

ENG 373: Introduction to Digital Humanities

Professor: Michelle Mouton

Collaborating Professor (and superhero): Brooke Bergantzel

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Course Description

Digital Humanities (or, DH) uses tools from computer science to extract, analyze and/or display information of interest in the fields of the Humanities (Literature and Languages, History, Philosophy, Religious Studies, and so forth). This definition of DH is deceptively simple. We'll begin with a look at theoretical debates about the nature of DH, and the nature of the Humanities, and you'll see what I mean. In addition to exploring definitions, we'll consider--what do we gain but also what do we lose when conceptualizing the products of Human culture as "data sets" to be analyzed mechanically/machinically. To what degree is digital "analysis" also already "interpretation" and to what degree is interpretation always in the hands of the reader/user?

As we grapple with these and other theoretical questions, students will design and implement Digital Humanities Projects. The texts we'll use as starting points are bound volumes of *The Husk*, Cornell's 20th Century Literary Magazine, and in some ways forerunner to the current publication *Open Field*. The class will produce the beginnings of an archive to the volume, with an index, searchable full text material, and a creative adaptation of one or more of the works. Students will also complete research tasks (traditional and digital) to help contextual their favorite works.

Structure: Progression

I envision us taking on this task in three successive "chunks":

- 1) Creating a database (using Omeka) that indexes and categorizes pieces from assigned volumes. (Topics: working with spreadsheets and databases; meta-data standards and consistency issues; literary genres and other classification systems)
- 2) Creating a digitally-shaped and digitally-shared story adaptation of a work from *The Husk*. (Possible Topics: adaptation theory; narrative theory; game creation; digital film editing; green screen video-making;
- 3) Using the class's *Husk* database (or some other data set) to create meaningful visualizations of Humanities texts. (Possible Topics: info-graphics and visual theory; human v. computing textual analysis strategies; digitization of texts; available free tools for textual analysis; interpreting visualized data.)

You'll note that #s 2 and 3 above use the word "possible. The learning objectives as we go forward will be based to (hopefully) a considerable extent on students' goals and contributions.

Collaboration, "play," and a willingness to take risks are central values in Digital Humanities. This is one way, in fact, that DH arguably differs from traditional Humanities. DH also values diversity

among participants—with respect not only to skills sets but to individual histories, social identities, and levels of experience.

This course's structure mirrors these values: students will be full participants in the course's design as we go forward, and are expected to bring and to share prior knowledge, skills sets, and perspectives on the material in a collaborative spirit of learning. My role as instructor is to provide the basic framework and foundation for learning about DH, and to articulate minimal learning objectives (students will shape and articulate additional objectives). Students' role will be to engage with this framework, but to go beyond this framework to do independent inquiry, to develop companion skills that we may not focus on in class (for example, students more advanced in CS may choose to experiment at points with more challenging tools, while Humanities students may wish to hone their literary analysis skills by focusing on the analysis of literary devices).

Structure: A Typical Day

Morning classes will meet from 9-11 daily, and most mornings will be spent discussing readings. I will call on a student (who will know in advance that it's their turn!) to begin discussion of the readings with two or three discussion questions. Many days, we will check in on how projects are proceeding.

Students should also reserve afternoons (from 1-3), as this time slot will be used to schedule technology workshops as needed, and it's a great time in any case for doing project-based homework, individually or in groups.

Homework will generally include readings on some aspect of DH (often, but not always, directly related to projects underway) and exercises related to the readings. Homework assignments will be posted on Moodle at least one day in advance.

On some days (see the schedule), students will have papers due before class, or should have projects ready to share for critique. On some days (hopefully) we'll have breakfast items to share. And on some days, we'll be visited by Cornell's Technology Superhero, Brooke Bergantzel.

Schedule – Rough Sketch of Topics and Due Dates

Week 1

Mon Overview of DH

Tues Humanities and DH: Definitions and Debates

Wed Working with Data: Spreadsheets v. Databases

Thurs **Essay 1 Due: DH at Cornell?**

Digital Literary Archives

Afternoon Workshop: Omeka, VLS

Fri Close Literary Devices and Close Reading, *The Husk*

Week 2 (to include afternoon workshops on various digital storytelling tools, including Premiere, Twine, etc., as needed)

Mon **Husk Spreadsheets Due**
Digital Storytelling Tools and Theory

Tues **Essay 2 Due: Close Reading of Chosen Piece from *The Husk***
Digital Storytelling Tools and Theory, cont.

Wed Digital Storytelling Tools and Theory, cont.

