



## ENG 697: English Studies and the Digital Humanities COURSE SYLLABUS: Summer II, 2013

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### COURSE INFORMATION

#### Required Text:

Gold, Matthew, ed. *Debates in the Digital Humanities*. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 2012. Print.  
(free, open-access version available at <http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/>).

Additional required readings available at our Zotero Group Library  
([https://www.zotero.org/groups/english\\_697-dh/items](https://www.zotero.org/groups/english_697-dh/items))

#### Course Description

An overview of the concepts, tools, and debates of and within the Digital Humanities (DH), especially as they (can) inform our research and teaching in English studies. *No technical background is required.*

In the Digital Humanities, the focus is neither the digital nor the technology. Instead, our concern is with the *humanities* themselves. In English studies, we study texts, readers, and writers. The “digital” plays a fundamental role in that focus, as writers and readers are increasingly reliant upon digital tools. Thus, our course readings and various projects invite you to consider the following question from a variety of angles: *what does the DH have to offer our various areas of English studies* (literary studies, rhetoric and composition studies, English education, etc)?

To this end, we'll explore DH's potential uses in answering the questions that most interest you as a researcher and teacher. The final project should demonstrate an awareness of the current conversations surrounding DH (what is DH? who is a DHer?) and potential uses for DH in pursuing our discipline's important work in more meaningful, generative, and perhaps even brand new ways.

#### Course Overview

This course will explore the history of the digital humanities, focusing especially on the diverse pioneering projects and core texts that ground this innovative methodological and conceptual approach to scholarly inquiry and teaching. It will also emphasize ongoing debates in the digital humanities, such as the problem of defining the digital humanities, the question of whether DH has (or needs) theoretical grounding, controversies over new models of peer review for digital scholarship, issues related to collaborative work on digital projects, and the problematic questions surrounding research involving “big data.” Thus, the questions that will drive our work together include the following:

- What is Digital Humanities?

- What do we mean by “humanities”?
- What key questions and objects dominate our work in English studies? What might DH enable researchers to visualize, understand, ask, explore, teach, and/or communicate in response to these key questions/objects that would not be possible without DH? (and how?)
- What is a "text?"
- What is "digital?"
- What are multi-modal essays and visual narratives, and why should we care?

### Student Learning Objectives

- students will be able to define and describe the Digital Humanities
- students will be able to demonstrate an awareness of key debates in the DH
- students will be able to illustrate meaningful applications for DH in their ongoing work as teachers and scholars
- students will be able to demonstrate familiarity with a wide range of tools and techniques for digital humanities scholarship
- students will be able to communicate their ideas using a variety of digital platforms

## COURSE PLAN

### Unit 1: Definitions and Debates in the Digital Humanities (Weeks 1-2)

*Objectives:* Familiarize yourself with various definitional debates surrounding the digital humanities and arrive at your own working definitions of DH.

### Unit 2: Exploring and Critiquing Projects (Weeks 3-4)

*Objectives:* Explore and critique some prominent digital humanities projects. Gain a sense of the field through an analysis of the projects produced under its aegis.

### Unit 3: Planning and Implementing Projects (Week 5)

*Objectives:* What (specific) contributions can the Digital Humanities make to your research and/or teaching interests?

## ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

**FORUMS (30%):** For the first half of the course, we will hold the bulk of our class discussions in the “Forums” section (see “Forums” tab in eCollege). Our goals for each Forum are to explore the assigned readings, lectures, and other, related elements in meaningful conversation with one another, just as you would in any graduate seminar meeting face-to-face. For that reason, I ask you to keep up with your assigned readings, and post in each assigned forum at least twice—once early in the conversation to get things started and again later in the discussion to keep it moving in meaningful directions.

