "digital humanist?" What makes one an ally to the digital humanities? How do we form questions in the humanities that the computer can help us answer? How do digital tools respond to these questions?

#### Preparation for This Week

1. Ingest and think about the following, working from the starter concepts, "tools" and "the humanities."
  - Drucker, Johanna. *Diagrammatic Writing*. Banff: Visual Writing/ubu Editions, 2013. [On CourseWeb]

### Week 2 (May 25)

*Data and Tools in the Humanities II*

#### Discussion Seeds

What are questions in the humanities? What are data in the humanities? What tools have we traditionally used to investigate the humanities? What additional tools, if any, does the digital computer offer? What problems, ideas and questions are brought in by the projects chosen by the group? What technologies are used in this first set of projects? How do these technologies interact with the primary source material?

### Preparation for This Week

1. Find the first pair of DH projects that you will bring to the group for discussion. Remember, they should be from different humanities domains. You are also looking out for the type of material you would like to analyze for your own coursework.
2. Ingest and think about the following, working from the starter concepts, “boundaries” and “definitions.”
  - Koh, Adeline. “A Letter to the Humanities: DH Will Not Save You.” *Hybrid Pedagogy* (April 19, 2014): <http://www.hybridpedagogy.com/journal/a-letter-to-the-humanities-dh-will-not-save-you/>.
  - Gold, Matthew K. “The Digital Humanities Moment.” In *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, edited by Matthew K. Gold, ix-xvi. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.
    - Please read from the open-access edition and leave at least one thoughtful annotation behind: <http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/2>.

### Week 3 (June 1)

*How is DH Produced? I*

#### Discussion Seeds

What is “digital scholarship,” and is it the same as the “digital production of academic work?” How do scholars learn to use their tools? How do they put them into practice? What problems, ideas and questions are brought in by the projects chosen by the group? What technologies are used in this first set of projects? How do these technologies interact with the primary source material?

### Preparation for This Week

1. Find the second pair of DH projects that you will bring to the group for discussion. Remember, they should be from different humanities domains. You are also still looking out for the type of material you would like to analyze for your own coursework
2. Ingest and think about the following, working from the starter concepts, “production” and “publication.”
  - Posner, Miriam. “How Did They Make That? The Video!” Miriam Posner's Blog, April 17, 2014. <http://miriamposner.com/blog/how-did-they-make-that-the-video/>. In tandem with this video, see also <http://miriamposner.com/blog/how-did-they-make-that/>, from August 29, 2013.
  - Morville, Peter and Louis Rosenfeld. “Chapters 1-3.” In *Information Architecture for the World Wide Web*, Third Edition, 3-38. Sebastopol, CA : O'Reilly, 2007. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,uid&db=nlebk&AN=415014&scope=site> [Also on CourseWeb]

### Week 4 (June 8)

*How is DH Produced? II*

### OFFICIAL PEER EVALUATION DAY; “Asking Questions...” DUE FRIDAY

#### Discussion Seeds

What are your questions, problems and ideas? What sorts of capta will you be working with? What tools suit your questions and your primary source material?

### Preparation for This Week

1. It is time for you to turn your attention to your own deliverables. What are your questions? Where is your capta? What tools suit your ideas and the primary sources? Bring ideas and answers to these questions to class.
2. Ingest and think about the following, working from the starter concepts, “knowledge as interpretation” and “cultural analysis.”
  - Drucker, Johanna. “Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display” *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (2011): <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/5/1/000091/000091.html>.
  - Liu, Alan. “Where is Cultural Criticism in the Digital Humanities” In *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, edited by Matthew K. Gold, 490-509. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012. <http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/20>.

### Week 5 (June 15)

*How Does a DH Analysis Operate? I*

#### Discussion Seeds

Let's consider what happens when statistics meets music history. How (and why) did the popular press pick it up?

#### Preparation for This Week

1. Find two tools, appropriate to your research, to bring into class. Come in having tried them and having developed an opinion of their pros and cons.
2. Ingest and think about the following, working from the starter concepts, "music" and "proof."
  - Brown, Eryn. "Scientists Make Surprising Discovery about Pop Music's Evolutionary History." *LA Times* (May 6, 2015): . <http://www.latimes.com/science/sciencenow/la-sci-sn-pop-music-trends-20150505-story.html> [NOTE: The newspaper has changed the headline to "Pop Music's Most Important Revolution? That Would be Hip-Hop, Science Reveals."
  - Mauch, Matthias, Robert M. MacCallum, Mark Levy, and Armand M. Leroi. "The Evolution of Popular Music: USA 1960-2010." *Royal Society Open Science* 2 (May 6, 2015): <http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rsos.150081>.

### Week 6 (June 22)

*Keystone DH 2016*

#### MIDTERM SELF-REFLECTION DUE FRIDAY

(Please remember to include thoughts on the Keystone DH session you attended and how it impacted—or did not impact—your thinking about your own work)

**At any time during this day, you will attend a session of the Keystone DH 2016 conference being held in Hillman Library.** The schedule is here: <http://keystonedh.network/2016/schedule/>. Please allow me to draw your attention to Sessions 1 and 2 which take place wholly within our scheduled class time, but also the keynote presentation at 5pm by [Roopika Risam](#), which promises to be fantastic.

