500 words Assignment- Introduction to Digital Humanities class-reflective essay

How profoundly digital technology has changed society is quite an intriguing question. From digitized books, articles, podcasts, communicating with satellites to platforms like Github and Hypothesis.is, the nature of classrooms have also witnessed a massive change.

Reflecting on the video of the man with the first printed book often leaves us in dilemma whether the next technological discovery will place us in the same position like that of the man who first came across a physical copy of the printed book.

Restricting the term ‘humanities’ within a boundary of words have always been a difficult task. Yet, as we try to figure out the definition of humanities, we come across certain keywords like culture, society, respect, language, memory and imagination.

Thus Humanities from that vantage point can be looked as a discipline studying expressions, emotions, empathy, memory, literature and captures it through cultural and socio-economic perspectives. This also incorporates intersectional possibilities and thinking through practice.

Critical Thinking, Critical Analysis, Critical Method and Analytical Approach can be understood as certain crucial steps that helps understand and respond to several questions like what, why , how , and finally evaluating after observing the patterns.

Florence has been the birthplace of Italian Renaissance. Once upon a time, the discipline of humanities was associated with secular and scholarly activities. There has been significant effort during 18th and 19th century in distinguishing Humanities as a discipline from that of natural sciences, as it focuses more on human centric ideas.

As we delve into humanities, we find different perspectives of defining it like Wilhelm Dilthey described it as "spiritual sciences" and “human sciences”. Neo-Kantian Heinrich Rickert focused on ‘method’ used by humanities and ‘unique value within the cultural contexts’. American Philosopher Martha Nussbaum focused on ‘global partnership’ , democracy and ‘human concerns’. When we look outside the geographical boundaries of Europe, the development and discussion of humanities can be found in the “six arts” of Confucius in China and Islamic scholarship of studia adabiya included grammar, history, poetry, and so on. Mid 19th century and onset of Industrial Revolution led to the rise of universities, schools and formation of separate disciplines like archaeology, literature, philosophy and many more. When we move to the Indian context of humanities, for instance the cultural heritage building of IIT (ISM) Dhanbad, helps us reflect on colonial power, domination, cultural forms and long lived memories.

Using of digital humanities has also helped understanding Tracking modifications by using version control systems (VCS) , highlighting and annotating using Hypothesis.is, grouping of words via Word Cloud, producing knowledge through technology all are part of humanities. The class also helped in learning GitHub platform, its usage and mechanism, creation of GitHub repository, GitHub education and uploading of files and documents.

Finally, digital humanities is opening up newer transformative spaces where questions on science, technology and society can be discussed on intersecting grounds.