Thurs Narrative Theory and the Digital

Fri **“Rough Cuts” of Digital Storytelling Projects due for class critique;**
Readings in Diversity and DH

WEEK 3 (Students will continue to work on Digital Storytelling Projects; and will begin digital textual analysis projects)

Mon **Essay 3 Due: Analysis of DH Project**
Digital Textual Analysis; Available Tools for Textual Analysis

Tues Textual Analysis and Literature

Wed **Final Versions of Digital Storytelling Projects Due**

Thurs Digital Humanities

Fri **Textual Analysis Visualization and Write-Up Due for Critique and AI**

Week 4

Mon **Textual Analysis Visualization and Write-Up Due, Final Draft**

Tues Big Data, Data Scraping in Literary Studies and History

Wed **Proposal for your dream DH Project**

Assignments and Grading

Teamwork Skills and In-Class Contributions: 15%

As a class, we'll develop a rubric together for this portion of your grade.

Homework Exercises: 15%

These will be assigned along with course readings on a near daily basis, and should be submitted to the appropriate location on Moodle before 8:00 AM. You may get full credit for this portion of

your final grade by putting in good-faith and consistent effort. Sloppy or unfinished homework assignments, both reading and writing, will negatively impact your learning and final grade.

4 Essays: 40% (1000-1200 wrds each)

Three of your essays (your choice) should be posted to Moodle in the appropriate place before morning class, for classmates as well as myself to access. I encourage you to use the Writing Studio for assistance with content and form, and feel free to rely on my assistance as well. Keep in mind that the goal is not to produce perfect writing but to engaged deeply with the prompts and to learn through writing, yours and others. Please do proofread carefully, by any means necessary, to avoid distracting your readers with needless errors. Please do proofread carefully, by any means necessary, to avoid distracting your readers with needless errors. ((Annoying, isn't it?)) Use MLA formatting for citations as appropriate.

Essay 1: This year, Cornell is embarking on a re-visioning of its general education curriculum. There will undoubtedly be consideration, too, of major requirements. Consider this hypothetical: a group of Cornell faculty are advocating for Digital Humanities as an essential, required—even a core—component of every Humanities student's education. An overlapping group of faculty are advocating for Digital Humanities as a core component of Computer Science students' education and practice. Your essay, addressed to the Cornell faculty, should explore the pros and cons of shifting to a Digital Humanities paradigm—incorporating insights and arguments from our readings and class discussions—and should take a position on each of these proposals. (1000-1200 words; double-spaced; MLA or Chicago formatting and citations) See below for writing strategies.

Essay 2: In this close reading of a literary work from *The Husk*, you'll analyze it, taking it apart as much as possible to examine how it works to convey meaning. Your purpose, in the end, is to think about what aspects of this work you would wish to convey through a digital adaptation. For now, you need to determine what it *does* mean, and how the literary and linguistic elements contribute to that meaning, using a traditional methodology from Literary Studies.

Your close reading will identify the genre, rhetorical situation, themes, and tone, and will focus on analyzing the striking patterns (and deviations from the patterns) of the language: word choice, syntax, punctuation, rhythm, imagery, meter (if a poem), literary devices like metaphor and personification, and so forth. What you uncover through this analysis and brainstorming will serve in your finished essay as the "evidence" for your claims about what the essentially work *means*, which you'll articulate in your thesis statement and sub points.

Conclude by reflecting on what aspects of the work's meaning you would want—essentially—to keep intact, even if conveyed by other means, and on how you might imagine conveying them with visual rather than oral/typographical/linguistic tools.

Essay 3: You are freelancing as a web-writer for the MVU Online Faculty Newsletter, which features stories for faculty on exciting new DH projects. Your goal is to act as a reviewer (and, with respect to the second essay, a curator): you should provide an overview that uses appropriate technical language while ensuring that it will be read and understood by faculty interested in DH but not necessarily CS experts. Your readers are busy but also on the lookout for teaching and research inspiration. They are interested, but to KEEP them interested, you will want your analysis go beneath surface issues. Your readers will probably have the following kinds of questions as they click on the link to your web-article:

- Who are the creators and what was their purpose or research question?
- What was their process, and what exactly is the final product? I.e. what kind of DH project is this?
- Does the project display information in a static way, or it interactive?
- What might it allow me to do as a researcher?
- What *value* does this project add to people studying this subfield? Simultaneously, what are its limitations—how does the quantification of information limit what can be asked and known about this subject?
- What might this allow me to do as a researcher?
- Could this project serve as a model for other, similar kinds of projects—and for example? To use this as a model, what level of computing or data science knowledge would be necessary?

Writing Strategy: Since this will be read online, keep paragraphs shorter, and avoid wordiness. Include essentials in the first paragraph (who, what, where, how) and keep your reader interested by going more deeply in to the question of “why.”

Since your audience is faculty and this will be published online (yet MVU doesn’t have money for a copy editor’s position) it’s essential that you read your work aloud, have someone read it to you, print it out in giant font to read it again, then in tiny font to read it yet again, and include NO errors in grammar, spelling, etc. The tone of the piece, or “voice,” can be conversational if you choose, or it can be more formal, but faculty probably aren’t interested in being your best buddy, so your tone should be appropriate to your purposes, which is demonstrating that you’ve done your homework (literally and figuratively) and are a reliable source of information.

