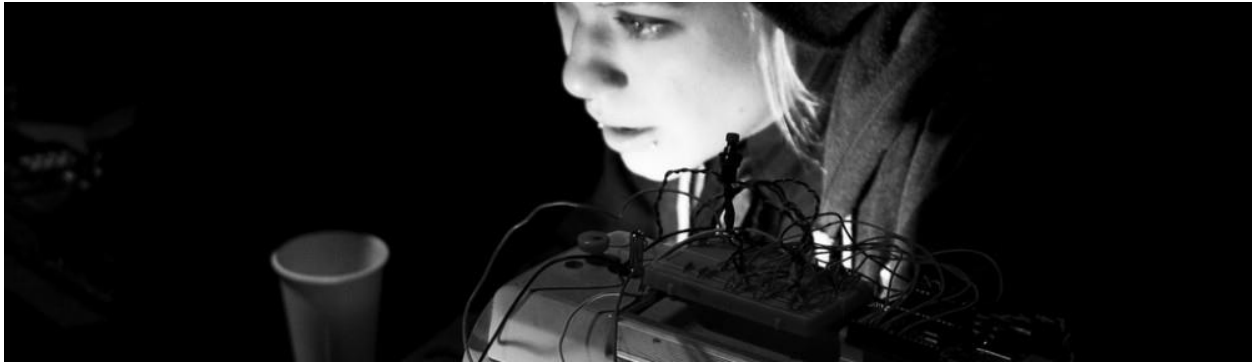


ENGL 668K/MITH 610: Critical Topics in Digital Studies

University of Maryland
Spring 2017



Tuesdays, 3:30-6:00 pm

Matthew Kirschenbaum, with Ed Summers and Raff Viglianti
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Office Hours: Thursday, 1:00-3:00, and also by appointment
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Email should be used for simple queries or communications only; please allow 24 hours for response.

Course Description

Digital Studies is an interdisciplinary approach to scholarship and teaching that combines the critical study of new forms of digital media and identity with creative practices utilizing digital media and the application of computational tools and techniques to areas of traditional humanistic study. While it is often hands-on or applied, Digital Studies also encourages, indeed demands, work that is primarily critical, theoretical, or experimental in nature. Broadly speaking then, Digital Studies is a critical scholarly and creative response to the widespread influence of digital media across nearly every aspect of contemporary life; more specifically, it recognizes that teaching, research, and scholarship in the arts and humanities cannot remain isolated from the networks, platforms, and new media all around us.

Digital Studies is also one of several rubrics denoting a contested array of topics, theoretical allegiances and approaches, hands-on skills and competencies, and disciplinary formations that have emerged to name the academic humanities' engagements with digital media over (at least) the last three decades. In this it is coterminous (though not necessarily interchangeable) with widespread interest in what has been variously termed "Digital Humanities," "Humanities Computing," "New Media Studies," and "Cybercultural Studies"; certainly other rubrics and nomenclatures are possible as well.

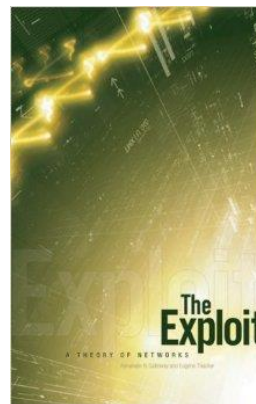
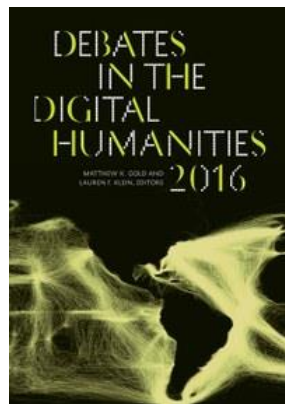
Rather than fixating on definitions, taxonomies, or genealogies, however, this course is designed to introduce you to different (and divergent) topics and practices in this diverse, complex, and rapidly changing area. It is thus organized around three independent units or modules, each extending over a period of four weeks. They are as follows: **Reimagining the Archive**, **Media Archaeology**, and **Data Stories**. For each we will read, think, experiment, and *do* in equal measures; in other words, this is neither a “skills” nor a “theory” course, but rather a course that attempts to break down the divisions and binaries between those two institutional constructs. In addition, the course will place particular emphasis on Digital Studies as it is currently practiced here, at the University of Maryland College Park. To that end, the course will feature a number of visiting speakers as well as site visits to various locales around campus. Staff and personnel from the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH) will be heavily involved throughout.

