Digital Public Humanities
Spring 2016
Jim McGrath
digitalpublichumanities.jimmcgrath.us
#DHJNBC

Date / Time: TR 1pm-2:30pm
Room: Seminar Room, John Nicholas Brown Center for Public Humanities and Cultural Heritage
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Course Description

What is “digital humanities” and how does it impact and intersect with the field of public humanities? Digital humanities work involves new approaches to reading, writing, research, publication, and curation: digital tools help us examine digital and non-digital material in innovative ways, and digital modes of communication help us reach new and wider ranges of audiences. While many of you are no doubt aware of the ubiquity of digital technology and the massive amounts of time people spend with digital media, my hope is that this course provides students with the opportunity to create digital projects and utilize digital tools to further their academic and professional interests.

In this course, students will:

● Examine the recent (and still developing) history of digital humanities and the uses of digital spaces and tools by cultural institutions, academics, and other parties (artists, activists, community reps) interested in various forms of public engagement
● Consider the place of digital initiatives less as a stand-in for “analog” work and more as projects in conversation with physical archives, exhibits, and events
● Review best practices for the creation, management, publication, promotion, and preservation of digital exhibits and objects
● Complete a project (ideally something you can add to your professional portfolio) designed to circulate publicly that demonstrates your familiarity with digital tools and contexts

Readings will be made available via our course website.

Important updates about the course will be circulated by me via email. We’ll also have a blog that will be hosted on the course site: details on its use below.

Required Materials
- Reliable web access. Given the nature of this course, it’s essential that you be able to get on the web on a regular basis. Please see me if you have any questions about this requirement or if you’d like to talk about resources here at Brown.
- Digital hosting for your project. You are not required to pay for a web site, but we will discuss the advantages/disadvantages of having server access/using a free site (WordPress, Tumblr, etc.). Do not worry about this requirement on the first day of class: we’re going to talk about various content management systems and platforms early in the semester, so you’ll want to review your options and think about what works best for you and your work.
- You are not required to bring a laptop, tablet, and/or smart phone to every class, but access to web materials during class discussions may be extremely useful.
- There is no required textbook for the course, but there may be moments when recommended additional readings might point you in the direction of texts available via the library’s resources.
- I’ve chosen #DHJNBC as our course Twitter hashtag. You are not required to use Twitter or use it in the context of this class (beyond brief occasions where you may be asked to review how public humanities scholars use Twitter). That being said, students who use Twitter in professional contexts (or may want to) should feel free to use it. A Twitter embed of activity on the hashtag will be up on the course site.

**Course Readings**

Course reading are outlined in the semester calendar. Direct links to readings can be found on the course site. If a reading is not publicly accessible online, I’ll get it to you by other means.

**Course Policies**

I expect that students will regularly attend class sessions, keep up with readings, and submit graded work on time. I also assume that students will participate in class discussions and be respectful of their peers in said discussions. Please contact me ASAP if you have any questions or issues related to the course. I’m also happy to meet with students during office hours or by appointment.

**Major Assignments and Grading Breakdown**

**Blog Posts (40% of total grade)**

Blog posts are ideally designed to circulate on our course web site. I imagine that they will be 750-1000 words in length. When relevant, posts should include images, hyperlinks, and other forms of media. That being said, if you’d rather publish your material on your own personal site, you are free to do so: you’ll just have to provide a brief note on our course blog letting readers know where to find it.
Consider the blog a collaborative digital project that we’re all working on together (though you should also consider me the Project Manager of said project). For the sake of convenience, I imagine we’ll just host the blog on the course site. Early in the semester, we’ll talk a bit about what the aims, audiences, and voice(s) of the blog might entail. I have my own ideas, but I’m open to your thoughts. If you’re new to WordPress, don’t worry: I’ll be available as a resource for questions about formatting, etc.

I’ve outlined four types of posts below. You have a lot of flexibility within these parameters (multimedia posts, collaborative posts, interviews, etc.), so we can talk about these options and my expectations if you have questions. I’m more interested in content that is valuable to you and to readers.

