

Emory University
Department of English

ENG 385W-3 (Fall 2025)
Methods of Literary Research:
Quantitative Literary Analysis

Course Description

One of the primary strands of digital humanities scholarship is quantitative literary analysis: the use of quantitative methods to study literary texts. These practices raise many questions: What does large-scale analysis reveal about literature that cannot be discerned by reading alone? What happens when literary texts are converted into numbers, as they must be for any quantitative analysis to take place? What does it mean, both ethically and intellectually, to borrow methods developed in the sciences and/or from industry for literary and cultural studies scholarship? And what of the core concerns of literary and cultural studies? Can ideas about language, metaphor, style, labor, and power, among many others, be quantified, modeled, and/or otherwise explored at scale?

This course will take on these questions in both theory and practice, focusing our inquiry around several core methods of quantitative literary analysis, each paired with a set of literary texts we will employ them on. This first-hand experience will support our semester-long investigation into the uses and limits of quantitative methods for literary analysis.

Participating students should have some familiarity with Python or a willingness to learn.

Required Course Materials

There are two required books available for purchase the Emory Barnes & Noble. They are as follows:

- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein: 1818 Text*, ed. Charlotte Gordon (Penguin, 2018). ISBN-13: 9780143131847.
- Jericho Brown, *The Tradition* (Copper Canyon, 2019). ISBN-13: 9781556594861.

Please rent/purchase **print versions** of both of these texts.

All other readings will be posted on Canvas.

No-Screen Policy

Using personal laptops, phones, tablets, or other devices is not permitted in class, unless specified by the professor for use with a particular classroom assignment, such as a lab.

I have implemented this policy on the basis of significant research showing that use of cell phones, laptops, and other electronic devices cause distraction and negatively impact learning—not only for the person whose devices they are but also for the people around them. As you will see below, analog in-class notetaking has been incorporated into the design of the course.

Note: If you have accommodation needs around screens and/or note-taking that have been registered with the Department of Accessibility Services, I should have already received an email about this. As a next step, please schedule a meeting with me to discuss your specific needs.

List of Graded Assignments

Your grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

- Participation: 10%
- In-class notebook: 45% (15% each)
- Final project preparation assignments: 20% (5%, 15%)
- Final project and presentation: 25%

Description of Graded Assignments

Participation

Here are short descriptions of the five areas through which I assess class participation, adapted from grading criteria developed by Dr. Mark Sample of Davidson College:

- **Preparation:** Reading/reviewing any assigned material before class.
- **Presence:** Being verbally and nonverbally engaged during class.
- **Focus:** Avoiding distractions during class (both human and tech-related).
- **Asking questions** in class and in office hours, as well as via email when appropriate.
- **Specificity:** Referring to specific ideas from readings and prior class discussions when contributing to class discussion and/or in conversations during office hours.

In-class notebook

As a way of increasing learning, maximizing retention, and enhancing class participation (see above), you will be required to take notes *by hand* in each class and, at the end of each unit, respond to summative an in-class writing prompt. This work will take place in a notebook that I will provide to you, and will be evaluated after each summative response for a total of three times. After each evaluation cycle, you will receive a letter grade (A-F) as well as short written comments.

Final Project Preparation (FPP) Assignments

As the name indicates, Final Project Preparation Assignments are designed to lead up to the final project, and may be submitted as a project group. These assignments must be submitted via Canvas by the start of the day's class. You (or your group) will receive a letter grade (A-F) for each submission. Some FPP assignments will receive written feedback as well.

Final Project

The major summative assignment for this course is a final project. This project will allow you to apply the ideas and methods discussed in the course to a topic of your own devising. As part of this project, you will be required to present your work (in progress) to the class and, in lieu of a final exam, submit a paper that documents the project in its finished form. You may work alone or in groups of two or three. Project groups will be determined around the time of the Fall Break. You will receive an *individual* letter grade (A-F) on the basis of your contribution, as well as written feedback.

Additional information about the final project, including possible project formats and ideas, will be distributed after Fall Break.

If you would like additional feedback on any assignment, or have additional questions, please schedule a meeting with me during my office hours.

