INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL ANALYTICS: DATA, COMPUTATION, & CULTURE

Spring 2020
Tuesday-Thursday 10:10-11am // Phillips Hall 307

Prof. Melanie Walsh // melanie.walsh@cornell.edu
Students Hours: Thursday 1-3pm by appt // Gates 211
https://melaniewalsh.youcanbook.me/

TAs
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TA Study Hall:
Wednesday 5:30-6:30pm // Rhodes 408
Friday 2:30-3:30pm // Rhodes 597

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will prepare students in the humanities to analyze, interpret, and visualize cultural data—such as novels, movies, tweets, and more—with computational methods. After a basic introduction to the programming language Python, we will cover topics such as web scraping and data retrieval, text mining, network analysis, and data visualization. We will survey and discuss how these computational tools are applied in humanistic research. We will also reflect on the specific problems, challenges, and ethical dilemmas posed by the computational study of culture. This course is specifically designed for students in the humanities who have no previous programming background.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Develop the ability to make nuanced, interpretive arguments about cultural data with computational methods
- Develop an emerging proficiency with the programming language Python in the context of cultural data analysis
- Become conversant with the field of cultural analytics and its trends

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Edward P. Jones, *Lost in the City* (1995).
(Order the book through our local Ithaca bookstore, Buffalo Street Books, by emailing bookseller@buffalostreetbooks.com with a request and the book title.)

Most readings for this course will be available for free online. All other readings will be available on Canvas.

GRADING:

Participation & attendance	10%
Discussion posts	10%
Homework assignments	45%

Final project 35%

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Participation includes (but is not limited to) meaningful contributions to class discussion; helpful and respectful collaboration with peers; staying on task (see Laptops & Cellphones below); and asking good questions.

LAPTOPS & CELLPHONES

Because we're going to use laptops almost every day in class, it's vital that we do so intentionally. We need to keep our attention (and our browser tabs) on course-related material at all times — not on email inboxes, Facebook chat, ESPN scores, or other tempting internet morsels. If there's a legitimate course-related reason for you to use your cellphone, you should feel free to do so. But it should be a good and legitimate reason. This committed focus with technology will be a big part of participation in the class.

DISCUSSION POSTS

For most assigned readings this semester, you will be required to submit a short discussion post to Canvas at 9am before the class when we discuss it. You will respond to a short prompt or set of questions. Your post can range from a few sentences to a few paragraphs, as long as it's substantive. Finally, you're highly encouraged to respond to the thoughts and questions of your peers. Let's get some threads going.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is essential, and you should come to class every day. We plan to take attendance every day. You're allowed to miss three classes, no questions asked, but further absences will negatively impact your learning experience and your grade.

Please contact Prof. Walsh about excused absences or, if you know about the absence in advance, please fill out this class absence form.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

Throughout the semester, you will submit weekly homework assignments to Canvas. These assignments will combine programming exercises and practice sets with short answer reflections and interpretive arguments (sometimes more programming or more reflection depending on the week). Homework makes up the majority of your grade in this class.

LATE HOMEWORK

Each student is allowed 3 "slip" days. If you missed a homework deadline for whatever reason, you're allowed an extra 24 hours to turn in the assignment. Beyond these slip days, late work will be penalized 10% each day it's late.

FINAL PROJECT

Your final project will revolve around a cultural dataset of your choosing. You will complete an Exploratory Data Analysis (EDA) of the chosen dataset and then apply at least one of the

computational methods that we learned in class to answer a research question or make an interpretive argument drawn from the data.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Your access in this course is important. If you are registered with Student Disability Services (SDS) and have a faculty notification letter, please contact Prof. Walsh early in the semester to review how the accommodations will be applied in the course. If you have an immediate access need, please speak with Prof. Walsh after class or send an email to Prof. Walsh and/or SDS at sds_cu@cornell.edu. If the need arises for additional accommodations during the semester, please contact SDS.

SDS is located on level 5 of Cornell Health, 110 Ho Plaza, 607-254-4545, sds.cornell.edu.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

From Cornell's Code of Academic Integrity:

> *At its most basic, academic integrity is about honesty.*
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> *Absolute integrity is expected of every Cornell student in all academic undertakings. Integrity entails a firm adherence to a set of values, and the values most essential to an academic community are grounded on the concept of honesty with respect to the intellectual efforts of oneself and others.*
> *Academic integrity is expected not only in formal coursework situations but in all university relationships and interactions connected to the educational process, including the use of university resources. Although both students and faculty of Cornell assume the responsibility of maintaining and furthering these values, the Code of Academic Integrity is concerned specifically with the conduct of students.*
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> *When you submit work for academic credit, you are certifying that the work is your own. All outside assistance should be acknowledged, and your original academic work and ideas truthfully reported at all times. In addition, you have the right to expect academic integrity from each of your peers.*

For more resources, see The Essential Guide to Academic Integrity at Cornell.