1. **Digital Project “Case Study”:** You will write and publish a blog post that reviews at least one digital project in-depth. This project doesn’t necessarily have to be a model you seek to imitate in your own work, but taking that approach might be useful to you. (10%)

2. **Social Media and Public Humanities:** You will discuss some dimension of the role of social media in the field of public humanities. You may also decide to take a more active / participatory role in social media here (and documenting that in your blog post): crowdsourcing information on Twitter, brainstorming the circulation of your own digital project on social media, creating a Twitter bot or Twitter archive, etc. (10%)

3. **Mystery Post!** Aka a post related to at least one reading / resource discussed in class: While you have a degree of flexibility with each assignment, this one gives you even more flexibility. I’ve provided this as an option with the understanding that different students might have different interests / responses to particular topics. That being said, some of you might end up writing about the same texts / projects, which is fine with me. (10%)

4. **Digital Project Debrief:** To be completed towards the end of the semester. Here I’d like you to think about your objectives, resources, completed work, next steps, etc. (10%)

**Digital Project (60% of total grade)**

In addition to reading work related to digital and public humanities and examining digital projects, your major project for the course will involve the creation of a digital project. Over the course of the semester, you’ll be developing a digital project that reflects both your research / professional interests and your familiarity with digital contexts and tools. You can choose to think of all of the assignments listed below as part of a larger digital project. Conversely, it may help some of you to think of these as mini-assignments that are linked rather than one big project.

I am open to the idea of collaborative work between students as well as external collaborators. I’d like this project to mirror the kind of project development work that is done outside of classroom settings wherever possible. Talk to me early and often about
your ideas, frustrations, etc. Your ideas re: projects can (and most likely should!) change over the course of the semester.

Imagine this project as version 1.0 of work that might develop further beyond the course (supported by collaborations, additional funding, and the luxury of more time and feedback). Ideally, this project will become part of your professional development: something to show prospective employers via a digital portfolio, work that gets further disseminated in conference presentations and/or journal articles, etc.

For the purposes of the course, I expect you to demonstrate:

- A familiarity with best practices re: the development and prototyping of a digital project
- An interest in creating a project that will be of particular use to a clearly defined audience
- The use of a digital tool, platform, and/or content management system that you had not previously used extensively

Digital projects take time and involve lots of resources: for example, the Our Marathon digital archive project that I worked on spanned two and a half years. Digital projects are also works in progress: you may not come out of the class with a fully-formed resource or initiative. But you will come out with an awareness of how projects are imagined, planned, executed, and circulated in initial forms to professional and public audiences.

Here’s a breakdown of the major components of your digital project:

- **Ignite Talk**: You’ll give a brief presentation to the class on your initial project idea (modeled on the “Ignite” style of rapid-fire presentations) (10%)
- **Formal Project Proposal**: You will write a more formal proposal (inspired in part by the areas highlighted in the NEH’s Digital Projects for The Public grant program, but the formatting may vary depending on your project) (20%)
- **Digital Project 1.0**: You will complete the project (or the first iteration of the project). Circulating all or some components of the project itself publicly is not required, but encouraged (30%)

You might end up re-using some content in your

We’ll also discuss the best venue (digital, physical, or both?) to curate your work for the JNBC community and other interested parties here at Brown (and beyond, depending on the digital components)? More broadly, how might we think of the work we’re doing this class as work that impacts the JNBC at-large and student interest in digital work and contexts?
There will be particular points in the semester when you’ll have time to work on your digital projects in class: see the schedule for particular dates.

**Schedule**

The Course Schedule, including major reading assignments, can be found on our course web site. It is full of hyperlinks, so re-printing it in this format doesn’t make much sense tbh.

Schedule pasted from course web site below for long-term preservation / remediation via PDF

**Schedule & Readings**

If anything changes below (readings, deadlines), I’ll let you know in class and via email. Readings listed next to dates refer to the texts we’ll be discussing on those particular dates. You’ll receive readings that don’t have hyperlinks by other means.