Grading Rubric for Final Projects

This chart of grading characteristics, also adapted from criteria developed by Dr. Mark Sample, describes the general rubric I employ when evaluating project-based work:

GRADE	CHARACTERISTICS
A	<p>Exceptional. The research question is substantive and well-scoped. The motivation for undertaking the project is clearly stated, as are its stakes. The student/group has clearly identified how the project extends and/or otherwise contributes to existing work on the subject. The student/group has identified (either by selecting or creating) a dataset of significant research potential, and matched their methods of analysis to the research question and to the dataset. They have employed the fullest possible range of methods that are appropriate to the research question, given the constraints of the project. They have analyzed the results of the research to the fullest extent possible, clearly identifying the implications of the research for existing scholarship and in more general terms. They have considered the limitations of the research as well as possible next steps. The work reflects an <i>original and in-depth</i> engagement with the topic.</p>
B	<p>Satisfactory. The research question is well-scoped and the motivation for undertaking the project is clearly stated, although its contributions are less substantive and its stakes are less compelling. The student/group has clearly identified how the project engages with existing work, although they have not made clear how it extends and/or otherwise contributes to existing scholarship. The student/group has identified (either by selecting or creating) a dataset of solid research potential, and matched their methods of analysis to the research question and to the dataset. They have employed methods that are appropriate to the research question, although they have not pursued all possible methods of analysis, given the constraints of the project. They have analyzed the results of the analysis sufficiently, identifying the major implications of the research for the existing scholarship and in more general terms, but they have not pursued those implications to the fullest extent possible. They have not fully considered the limitations of the research and/or possible next steps. The work reflects a <i>moderate</i> engagement with the topic: satisfactory and certainly solid, but not as original or in-depth as it could be.</p>
C	<p>Underdeveloped. The research question is poorly scoped and the motivation for undertaking the project is unclear. The contributions of the research are not articulated or, if they are, remain unconvincing. The student/group has not clearly identified how the project engages with existing scholarship. The selected dataset lacks significant research potential and/or the methods of analysis are poorly matched to the research question and/or to the dataset. Few methods of analysis are employed. The results of the analysis are not sufficiently explored; few implications of the research, either for the existing scholarship or in more general terms, are considered. The individual/group has not considered the limitations of the research and/or possible next steps. The work reflects a <i>passing</i> engagement with the topic: an attempt has been made, but not to a satisfactory degree.</p>

D	Limited. The research question is poorly scoped and the motivation for undertaking the project is unclear. The contributions of the research are not articulated. The student/group has not identified how the project engages with existing scholarship. The selected dataset lacks significant research potential, and the methods of analysis are poorly matched to the research question and/or to the dataset. Few methods of analysis are employed; they may be incompletely applied. The results of the analysis are scarcely explored, and no extended implications and/or limitations of the research are considered. The individual/group has not considered possible next steps. The work displays <i>no evidence of student engagement</i> with the topic: a cursory attempt has been made, but it remains insufficient and/or incomplete.
F	No Credit. The work is missing or consists of one or two unfinished sections.

Process for Calculating Final Grades

At the end of the semester, I will convert each of your letter grades to a 12 point GPA scale (e.g. A = 12, A- = 11, B+ = 10) and weight each of these numbers according to the percentage listed above. On Canvas, the letter grade—NOT the numerical/percentage grade—will reflect your grade in the course.

Policy on Attendance and Punctuality

I allow two excused absences, no questions asked. You do not need to tell me the reason why you are missing these classes, but you are responsible for finding out what was discussed in class on the days you miss. I do not provide copies of my personal class notes, although I may post slide-decks to Canvas.

If you need to miss more than two classes, *you must email me beforehand to ask for an excused absence*. Excused absences include: illness, approved Emory travel, and family emergencies. Other absences may be excused at my discretion. If I do not hear from you, your participation grade will be lowered beginning with the first unexcused absence.

Finally, please be respectful to your peers and arrive on time. If you arrive more than 15 minutes late, you will be considered absent for that class.

Policy on Late/Skipped Assignments and Extensions

All assignments are mandatory. Should you or your group submit an assignment after the due date, your grade for that assignment will decrease by a 1/3rd letter grade for each day that it is late (e.g. B becomes B-). Should you fail to submit an assignment entirely, you will receive an F on that assignment.

Should you need an extension, please contact me 24 hours *in advance* of the due date. After that, I will be unable to grant any extensions.

Should you experience difficulties working within your group, please also contact me as soon as possible.

Policy on AI

While this course is in many ways *about* AI (in that we are using methods that are now described as “AI”), the goals of this course are to think creatively and critically about AI, its uses, and its limits. As such, *the use of AI for any and all reading or writing assignments is prohibited*. (This includes the final project). This prohibition includes (but is not limited to) the use of AI to summarize course readings, outline or draft written work, or suggest improvements or offer feedback on your ideas or your writing. I have implemented this policy because reading and writing are both forms of thinking. They are also, crucially, both forms of learning. Very often, we do not entirely know what we think until we are required to put our ideas into words. This is the reason why writing is hard! But just because something is hard, it does not mean that we should not do it. In fact, the skills that we cultivate in this class that exceed the capabilities of chatbots and other genAI tools will be the ones that will ensure your future employability and professional success, not to mention your ability to take pleasure in the full range of human experience, expression, and communication.

