As I reflect back on our week-long **introduction to digital humanities**, I see it as a bridge between traditional humanities and the ever-evolving digital landscape. The classes highlighted both opportunities and challenges of how digital tools can be applied to study and interpret human experiences.

We began by exploring the concept of historicity in digital humanities. Historicity involves understanding the past not just as a series of events but as complex narratives shaped by human experiences and interpretations. This understanding is essential during digital archiving or digital storytelling, as it allows us to maintain the integrity and context of the original materials. We also examined how humanities are interpreted differently in Western, Global South, and Indian contexts, across generations- emphasizing the need for a culturally sensitive approach when applying digital humanities methodologies.

The course introduced us to the various functions of digital humanities, such as data management and collaboration. We learnt how digital tools facilitate the collection, analysis, and sharing of data in ways that were previously unimaginable which opened up new possibilities for collaboration across disciplines and regions, enabling scholars to work together on projects that span continents and cultures.

Understanding humanities as a field is crucial to appreciating the role of digital humanities. Humanities involve the study of people, processes, and human experiences, documenting both past and contemporary times through philosophy, literature, religion, language, archaeology, and the arts. Social sciences that employ humanistic methods fall under the umbrella of humanities. Thus, teaching us how people have created their world and how they, in turn, are shaped by it.

The course emphasized the importance of critical thinking, analysis, and approaches within the humanities. We traced the origins of the humanities back to the Greek term "Paideia," which referred to a general education course in the 5th century BCE. This concept was later adapted by the Church Fathers and merged with liberal arts in Christian education. Although it fell out of use after the Middle Ages, it was revived during the Renaissance. By the 19th century, humanities separated from the physical sciences, focusing more on human experiences. We also explored how humanities have been interpreted differently across cultures, from Europe to China, Japan, Islamic studies, and India.

In my regional language, Bangla, the term "Manob Bidya" (human studies) is often used to refer to the humanities. But according to me, a more fitting translation might be "Manob Prokriti" (the nature of humans), as the humanities fundamentally record and interpret human experiences.

We also reflected on the transition to the digital era, considering whether machines can truly think and how this shift is affecting art, culture, and human expression. While digital tools are powerful, they must be guided by empathy and a humanistic perspective to create a sustainable digital world. Ultimately, machines are designed to serve humanity. It is our responsibility to ensure they reflect the unique human experience.

References:

1. The British Academy for Humanities & Social Sciences, “Press Pack”.
2. National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act, 1965