**Introductions**

**TH 1/28:** Overview of course; *“What is Digital Humanities?”*(Various); *“Getting Started in Digital Humanities”* (Spiro)

**Secondary Readings:** *The Oregon Trail* (Various); *Bambi vs. Godzilla; Doom 2; “Encarta ’96”; “Where Online Services Go When They Die”* (Edwards); *Windows 95 Tips* (Cicerega); *“Web 2.0”* (Various); *“Good Intentions: The Later Works of Brian O’Nolan”* (McGrath)

**Backgrounds and Contexts**

**T 2/2** Excerpts from *Hypertext 2.0* (Landow) and *Hamlet on The Holodeck* (Murray); *“Intermedia:}*
An Introduction” (Landow); “Credits: Who Wrote the Material in the In Memoriam Web” (Landow and Lanestedt); In Memoriam Web (Landow et al)

Secondary Readings: “The History of Humanities Computing” (Hockey); “Hypertext” (Landow); “A Command Line Primer for Beginners” (LifeHacker)

TH 2/4 “Digital Dualism vs. Augmented Reality,” “Digital Dualism and the Fallacy of Web Objectivity” and “The IRL Fetish” (Jurgenson); Various works by Lauren McCarthy

Secondary Readings: “Your Internet Friends Are Real” (Chayka); “Digital Ephemera and The Calculus of Importance” (Cohen); “Brands Are Not Your Friends” (Biddle); “Augmented Reality Livens Up Museums” (Rieland); Second Life

T 2/9 “Promises and Perils of Digital History” and “Exploring The History Web” (Introduction through “Discussion and Organizational Sites”) (Cohen and Rosenzweig); September 11 Digital Archive; Guantanamo Public Memory Project

Secondary Readings: “Snapshots of History” (Onion); “Between Archive and Participation: Public Memory in a Digital Age” (Haskins)

TH 2/11 “Digital Humanities As/Is A Tactical Term” (Kirschenbaum); “The Productive Unease of 21st-century Digital Scholarship” (Flanders); “Can Digital Humanities Mean Transformative Critique?” (Lothian and Phillips); Girls Who Code

Secondary Readings: “A Digital Humanities Manifesto” and “The Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0” (Various); “Why are The Digital Humanities So White? or Thinking the Histories of Race and Computation” (McPherson); “What’s
Media, Digital Media, and Digital Interfaces

T 2/16 “Immediacy, Hypermediacy, and Remediation” (Bolter and Grusin; link emailed to students); “Indistinguishable from Magic: Invisible Interfaces and Digital Literature as Demystifier” (Emerson; read via Brown’s ebrary edition); The Text Encoding Initiative and the Women Writers Project

Secondary Readings: “Sing to Me, O Muse (But Keep It Brief)” (Lehman); “The Future of A Thing is A Return To Its Values” (Visconti)

TH 2/18 “From Reading to Social Computing” (Liu); Excerpt from Always Already New (Gitelman); “Edition, Project, Database, Archive, Thematic Research Collection: What’s In A Name?” (Price); “The Custodians” (Lerner); What Jane Saw

Secondary Readings: “The Cathedral of Computation” (Bogost); “So The Colors Cover The Wires” (Kirschenbaum); The Computer History Museum; Electronic Literature Organization

T 2/23 NO CLASS (LONG WEEKEND)

Archives and Digital Archives

TH 2/25 “facts and FACTS: Abolitionists’ Database Innovations” (Garvey); “The Image of
Absence: Archival Silence, Data Visualization, and James Hennings” (Klein); Chronicling America; The Digital Public Library of America; “Radical Archives and the New Cycles of Contention” (Springer)

**Secondary Readings:** Serendip-o-matic; “Digital Records of Incarceration” (McGrath)

T 3/1 “Archives in Context and As Context” (Theimer); “We’re All Digital Archivists Now” (Schaefer and Owens); “Can The Internet Be Archived?” (Lepore); “Personal Digital Archives” (Library of Congress); The Internet Archive and Archive-It

**Secondary Readings:** “Animating the Archive” (Schnapp); “The .txtual Condition: Digital Humanities, Born-Digital Archives, and The Future Literary” (Kirschenbaum); Silencing The Past: Power and The Production of History (Trouillot); “Venus in Two Acts” (Hartman)

TH 3/3 “Towards Generous Interfaces for Archival Collections” (Whitelaw); Omeka and Digital Archives