Here's another take by the illustrious science fiction author Ted Chiang:

"When you're a student at a university, you should think of yourself as an athlete in training, and the job you'll do after you graduate is the sport you will compete in. You don't know specifically which sport you will play, and neither do your professors. What your professors do know is that strength training will help you. That's what essay writing is; it's strength training for the brain. Using ChatGPT to write your essays is like bringing a forklift into the weight room; you are never going to improve your cognitive fitness that way."

Finally, [here is just one recent EEG study](#) (of many that I expect we will soon see) that supports these claims.

And one caveat: where genAI tools can be useful, especially those embedded in programming environments, is in helping with basic data processing and programming tasks. If this were a course designed to teach you these methods, the same prohibition as above would apply. Because the goals of the course have to do with thinking critically and creatively about AI and *through* AI, and because not everyone is arriving to this class with the same skillset, I will allow the use of genAI code assistants in this course. I will model the responsible use of these code assistants in our in-class labs throughout the course.

Contacting your Professor and TA

Your professor and TA can be reached via their Emory email addresses. We respond to email M-F 9am-5pm, and outside of those hours if our schedules allow. Please allow 24 hours for a response, and 48 hours if your message is sent over the weekend.

For questions about grades, please contact Professor Klein only. I will discuss the issue with Mx. Whalen on your behalf.

Office of Accessibility Services

Office of Accessibility Services works with students who have disabilities to provide reasonable accommodations. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact OAS. It is the responsibility of the student to register with OAS. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and that disability accommodations are not provided until an accommodation letter has been processed. Students registered with OAS who have a letter outlining their academic accommodations, are strongly encouraged to coordinate a meeting time with your professor that will be best for both to discuss a protocol to implement the

accommodations as needed throughout the semester. This meeting should occur as early in the semester as possible. Students must renew their accommodation letter every semester they attend classes. Contact the Office of Accessibility Services for more information at (404) 727-9877 or accessibility@emory.edu. Additional information is available on [the OAS website](#).

Writing Center and ESL Program

Tutors in the Emory Writing Center and the ESL Program are available to support Emory College students as they work on any type of writing assignment, at any stage of the composing process. Tutors can assist with a range of projects, from traditional papers and presentations to websites and other multimedia projects. Writing Center and ESL tutors take a similar approach as they work with students on concerns including idea development, structure, use of sources, grammar, and word choice. They do not proofread for students. Instead, they discuss strategies and resources students can use as they write, revise, and edit their own work. Students who are non-native speakers of English are welcome to visit either the Writing Center tutors or the ESL tutors. All other students in the college should see Writing Center tutors. Learn more and make an appointment by visiting the websites of the ESL Program and the Writing Center. Please review tutoring policies before your visit.

Honor Code

The Honor Code applies to all work submitted for courses in Emory College. Students who violate the Honor Code may be subject to a written mark on their record, failure of the course, suspension, permanent exclusion, or a combination of these and other sanctions. The Honor Code may be reviewed [online](#). If you are unsure as to what constitutes plagiarism, please contact me before submitting your assignment.

Course Schedule at a Glance*Class schedule subject to change.**Please consult Canvas for the most current class schedule*

Meeting	Topic	Date	Milestone
1	Course overview	Aug 28	
2	Unit 1 Overview: Topic Modeling Climate Fiction	Sep 2	
3	Climate Fiction: Literary Analysis	Sep 4	
4	Climate Fiction: Topic Modeling	Sep 9	
5	Topic Modeling Climate Fiction Lab	Sep 11	
6	Topic Modeling Climate Fiction Discussion	Sep 16	
7	Topic Modeling Climate Fiction Response	Sep 18	In-class: Prompt #1
8	Unit 2 Overview: Classifying Frankenstein	Sep 23	
9	Frankenstein: Literary Analysis, day 1	Sep 25	
10	Frankenstein: Literary Analysis, day 2	Sep 30	
11	Frankenstein: Classification	Oct 2	
12	Frankenstein: Classification Lab	Oct 7	
13	Frankenstein and Classification Discussion	Oct 9	In-class: Prompt #2
14	// No class - Fall break	Oct 14	
15	Interlude: Vauhini Vara (optional 4pm public lecture) + Final Project Overview	Oct 16	
16	Unit 3 Overview: GenAI vs. the Duplex	Oct 21	
17	GenAI primer, day 1	Oct 23	
18	GenAI primer, day 2	Oct 28	
19	GenAI vs. the Duplex: Literary Analysis	Oct 30	
20	GenAI vs. the Duplex: Lab	Nov 4	
21	GenAI vs. the Duplex: Discussion Optional: Lecture by Kauna Malgwi at Georgia Tech, noon-1:30pm	Nov 6	In-class: Prompt #3
22	Unit 4 Overview: Final Project Brainstorming Day	Nov 11	
23	// No class – Professor at MIT	Nov 13	Due: FPP #1: Final project ideas

24	In-class project development day	Nov 18	
25	In-class project development day	Nov 20	
26	<i>// No class - Thanksgiving</i>	Nov 25	
27	<i>// No class - Thanksgiving</i>	Nov 27	
28	In-class work session	Dec 2	Due: FPP #2: Final project first pass
29	In-class work session	Dec 4	
30	In-class presentations	Dec 9	
X	[Instead of Final Exam]	Dec 16	Due: Final project

Class-by-Class Schedule

Class schedule subject to change.

