Syllabus for DIGH5000, Carleton University, Fall 2017

This pdf is a static version of the dhcu.ca website as it stood on August 31 2017. The site is continually updated with readings, projects, tools, and other materials. On that website, the materials are divided into broad categories. Those files are not incorporated into this pdf

A graduate seminar in the digital humanities, asking:

What should undergrads know about DH?

Your mission: to write the book.

Caveat Lector: All readings listed are mere possibilities and do not necessarily represent canon. Let them be the starting point for your explorations.

DH, eh?

The course catalogue will tell you that this course is about an “Introduction to the theoretical and practical aspects of the Digital Humanities, including the historical and ongoing debates over its boundaries, methodologies, objectives and values.” I suppose that’s more or less correct. Doesn’t actually tell us much about what ‘dh’ is about. Let us turn to the web:

http://40.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_lu0uq3612l1r5i95zo1_400.jpg
http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/definingdh/files/2013/11/lizard.jpg

Well, still no good answer, which is great, for it gives us much territory to explore. I’m loathe to define DH. But I will say this much: it’s not just about tool use or shiny new digital toys applied to humanities-type materials. It is also about exploring what our tools do to us. I would suggest that’s the more important aspect. Archaeology teaches us that our things help make us as much as we make our things. What kind of a world are we building? There is no such thing as ‘data’. There are only ‘capta’.

We will read, and we will make. We will build!

Let us begin.

Required materials

- A free account for Slack https://dhcu-2017.slack.com/ which handles our private communications (make sure to ‘take the tour’ once you sign up)
• An account on Github http://github.com
• An account with Hypothesis https://web.hypothes.is/
• Twitter is optional, but most digital humanities folks are on there, and that’s where a lot of the field is discussed (Amanda French and Dan Cohen maintain excellent lists here and here; great places to lurk!)

Assessment

How we will measure your development.

This course intends to uncover a broad swathe of the current body of practices, approaches, and perspectives that currently are known as ‘digital humanities’. It does this by introducing you to certain techniques and habits of thought through a year long project to write and publish a textbook for the digital humanities, aimed at the second or third year undergraduate level. Thus, your grade will be composed:

• 20% Open Notebook Research
• 20% Collegiality and Generous Thinking
• 60% The DH-X Project: A Textbook for Undergraduate Digital Humanities; grade is composed 1/3 Research; 1/3 Service; 1/3 Teaching

Privacy

You are in no way obligated to do any of the public-facing work of this course under your own name. **Pseudonyms are ok.** You do not need to explain why you want to use a pseudonym to me. At all times, keep your own personal safety online front and centre: my experience of the internet, and of academic culture, will have been different from yours, and my goal is to listen more than I talk when it comes to these issues.

Open Notebook Research

You will be creating your own academic presence online using a static site generator and your Github account. You will use the site you create to keep track of your reading notes and your annotations. Before each meeting, I expect you to annotate the readings with an eye to what I call ‘the 3ws’ of DH: what is ‘weird’ (eg, unfamiliar to your experience or disciplinary home), ‘wonderful’ (eg, makes you see your research, your discipline, and so on, in an exciting way), or ‘worrying’ (eg, something that shakes a core assumption, something that seems problematic to you). You can use Jon Udell’s Hypothesis facet viewer to collect and download your annotations to put into your notebook. You should
also pull together from your annotations a brief narrative about what (and how) you’ve read, before each meeting.

Please make all annotations as part of the DHCU group. After you get an Hypothesis account, you may join our DHCU group here. The Quick Start Guide For Students takes you through the process of signing up for and using Hypothesis.

We will set up our open notebooks in our first meeting. We will use either Hugo Academic or Jeyll-Now. There are other options too that we could explore.

To recap:

- annotate the readings according to the 3w’s (at a minimum)
- collect your annotations and copy them to your notebooks
- and write a brief narrative making sense of your notes

This aspect of the course is graded exceptional / pass / fail.

Collegiality and Generous Thinking

Generous Thinking [begins] by proposing that rooting the humanities in generosity, and in particular in the practices of thinking with rather than reflexively against both the people and the materials with which we work, might invite more productive relationships and conversations not just among scholars but between scholars and the surrounding community. - Kathleen Fitzpatrick

To demonstrate generous thinking and collegiality, I want you to be attentive to your peers’ annotations and notebooks, and engage with them thoroughly, whether by responding to an annotation, drawing the connections with other bodies of thought or artefacts, or by annotating someone else’s notebook. A compulsory to this, I also want to see you searching for opportunities to wonder aloud about how your discipline and dh might engage in the kind of generous thinking that Fitzpatrick describes. Another possibility to meet this aspect is to engage on Twitter or DH Slack insofar as it makes sense or is safe for you to do so. (DH Slack is a Slack space populated by academics, librarians, grad students, post docs, enthusiasts. Well worth your time).

Collegiality also entails attending and being prepared for all of our meetings.

This aspect of the course is graded exceptional / pass / fail.

The DH-X Project

Our meetings do double duty. They are not just for exploring the different facets of the digital humanities, learning various techniques, and exploring others’ work, but also, for sifting through the volumes of material to identify the things
that undergraduates should know about the digital humanities. We will then pull these materials together into a textbook, which we will publish. The content, organization, and production of this textbook, and the management of this project, will be up to all of you. The grading breaks down as follows:

- 20% **Research** research to write an accurate and up to date text
- 20% **Service** the work involved in project management, organization, ‘back-end’ production
- 20% **Teaching** writing and testing the exercises and tutorials within the textbook

Each of you is expected to do your equitable (nb: not necessarily ‘equal’) share.

(Credit: United Way of the Columbia-Willamette)

You are not starting cold: you may dismember, improve, remix, or rejig the materials from my own open-access workbook for doing digital history here.

This aspect of the course will be graded based on a self-assessment and final interview.

**Schedule**

Meeting times and other important information
Because our class meets irregularly on a Monday, various holidays and long weekends mean that we could go for quite some time before seeing one another. To mitigate this, our first in-person meeting will not happen until October 2nd, though you will have work to do before that meeting. I also expect that you will make use of our chat space in Slack during the intervals.

I would like to meet with you individually before we meet as a group. Please email me at shawn dot graham at carleton dot ca to make an appointment.

Before our first meeting as a group:

1. Get all of the required accounts
2. Explore and annotate as you go through this website (syllabus, assessment, schedule, potential topics), responding at least initially with the 3w’s to guide you (if you missed that, they’re over here). Remember to make all of your annotations as part of the DHCU group
3. Explore the variety of topics on the main page of this site
4. Select your top three preferred topics where you would be prepared to take a leadership role, and indicate this by making an annotation RIGHT HERE to that effect. You may also wish to take that opportunity to reflect on what is missing from the potential topics.
5. Take a look at my digital history workbook and study how it is organized

During our first meeting on October 2nd, we will work together to set up our open notebooks, and to learn some basic version control and collaboration software (see tutorials). We will discuss how this class is set up, the kind of work I am expecting from you, and we will decide which topics we would like to discuss when, filling out the schedule below. We will also explore the current state of play regarding ‘open educational resources.’

The actual sequence of topics and readings to explore is generated by the group as a whole. Graham then weaves tool tutorials, exercises, collaborative coding and so on around that sequence. This is partly because DH is just so big; but also because the group itself is drawn from several different disciplines and this way we reach consensus on common themes to explore.