Assignment 1: Coding the Humanities Essay

Why Coding?

January, Block III, 2017/2018
15 January 2018

1 Assignment Description: The Computational Turn in the Humanities

Over the last decades, the humanities have experienced a computational turn, in the sense that, on the one hand, researchers increasingly rely on digital tools to interrogate their sources and answer prevailing questions in their domain, and on the other hand engage with "the digital" from a humanities perspective—for example by critically scrutinizing the role of algorithms in organizing society. In this essay, I want you to critically discuss the computational turn in your discipline by addressing the following questions:

- The course gave an introduction to basic programming techniques. Reflect in how you could have use coding your current or previous research?

- More generally: How has the computational turn affected your discipline and how will it revolutionize the Humanities? What do you think about the future role of computing in your discipline?

- Even if you think, after the course, that programming is totally irrelevant for the humanities, argue why.

2 Assignment Requirements and Instructions.

The Final Paper should meet the following formal requirements:

- I recommend keeping a logbook during in which you reflect on the practical use of the topics we cover in class.

- Maximum five pages (ca. 2500 words)

- To back up your essay with specific examples: select minimally three articles as examples

    - of the use computational techniques to the humanities,
    - **or**
    - existing research (including your own), which could benefit from a computational approach.

- Write a coherent text. And avoid repetition.

- Cite coherently in the reference style of your choice.

- As the paper is relatively short, avoid quoting too much.

3   Assignment Procedure

- Sunday 21 January, 23:59h: Upload a draft version on Blackboard with references.

- Monday 29 January, 23:59h: Opportunity for individual feedback.

- Monday 5 February, 23:59h: Final Paper due. To be uploaded on Blackboard.

4   Grading

4.1   Aspects

This assignment counts for 40% of the total grade. Grading will assess the following aspects:

- Research Question.

- Positioning yourself in an academic debate.

- Correct application of concepts/theories.

- Selection of literature and/or data.

- Originality.

- Structure and presentation of the argument.

4.2   Scheme

The assignment will be graded using the following schema:

- 10 - The paper can be published without any additional work. Perfect

- 8 - 9: Excellent. Highly original work. A solid representation of existing literature.

- 6 - 7: You did very well in reproducing existing findings/concepts, but the paper lacks a personal perspective/contribution.

- 5: You have written the required amount of words, without making fatal errors.

- 2 - 4: You did an attempt, but not very seriously. Your paper either lacks a personal contribution, and/or does not meet the formal requirements.

- 1: You filled out your name and student number correctly.

5   Deadline

Hand in your assignment k.beelen@uva.nl on Sunday **February 5 2018, by 23:59** latest. You can upload it on Blackboard as well.

6   Literature

Important Digital Humanities journals:
Journal of Literary and Linguistic Computing
Digital Humanities Quarterly
Other Useful Books Schreibman, Susan, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth, eds. A companion to digital humanities. John Wiley Sons, 2008.
Debates in the Digital Humanities. Open Access, see here: http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/