No special skills are required or assumed other than a willingness to experiment and learn.

This class is not available for 700-level seminar credit.

Texts

There are two required texts for the course, *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein (Minnesota, **2016 edition**), and Alexander R. Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks* (Minnesota, 2007). Both can be ordered from any quality bookseller.



The *Debates* volume's contents are also available online in their entirety here:

<http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/>

You may read it online, buy a print copy or an ebook edition, or any combination thereof.

Other readings will be available through ELMS (usually as PDFs) or directly from the Web.

Course Grading

- Exercises (20% each, 60% total)
- Fieldwork (20%)
- Final Essay (20%)

Exercises will be assigned throughout the semester and due according to the schedule below. All Exercises are to be turned in at the *beginning* of the class meeting for which they are due. Late Exercises cannot receive higher than a B grade absent some specific prior arrangement with me, and will not be accepted at all if more than a week overdue. The Fieldwork component of the course requires you to go places and do things: we are situated in the midst of one of the greatest cultural heritage centers in the world, with a thriving area-wide digital studies community. You must accumulate 10 points of fieldwork over the course of the semester; you will keep your own tally (according to a point schedule below) and submit a record of your fieldwork to me at the end of the semester. The Final Essay (6-8 pages) will ask you to synthesize and reflect on key readings and ideas from the course.

Auditors will be asked to complete the three Exercises, and to participate in our discussions; they will be exempt from the Fieldwork and Final Essay requirements.

More about Exercises: The Exercises are designed to give you some practical exposure to various tools and technologies. Their objective is not instilling professional competencies and skills; rather, they are best understood as an alternative format for our collective critical engagement—hands-on instead of readerly and reflective. More detail about each will be distributed at the start of their respective modules, but in brief:

- Exercise 1 will ask you to transcribe and apply encoding (markup) to a manuscript page from the materials in the Shelley-Godwin Archive currently under development at MITH (<http://shelleygodwinarchive.org/>). You will be exposed to textual/editorial considerations as well as the principles of markup, one of the oldest forms of digital scholarship in the humanities.
- Exercise 2 will ask you to work with a variety of obsolete hardware and software materials from the collections on hand at MITH. You will be exposed to basic principles of forensic computing, as well as software emulation; you will also learn how to formulate research questions at the intersection of literary and technological history.
- Exercise 3 will ask you to choose a person or organization and harvest (“scrape”) data from Twitter, prepare that data set for computational analysis, and then apply several different kinds of tools to the data set you have created and curated. You will then craft a “data story,” a short prose account that narrativizes your findings. You will be exposed to some of the principles involved in so-called “big data” or quantitative research, as well as basic principles of social network analysis and information visualization.

For each exercise, you will receive instruction from a member of the MITH staff with expertise in that area. You will work sometimes alone and sometimes with a partner or in a small group, and you will have access to members of the MITH staff (as well as the computing facilities at MITH). Each exercise will also include one or more milestones where we will check your progress before it is submitted for evaluation.