### Week 7 (June 29)

*How Does a DH Analysis Operate? II*

#### OFFICIAL PEER EVALUATION DAY; 1<sup>st</sup> ITERATION DUE FRIDAY

#### Discussion Seeds

Does the type of humanities capta you are using change the way a DH analysis operates? How do different tools respond to different types of capta? Are there digital doors that do not open to certain fields?

#### Preparation for This Week

1. Find two more tools, appropriate to your research, to bring into class. Come in having tried them and having developed an opinion of their pros and cons. Can you tell if any of your initial assumptions are being revealed or challenged by the tools you have chosen and/or the process of using computers for analysis?
2. Ingest and think about the following, focusing on the starter concepts, "data model" and "interpretive computation."
  - McDonough, Jerome, et al. "Twisty Little Passages Almost All Alike: Applying the FRBR Model to a Classic Computer Game." *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (2010): <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/4/2/000089/000089.html>.
  - Szabo, Victoria. "Transforming Art History Research with Database Analytics." *Art Documentation* 31 (Fall 2012): 158-175.

### Week 8 (July 6)

*How is Contemporary Capta about Humans Created and Preserved?*

#### Discussion Seeds

What implications does mediation have for the way we generate, understand, and analyze capta? What are the merits of “forgetting,” and how does it relate to the way information professionals understand preservation?

#### Preparation for This Week

1. Consider the ways in which you are leaving a trace through your process and activities in this class.
2. Ingest the following, working from the starter topics “**forgetting**” and “**mediation**.”
  - Mayer-Schönberger, Viktor. “Useful Void: The Art of Forgetting in the Age of Ubiquitous Computing.” Working Paper. August 2007. <https://research.hks.harvard.edu/publications/getFile.aspx?Id=255>.
  - Deuze, Mark, Peter Blank, and Laura Speers. “A Life Lived in Media.” *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (2012): <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/6/1/000110/000110.html>.

### Week 9 (July 13)

*Ethical Representations of Digital Bodies*

#### Discussion Seeds

How does Kim's notion of the “digital body” fit into your perception of online identity? Does this alter your view of your work for this class or in the realm of DH more generally? Do you agree that Digital Humanities projects are concerned with what Kimberly Christian-Withey describes as “the gaze” or “practices of looking”? Had you already encountered some of these concerns of representation in your own work? Do you think these concerns only relate to particular topics? Are there ethical concerns in your work for this class?

1. Ingest the following, working from the starter topics “**digital bodies**” and “**the gaze**.”
  - Kim, Dorothy. “Social Media and Academic Surveillance: The Ethics of Digital Bodies.” *Model View Culture*, October 7, 2014. <https://modelviewculture.com/pieces/social-media-and-academic-surveillance-the-ethics-of-digital-bodies>.
  - Christen-Withey, Kimberly. “On Not Looking: Ethics and Access in the Digital Humanities.” Presentation at the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities, March 25, 2014. <http://mith.umd.edu/podcasts/dd-spring-2014-kimberly-withey-christen/>.

### Week 10 (July 20)

*Where and How Does DH Research Get Used? I*

#### Discussion Seeds

How do TED talks work? How do archives work? What does any of this have to do with the digital humanities?

#### Preparation for This Week

1. Think about how you would summarize your work for this class in 250 words, or 2 minutes, or in one 1400 x 1000 pixel collage. [Hint: this isn't just going to be a thought experiment].
2. Ingest and think about the following, working from the starter concepts, “**sustainability**” and “**fame**.”
  - Koblin, Aaron. “Visualizing Ourselves...with Crowd-Sourced Data.” Ted2011 Video, recorded March 2011, [http://www.ted.com/talks/aaron\\_koblin](http://www.ted.com/talks/aaron_koblin).
  - Theimer, Kate. “Archives in Context and as Context.” *Journal of Digital Humanities* 1 (Spring 2012), <http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/1-2/archives-in-context-and-as-context-by-kate-theimer/>.

**Week 11 (July 27)***How Is DH Critically Assessed?***OFFICIAL PEER EVALUATION DAY****Discussion Seeds**

Do we require scholars of English assess our five-paragraph essays? Do we require scholars of code to assess our software design? Do we require art historians to assess our visualizations?

**Preparation for This Week**

1. Ingest and think about the following, working from the starter concepts, “critique” and “expertise.”
  - Burdick, Anne, et al. “4. Provocations.” In *Digital\_Humanities*, 99-135. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012.
    - Please read from the open-access digital edition and consider its form factor:  
[http://mitpress.mit.edu/sites/default/files/titles/content/9780262018470\\_Open\\_Access\\_Edition.pdf](http://mitpress.mit.edu/sites/default/files/titles/content/9780262018470_Open_Access_Edition.pdf).

**Week 12 (August 03)***Assessing DH in Practice***PROJECT PRESENTATIONS TODAY****2<sup>ND</sup> ITERATION AND FINAL SELF-EVALUATION DUE FRIDAY**