**Analog and Digital Crowdsourcing**

T 3/8 “Engaging the Public: Best Practices for Crowdsourcing Across the Disciplines” (Crowd Consortium); Wikipedia

Blog Post due: Case Study of Digital Project

**Secondary Readings:** “Crowdsourcing and Community Engagement” (Peaker); “How an
Ecosystem of Machine Learning and Crowdsourcing Could Help You” (Ridge)

TH 3/10 “Postcolonial Digital Humanities: The Rewriting Wikipedia Project” (Koh and Risam); “#transform(ing)DH Writing and Research” (Bailey); Wikipedia editing

Secondary Readings: “The News on Wikipedia in 2014” (Keegan); New American Notes Online Special Issue: “Digital Humanities, Public Humanities” (Various)

Data, Big Data, and Data Curation

T 3/15 “Big? Smart? Clean? Messy? Data in the Humanities” (Schöch); “The Red Herring of Big Data” (Croxall); “Google Ngram: An Intro for Historians” (Gratien and Pontillo); Google Ngram and Google Ngram FAQ

Secondary Readings: “What is Code?” (Ford); “Defining Data for Humanists: Text, Artifact, Information, or Evidence?” (Owens); “Mr. Penumbra, Distant Reading, and Cheating at Scholarship” (Cordell)

TH 3/17 “Foundations of Data Curation: The Pedagogy and Practice of ‘Purposeful Work’ with Research Data” (Various); “An Introduction to Humanities Data Curation” (Flanders and Muñoz)

Secondary Readings: “Data Curation as Publishing for the Digital Humanities” (Muñoz)
Social Media

T 3/22 “What is an @uthor?” (Kirschenbaum); “A Call for Bots of Conviction” (Sample); “After The Protests” (Tufekci); Every Three Minutes; How To Make A Twitter Bot with Google Spreadsheets (Whalen)

Secondary Readings: Interview with Patricia Lockwood (HTMLGIANT); Mark Sample’s Twitter Bots; “The Best Twitter Bots of 2015”

TH 3/24 TAGS and Twitter Data; “History Hashtags: Exploring a Virtual Network of Twitterstorians” (Varin); Selfie City


SPRING BREAK

T 3/29 NO CLASS

TH 3/31 NO CLASS

Mapping: Data, Design, and Curation

T 4/5: “The Potential of Spatial Humanities” (Bodenhamer; pgs. 14–29); “Digital Maps and
Social Data” (Long); The Roaring Twenties; Mapping Titian; Select ArcGIS Projects

TH 4/7: “Mapping the Digital Empire: Google Earth and the Process of Postmodern Cartography” (Farman); Neatline, Google Maps, and HistoryPin: Comparing Methodologies and Uses

Blog Post Due: Social Media

Project Development

T 4/12 Blog posts (#2) due

TH 4/14 “Ten Rules for Humanities Scholars New to Project Management” (Nowviskie); “Building Digital Humanities Projects for Everyone” (Reut)

Secondary Readings: “Project Management for Humanists” (Leon); “12 Basic Principles of Project Management” (Croxall)

T 4/19 NEH Grant Proposals and Project Case-Studies; Examples of Scaling Up Projects; Examples of Specs and User Stories

TH 4/21 “How did they make that?” (Posner); “What Ever Happened to Project Bamboo?” (Dombrowski)

T 4/26 “Digital Preservation’s Place in the Future of the Digital Humanities” (Owens)

TH 4/28 Formal Proposal DRAFTS Due; Discussion of Proposal Drafts (Ignite Pitches)
T 5/3 Workshop Session (Digital Project 1.0)

**TH 5/5** “Published Yet Never Done: The Tension Between Projection and Completion in Digital Humanities Research” (Various); “Done: Finishing Projects in the Digital Humanities” (Kirschenbaum)

Secondary Readings: “The Eternal September of the Digital Humanities” (Nowviskie)

T 5/10 Digital Project 1.0 and Final Drafts of Formal Proposals Due

TH 5/12 Blog Post Dissemination Due

T 5/17 tba

TH 5/19 LAST DAY OF CLASS