More about Fieldwork: Here are some examples of Fieldwork opportunities. You are responsible for keeping a tally of your own activities, to be submitted to me at the end of the semester. You must accumulate 10 points in order to receive full credit. **If you have an idea for a Fieldwork opportunity that is not described below just ask!**

- Attend a relevant campus talk, including [MITH Digital Dialogues](#) (2 pts)
- Attend an [AADHUM Incubator](#) or [Reading Group](#) (2 pts)
- Attend a relevant talk elsewhere around town (3 pts)
- Visit another Digital Humanities center, or a library, museum, or archives doing noteworthy digital work and find a way to document that visit (3 pts)
- Attend a conference with a significant number of Digital Studies sessions for half-a-day or more (3 pts)
- Fabricate something in the MakerSpace (1-3 pts—check with me)

Expected Outcomes: By the end of the course you will: have an understanding of current debates and issues in the field of digital studies; have a mental map of the field, including major scholars, centers, projects, initiatives, resources, and methods; have experimented with some commonplace tools, platforms, and technical practices; have practical strategies at your disposal which may affect your thinking about how you teach, research, and how you communicate with others in your discipline; have a clear path forward to further engagement with digital studies here at UMD if you so choose.

By the end of this course you will not: have had all your questions answered; have read everything there is to read; have experimented with everything there is to experiment with; know how to design Web sites; know how to program a computer; be done with digital studies.

Diversity: The University of Maryland values the diversity of its student body. Along with the University, I am committed to providing a classroom atmosphere that encourages the equitable participation of all students regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, national origin, race, religion, or sexual orientation. Potential devaluation of students in the classroom that can occur by reference to demeaning stereotypes of any group and/or overlooking the contributions of a particular group to the topic under discussion is inappropriate.

Academic Integrity: The University is one of a small number of universities with a student-administered Code of Academic Integrity and an Honor Pledge. The Code prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents, and forging signatures. *All students in this class are expected to abide by the terms of this code at all times*

and are assumed to be operating under its strictures. More information is available here: <http://www.shc.umd.edu/SHC/Default.aspx>.

Religious Observances: The University of Maryland policy “Assignments and Attendance on Dates of Religious Observance” states that students should not be penalized in any way for participation in religious observances and that, whenever feasible, they be allowed to make up academic assignments that are missed due to such absences. *It is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor of any intended absences or need for other accommodation for religious observances in advance.*

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The University is legally obligated to provide appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities. In order to ascertain what accommodations may need to be provided, students with disabilities should inform the instructors of their needs at the beginning of the semester. They will make arrangements with the student to determine and implement appropriate academic accommodations. Student should also register with Disability Support Services (DSS) <http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS> (301-314-7682).

Attendance Policy: University policy excuses the absences of students for illness (self or dependent), religious observances, participation in University activities at the request of University authorities, and extreme extenuating circumstances beyond the student's control. If you wish to have any absence formally “excused” for one of the above reasons please supply me with appropriate written documentation. Note that given its hands-on focus, absences in this class may impede not only your own progress but also that of peers who may be working with you and depending on you. Unexcused absences will have not have options for making up for any lost instruction.

ELMS: The class is listed on ELMS. I will use the ELMS site primarily to distribute readings, but we may also take advantage of discussion forums and other features. Course news and announcements will be distributed through ELMS email. Please make sure you have a current address recorded there that you check regularly and that your spam filter is not blocking ELMS messages. *You will be held responsible for any electronic announcement 24 hours after it has been distributed.*

Class Meetings: Class meetings will typically encompass several different kinds of activities, including: lectures and formal instruction; discussions; hands-on workshops; guest speakers; site visits; and group work. If you have a laptop computer or tablet please bring it to class (a laptop is preferable; neither is required, however). Please also bring copies of any readings assigned for discussion. Drinks and light snacks are fine during class, but please don't bring your whole dinner.

MITH, Digital Dialogues, AADHum, and DSAH: This class is part of a coordinated effort between several ARHU units and programs, and you should be aware of that expanded context. Here are the key pieces:

Our meetings will take place at the [Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities](#) unless otherwise announced and MITH personnel will be closely involved in your instruction. Feel free to come in to MITH to work at any time during our normal operating hours (M-F, 9:00-5:00). Please do not, however, expect support or consultation from MITH staff without a specific prior appointment.