Be sure to title your work, or else there wouldn’t be anything to click on in the first place.

Essay 4: Write a sketch (“treatment”) of a grant proposal for your dream DH project. Details forthcoming.

DH Products: 30%

Your three DH “products” will be (1) a class-built database of content published in Cornell’s

historic literary magazine, *The Husk*, (2) the transformation of content from the *The Husk* of your choosing into a digital story, and (3) a textual analysis and data visualization project accompanied by an analytic write-up of findings. We'll produce a rubric for these collaboratively.

Course Policies

Technology: Students should bring laptops to class on a regular basis. These are for coursework only and may not be used for email, general web-surfing, games, etc. Students who appear distracted or disengaged from class discussion, or who do not follow this policy, will have be forbidden from using technology in class.

Van Etten – Lacey House: The Van Etten - Lacey House was once the home of Cornell's English Professor Winifred Van Etten, and later by English Professor Stephen Lacey. It was entirely hand-crafted in the 1930s, and showcases the original woodwork and stonework. The college acquired the house in 2006, and it now houses the Center for the Literary Arts. In addition to our classroom, the VEL is home to a letterpress print shop and book bindery (ground floor), and the office of the Emerging Writers Fellow (main floor). At all times, the house should be treated with respect: wash your own dishes, don't leave any trash behind, and treat the furniture with care. When it is not reserved, you are welcome to use the main floor for study outside of class times.

Accessibility: Cornell College makes reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. Students should notify the Coordinator of Academic Support and Advising and their course instructor of any disability related accommodations within the first three days of the term for which the accommodations are required, due to the fast pace of the block format. For more information on the documentation required to establish the need for accommodations and the process of requesting the accommodations, see <http://www.cornellcollege.edu/academic-support-and-advising/disabilities/index.shtml>.

Attendance: I expect you to come to class every day and to participate constructively. Because our class format will be based primarily on discussion and activities, you'll learn most from being fully present and engaged. Any absence after two missed class periods (not days) will result in the automatic diminishment of your final grade by ½ letter grade. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, so I advise you to save these two class periods for illness, travel, co-curricular events, and other times you might really need them. Perfect attendance will work in your favor should your final grade be a borderline percentage.

Coordinating Co-Curricular Activities and Religious Observances: Although I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, if you have a sports or other co-curricular activity scheduled that could interfere with your ability to attend class, or plan to observe a religious holiday, please notify me at the beginning of the term and provide me with a schedule of events. Afterwards, you should consult others in the class about what you may

have missed. I will also meet with you before or after that class period at your request to discuss options.

Deadlines: Because getting behind on the block plan can be fatal for later assignments, I typically will not accept late papers, and I do not grant extensions except for true emergencies. If you find yourself falling behind, talk with me about it as soon as possible, and I will help you to strategize. For project deadlines, it's important to set mini-deadlines with your group, and to stick to the time-table. If you're falling behind, it's always better to turn in something than nothing. To quote a famous fashion designer, "Make it work."

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism is using others' words, research, or ideas without crediting them fully and accurately, and it is a serious academic offense. Plagiarism can include writing a classmate's paper, stealing (or buying) an essay and submitting it as your own, cutting and pasting from the internet, or mis-paraphrasing an article that you document. Cheating includes receiving unauthorized assistance in class discussions or exams (e.g., relying on crib notes rather than your own reading). Whatever the form, know that you are ultimately the person responsible for maintaining academic integrity. If you plagiarize or cheat, whether it is intentional or not, you'll receive an F as your final course grade and I will document the incident with the registrar. Feel free to ask me questions any time about properly documenting sources, or the distinction between collaboration and cheating. Here is Cornell's official policy:

Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in The Catalogue, under the heading "Academic Honesty."

Intellectual Property: DH projects created for this course will be "open source." Your name (unless you opt out) will be added as a contributor to projects, but the class goal is to produce a structure that can be modified and built upon later, for the use of the Cornell Community and beyond. Your essays are yours to copyright, though Cornell reserves the right to use student work in institutional research projects and the like. (You have apparently signed something to this effect at some point.)

While I (as your instructor) can require you to "publish" work online, I cannot require you to attach your legal name to that work, because you have the right to protect your privacy

under FERPA laws. If you wish to opt out of having your name attached to your work online for privacy purposes, let me know and we can set up an alias.

Contacting Me: I would be happy to discuss your coursework during my office hours or by appointment. The best way to reach me, outside of office hours, is through email. If urgent, you may also text me at 319-560-2973. Know that I am unlikely to look at either after 7:00, but will respond within 24 hours and probably sooner.