Please consult Canvas for the most current class schedule.

Introduction and Overview

Thurs Aug 28 – Course overview

Unit 1: Topic Modeling Climate Fiction

Tues Sept 2 – Overview: Topic Modeling Climate Fiction

- Reading: Margaret Atwood, "[Time Capsule Found on a Dead Planet](#)"

Thurs Sept 4 – Climate Fiction – Literary Analysis

- Reading: NK Jemisin, "Cloud Dragon Skies" (Canvas); Kim Stanley Robinson, [from *New York 2140*](#)

Tues Sept 9 – Topic Modeling Overview

- Reading: Richard So, "Consecration: The Canon and Racial Inequality," from *Redlining Culture* (Canvas)
- In class: bring laptop

Thurs Sept 11 – Topic Modeling Climate Fiction Lab

- In class: bring laptop

Tues Sept 16 – Topic Modeling Climate Fiction Discussion

- In class: bring laptop

Thurs Sept 18 – Topic Modeling Climate Fiction Reflection

- In class: bring laptop; **prompt #1**

Unit 2: Classifying Frankenstein

Tues Sept 23 – Overview: Classification and Frankenstein

- Readings: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, vol. 1 (to p. 77)

Thurs Sept 25 – Frankenstein: Literary Analysis, day 1

- Readings: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, vol. 2 (to p. 141)

Tues Sept 30 – Frankenstein: Literary Analysis, day 2

- Readings: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, vol. 3 (to end)

Thurs Oct 2 – Classification Overview

- Readings: Daniel Wilson et al., "The Living Machine" (Canvas)
- In class: bring laptop

Tues Oct 7 – Classification Lab

- In class: bring laptop

Thurs Oct 9 – Classification Discussion

- In class: bring laptop; **prompt #2**

Tues Oct 14 – NO CLASS – FALL BREAK

Interlude: Vauhini Vara

Thurs Oct 16 – Vauhini Vara (and final project planning begins!)

- Readings: Vauhini Vara, from *Searches* (Canvas)
- In class: Vara discussion; final project overview
- Optional: Lecture by Vauhini Vara, Atwood 360, 4pm

Unit 3: Generative AI vs. the Duplex

Tues Oct 21 – Overview: GenAI vs. the Duplex

- Readings: Melanie Walsh et al., “[Sonnet or Not, Bot? Poetry Evaluation for Large Models and Datasets](#)”; Melanie Walsh et al., “[Does ChatGPT Have a Poetic Style?](#)”

Thurs Oct 23 – GenAI Primer, day 1

- Readings: “[Generative AI Exists Because of the Transformer](#)”
- In class: bring laptop

Tues Oct 28 – GenAI Primer, day 2

- Readings: Jericho Brown, *The Tradition*, at least through p. 27
- In class: bring laptop

Thurs Oct 30 – GenAI vs. the Duplex: Literary Analysis

- Readings: Jericho Brown, *The Tradition*, through end

Tues Nov 4 – GenAI vs. the Duplex – Lab

- In class: bring laptop

Thurs Nov 6 – GenAI vs. the Duplex – Discussion

- In class: bring laptop; **prompt #3**
- Optional: Lecture by Kauna Malgwi, Georgia Tech, Centergy Building, noon-1:30pm

Unit 4: Final Projects

Tues Nov 11 – Unit 4 Overview: Final Project Brainstorming Day

Thurs Nov 13 – Final Project Team Meetings

- NO CLASS MEETING – PROFESSOR AT MIT
- **Due: FPP #1: Final Project Ideas**

Tues Nov 18 – Final Project Development Day

- In class: bring laptop

Thurs Nov 20 – Final Project Development Day

- In class: bring laptop

Tues Nov 25 and Thurs Nov 27 – NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING

Tues Dec 2 – In-Class Work Session

- In class: bring laptop
- **Due: FPP #3: Final Project First Pass**

Thurs Dec 4 – In-Class Work Session

- In class: bring laptop

Tues Dec 9 – Final Presentations

- In class: bring laptop; final presentations

FINAL PROJECT DUE: Tuesday, December 16th, 10:30am