MITH's [Digital Dialogues](#) series is Tuesday's at 12:30. This is an outstanding opportunity to hear from leading scholars in the field. *You are strongly encouraged to attend as often as your schedule permits.*

Concurrently with our course this semester, MITH and the ARHU Center for Synergy are launching the new [African American Digital Humanities](#) initiative, or AADHum. Among much else, AADHum will be running a series of hands-on Incubators for technical instruction and Reading Groups for critical engagement and discussion. Both of these are opportunities for Fieldwork, as noted above. See the AADHum website for more information.

Finally, ENGL 668K/MITH 610 is a required course for the [Graduate Certificate in Digital Studies in Arts and Humanities](#) (DSAH). Please consult the website and talk with me for more information about the Certificate.

Schedule

Only Exercises and major assignments are listed with due dates below; there will also usually be homework due on a week by week basis as stepping stones toward the final Exercise for each unit.

Readings and other assignments are to be completed by the date listed on the schedule below. **DDH16** means the text can be found in the *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016* volume. **ELMS** means the text is available on ELMS in the "Files" folder, usually as a PDF. For online materials, consult the service listed or use the direct link provided.

Occasionally a project (such as *Infinite Ulysses*) will be assigned as a "reading"; obviously this does not mean attempting to read through the entirety of the project's content in a linear fashion. Rather, you should get a feel for what the project is, where it comes from, what design principles are at work, what technologies are involved, and what critical or theoretical issues it raises in the context of the class. Some ideas on how to do this: read the "About" page if there is one; look at who the designers and sponsors are; look at sample entries or pages; try some searches; look "behind the scenes" at how URLs are rendered or for other visible signs of technological implementation. You should "spend" at least the same amount of time on a project as you would on a short essay—landing on the splash page and clicking around for a minute or two isn't enough.

Logging On

January 31

Readings	Tara McPherson, “Why are the Digital Humanities So White?”: http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/29
Guest	Purdom Lindblad, Assistant Director of Innovation and Learning, MITH

February 7

Readings	Steve Jones, “The Emergence of the Digital Humanities” (DDH16), Miriam Posner, “What’s Next: The Radical Unrealized Potential of the Digital Humanities” (DDH16); Kim Gallon, “Making the Case for the Black Digital Humanities” (DDH16), Elizabeth Losh, et al. “Putting the Human Back Into Digital Humanities” (DDH16).
Instruction	Ed Summers (Lead Developer, MITH): Introduction to GitHub/Git

Reimagining the Archive

February 14

Readings	Jacques Derrida, from <i>Archive Fever</i> (ELMS); Marlene Manoff, “Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines” (ELMS); Ken Price, “ Edition, Project, Database, Archive, Thematic Research Collection: What’s In a Name? ”; Michelle Caswell, “ ‘The Archive’ is Not an Archives ”; Andrew Stauffer, “My <i>Old Sweethearts</i> ” (DDH16); The Shelley Godwin Archive
Guest	Neil Fraistat, Professor of English
Instruction	Raff Viglianti (Research Programmer, MITH): TEI Encoding and Transcription

February 21

Readings	Rodney G.S. Carter, “Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence” (ELMS); Eric Ketelaar, “Archival Temples, Archival Prisons: Modes of Power and Protection” (ELMS); Anne J Gilliland and Michelle Caswell, “Records and their Imaginaries: Imagining the Impossible, Making Possible the Imagined” (ELMS); Jarrett M. Drake, “Liberatory Archives: Towards Belonging and Believing” (Part 1 and Part 2); The Mukertu Project
Instruction	Raff Viglianti, TEI Encoding and Transcription

February 28

Readings	Moir Bailey, et al. "Reflections on a Movement" (DDH16); Alan Liu, " Where is Cultural Criticism in the Digital Humanities? "; others TBA
Guest	Catherine Knight Steele, Assistant Professor of Communication and Director, African American Digital Humanities Initiative
Instruction	Raff Viglianti, TEI Encoding and Transcription

