**FAULL / Jakacki — Pedagogical**

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**Pedagogical Hermeneutics and Teaching DH in a Liberal Arts Context**

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In the summer 2014 issue of *CEA Critic* authors Lindsay Thomas and Dana Solomon remarked on the notable lack of discussions of pedagogy in the development of DH in undergraduate institutions (2014). Arguing that DH pedagogy should be something far more than an afterthought, Thomas and Solomon outlined how their undergraduate project RoSE at the University of California, Santa Barbara developed students to be active users and researchers of DH. In the same issue of *CEA Critic,* E. Leigh Bonds drew on the discussions of Melissa Terras, Stephen Ramsey, Alan Liu, et al. about the fundamental difference between the learning goals of DH courses and those of traditional courses in the humanities (2014). In the case of working with archival materials, how do we teach students to be makers and doers together? Or, in Liu’s terms, how do we develop a pedagogical hermeneutic of ‘practice, discovery, community’ (2009)?

This paper will focus on the teaching experience of Drs. Katherine Faull and Jakacki in the fall of 2014 to show how the planning, design, and execution of a new project-based course—HUMN 100: Digging into the Digital and the Humanities Now!—introduced students to the world of digital humanities through the use of selected digital tools and methods of analysis. This course, taught within the Comparative Humanities program, was designed specifically for first- and second-year students in order to encourage the development of digital habits of mind at the earliest phases of their liberal arts curricular experience (Clement, 2012). Developed to encourage examination and experimentation with a range of digital humanities approaches, students worked with primary archival materials to encourage digital modes of inquiry and analysis. The decision to root the course in a multifaceted analysis of archival materials provided the rare chance for students to engage in the research process typical for a humanities scholar: namely, the discovery of artifacts, the formulation of research questions, followed by the analysis and synthesis of findings culminating in the publication of initial findings in a digital medium. In the process, we introduced students to the basic structure of how to develop a DH research project.

For Bucknell University, the focus in digital humanities scholarship and learning has been primarily on spatial thinking (Pacchioli, 2013). It was important to both instructors to emphasize that objective in the development of the course and its learning outcomes, and so they focused upon the importance of finding materials that would be of interest to students ‘in place’. We decided to run the course in two sections, anticipating an opportunity to reflect different perspectives of the instructors’ expertise with DH methods and tools. One section focused on the Colonial mission diaries of the Moravians from Shamokin, Pennsylvania. Written in English, the diary sections selected dealt with interactions between some of the first Europeans to the area and the Native peoples they met and worked among. The other section considered a subset of the diaries of James Merrill Linn, one of the first graduates of the university and a soldier in the American Civil War. Both choices reflect and extend Bucknell’s interest in digital/spatial thinking in terms of its place in the larger historical and cultural narrative.

In this paper we demonstrate how scaffolding the course—establishing a parallel structure that spanned both sections—accommodated both core texts while reinforcing the importance of considering how different DH-based methods would strengthen students’ understanding of that subject matter. This approach allowed both instructors to develop more sophisticated and complex course modules while assisting one another through the strengths and skills of each. We will discuss how this challenged us to consider whether we were co-teaching two sections of one course or two courses in collaboration, and where we were successful in identifying moments that offered a richer learning environment for both sections, supporting each other in our separate sections when our own DH expertise and pedagogical approaches were needed by the other. In essence, we had to learn how to teach one another while we were teaching the subject matter to our students.

This course was developed to encourage examination and experimentation with a range of digital humanities approaches, and how digital humanists apply computational methods that involve textual analysis and data visualization. The sequencing of the modules was carefully designed so that the ‘product’ of each module then became the ‘data’ of the next module. Throughout the course, students developed a database of names, people, places, and connections that grew organically out of the focus of each specific section. This data, crucial to the success of the students’ assignments, needed some restructuring as we moved onto the next module; for example, students’ close reading in the TEI module led to the development of a prosopography that led to data for entry into Gephi that was then built out in adding geospatial data for GIS. Extensive use was made of online platforms that emphasize important forms of digital engagement, including collaborative online writing environments. Each module ended with a short assignment and also a reflective public-facing blog post that became an unmarked form of intellectual interaction.

Student enrollment in the two sections of the course was purposely limited to first- and second-year undergraduates with no background in digital humanities. Accordingly, the course was designed with the goal of not only exposing them to tools of distant and close reading, and network and spatial visualization, but also requiring that they learn to think critically about what each of these methods reveals in the manuscript texts they themselves transcribed; finally, the students were required to produce digital artifacts.

This paper will argue that the placement of this course within the interdisciplinary context of the program in Comparative Humanities underscored the program learning goals both of comparativity and interdisciplinarity and the course-specific goals of a new pedagogical hermeneutic. Teaching students to compare meaningfully intellectual materials of different or opposing types, and to theorize the difference between textual and material artifacts, narrative and non-narrative texts, and visual and analytical modes of thought was central to the course. To promote this, each module required students to read key secondary texts that were then integrated into their own reflections on the module. What does Johanna Drucker say about the visual rhetoric of visualization (2014)? How does Elena Pierazzo argue for the epistemic difference of diplomatic editions (2011)? What do Daniel Rosenberg and Anthony Grafton say about the development of timelines and the conceptualization of history (2000)? The interdisciplinary humanistic approach was thus clearly and directly linked to the learning goals of the course. Students also learned to identify, use, and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different DH methodologies and tools and were encouraged to identify and use key DH terms and concepts. As a result, students learned to develop research questions that could be answered with DH tools and methodologies, and work collaboratively in groups to create projects that related to their own research interests.

The development and implementation of HUMN 100—a course without precedent at Bucknell and few guiding models at other undergraduate institutions—was far from easy. While both instructors had co-taught courses before, neither had developed what both agreed was a high-risk, high-profile course that could have significant impact on our colleagues as well as on our students. We knew that we were establishing a foundation that could (hopefully) scale to a much broader presence for the digital humanities across the Bucknell curriculum.1 We realized early on in course development that in order for our students to understand the evolving nature of DH research, we would have to reveal our own status as learners. Teaching unfamiliar material—not only across sections, but within a particular class—required an at times uncomfortable degree of transparency.

However, for all the challenges involved in teaching the class, there were moments of glory. Disengaged students became engaged; solitary learners recognized the essential need to collaborate in order to succeed; participants recognized the transformative nature of the course to their own concepts of the humanities. Students were eager to participate in crowdsourced data collection; they were intrigued to visualize ego-networks as they learned the concepts of network theory; they were excited to see their marked-up transcriptions published in an online digital edition. Through these experiences, they realized that they were creating a community of young DHers and expressed eagerness to take part in more of these learning experiences.

We believe that this paper is important to the community that will be present at DH2015 because it provides a model for how digital humanities can and should be taught at the earliest stage of an undergraduate’s university experience, and how this type of learning experience is transformative in terms of demonstrating the interdisciplinarity within the humanities. If such courses are well planned, modestly ambitious, and truly collaborative in both conceptualization and execution, they promote radically new ways of understanding the goals of humanistic enquiry, a new pedagogical hermeneutic for teachers as well as students.

**Note**

1. In ‘Digital Learning in an Undergraduate Context: Promoting Long-Term Student-Faculty (and Community) Collaboration in the Susquehanna Valley’ (under review), we argue for the importance of such DH methods courses as crucial to the development of a larger curricular program of research-based learning environments that engage students in digital public humanities projects.

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