March 7

Readings	Neil Fraistat, "Literary Archives and the Participatory Turn" (ELMS); Andrew Stauffer, Book Traces ; Amanda Visconti, Infinite Ulysses ; Smithsonian Transcription Center ; Rap Genius ; University College, London, Transcribe Bentham ; Amazon's Mechanical Turk
Guests	Neil Fraistat, Amanda Visconti (Assistant Professor of Digital Humanities, Perdue University).
Instruction	Raff Viglianti, TEI Encoding and Transcription

Media Archaeology

March 14

Due	Exercise 1
Location	McKeldin Library, John and Stella Graves MakerSpace
Readings	Stephen Jackson, "Rethinking Repair" (ELMS); Kari Kraus, et al. " Bibliocircuitry and the Design of the Alien Everyday " (PDF); Debbie Chachra, " Why I Am Not a Maker "; Kirschenbaum, "Ancient Evenings: Retrocomputing in the Digital Humanities" (ELMS)
Instruction	Introduction to MakerSpace Facilities

March 21: Spring Break

March 28

Readings	Friedrich Kittler, “There is No Software” (ELMS); Lisa Nakamura, “Indigenous Circuits” (ELMS); Wolfgang Ernst, “Media Archaeography” (ELMS); Wendy Chun, “The Enduring Ephemeral, or the Future is a Memory” (ELMS); Fiona Barnett, et al., “Queer OS” (DDH16)
Instruction	Introduction to MITH’s Vintage Computer Collection

April 4

Readings	Lori Emerson, from <i>Reading/Writing/Interfaces</i> (ELMS); Jason Farman, “A Delayed Crossing,” from <i>Waiting for Word</i> , and <i>Waiting for Word</i> book proposal (ELMS); Farman, “ The Forgotten Kaleidoscope Crazy in Victorian England. ”
Guest	Jason Farman, Associate Professor of American Studies and Director, Design, Cultures, and Creativity Program
Instruction	MITH’s Vintage Computer Collection

Data Stories

April 11

Due	Exercise 2
Readings	Dennis Tenen, “Blunt Instrumentalism” (DDH16); Tressie McMillan Cottom, “More Scale, More Questions” (DDH16); Benjamin Schmidt, “Do Humanists Need to Understand Algorithms” (DDH16); Tarleton Gillespie, “Algorithm” (ELMS); Jen Golbeck, “ The Curly Fry Conundrum. ”
Instruction	Ed Summers (Lead Developer, MITH): Twitter Analytics

April 18

Readings	Alex Galloway and Eugene Thacker, “Prolegomenon” and “Nodes” (Part I), <i>The Exploit</i>
Instruction	Ed Summers, Twitter Analytics

April 25

Readings	Galloway and Thacker, “Edges” (Part II) and “Coda” <i>The Exploit</i>
Instruction	Ed Summers, Twitter Analytics

May 2

Readings	Zeynep Tufekci, “Algorithmic Harms” (ELMS); Frank Pasquale, from <i>The Black Box Society</i> (ELMS); Nicholas Diakopoulos, “Algorithmic Accountability” (ELMS); Diakopoulos and Sorelle Friedler, “ How to Hold Algorithms Accountable ”; Martha Kang, “ 7 Types of Data Stories ”
Guest	Nicholas Diakopoulos, Assistant Professor of Journalism
Instruction	Ed Summers, Twitter Analytics

Logging Off

May 9

Due	Exercise 3
Readings	Jentery Sayers, “Dropping the Digital” (DDH16); Cathy Davidson, “ Humanities 2.0 ”
Guest	James Neal, Program Officer, Institute of Museum and Library Services

Final Paper Due: TBA

This schedule is subject to change. The online version on ELMS should always take precedence over any printed copy.