*Deadlines:* July 9, 11, 15, 18, and 22 (see “Forums” tab in eCollege for prompts and other details)

**UNIT RESPONSE PAPERS (30%):** At the end of the first and second units, you will complete response papers that address key issues raised in the assigned readings, videos, and other related “texts.” Because these Unit 1 and Unit 2 Response Papers are being submitted in the last half of the term, I expect them to be well thought-out, critical, carefully written, and reflect a deep understanding of the texts read and discussed throughout each unit. *Your contributions to the Forums throughout the first half of the term will provide much fodder for your response papers later in the term.*

**Due dates: July 25 and August 1, always before midnight.** Submit to the “Response Papers” section in eCollege. I will grade them from there, and your classmates will have an opportunity to respond to them as well.

### **Unit 1 Response Paper: Definitions and Debates in the Digital Humanities**

*Objective: Familiarize yourself with various definitional debates surrounding the digital humanities and arrive at your own working definitions of DH.*

In this response paper, demonstrate your understanding of the various definitional debates surrounding DH, foregrounding your own working definition of DH as illustrated in select DH projects. In other words, help your readers understand

- what you mean by the “Digital Humanities,”
- how your definition may be situated within the ongoing definitional debates concerning “What is DH?” and “Who is a digital humanist?,”
- how the DH project (or projects) you selected serve as a lens for examining that working definition.

To this end, you will be expected to make extensive use of the critical texts assigned throughout this unit.

*Hint:* In Unit 2, we will begin a more in-depth exploration of how the DH might benefit your own work as a scholar and/or teacher. For that reason, it would be beneficial to foreground your own specific research and teaching interests as you set up your DH definition and select appropriate examples. **(3-5 pages).**

### **Unit 2 Response Paper: Exploring and Critiquing DH**

*Objectives: Explore and critique some prominent digital humanities projects. Gain a sense of the field through an analysis of the projects produced under its aegis.*

In Unit 1, we built a foundation for better understanding the Digital Humanities. Unit 2 complicates this foundation with specific, theoretically driven examples of DH that may begin to address issues in our discipline that you find most challenging/interesting/significant. You will spend Unit 2 exploring and critiquing various DH projects in preparation for our final project. Thus, for your Unit 2 Response Paper, you should

- focus on an issue or theme that strikes you as key in the texts and projects we’ve explored thus far;
- select two or three DH projects that seem to address this issue in meaningful, generative, and/or otherwise significant ways;

In the response paper itself, you should

- offer a clear and concise explanation of the issue or theme you have identified, making excellent use of the texts from which you are drawing to identify that important theme (remember to make extensive use of our assigned course materials, especially for this unit!).
- Next, you should demonstrate the important ways in which these DH projects address the issue or theme you have identified. Though you should make meaningful use of at least two DH projects in your response paper, the bulk of your analysis should rest on just one of these examples. The others serve to ground your analysis in a larger conversation by demonstrating your awareness of related work in the DH.

As this is a response paper, I expect quotation from the text and representation from texts throughout the unit—not just one text. Also, be sure that this text shows you are developing a knowledge base that begins with the foundation laid in Unit 1. **(5-7 pages).**

NOTE: You may use this paper to try out ideas for your final project. In response to Unit 3, the final project should offer a clear and concise summary of the DH projects most relevant to the research and/or teaching agenda you’d most like to pursue. Keep that in mind as you select your projects for the Unit 2 Response Paper. Ideally, you’ll be utilizing these response papers extensively as you prepare your final project.

**FINAL PROJECT (40%):** An annotated bibliography that features DH projects, articles, and related resources on a theme in the DH you have identified as significant. Your response papers (above) should offer a great deal of

support in identifying this theme and relevant source materials. The bibliography should include at least 15 sources and an introductory statement (4-7 pages) framing the annotations according to your key arguments and goals. You should consider this annotated bibliography as a preliminary step in a project you might pursue later. Possibilities include but are not limited to the following: a **scholarly project** (article, thesis, dissertation), an **educational project** (for example, a meaningful unit in an existing course/curriculum, a new course/program, or relevant resources for teachers on a given topic), or even a new DH project (tool, program, etc) that might attract **grant funding**. Whatever your goals, keep them right in front of you as you prepare your annotated bibliography, and select your sources accordingly. Your introductory statement should make these goals clear, as well as the ways in which the goals and approach address a pressing need in your targeted area.

For additional details and guidance, please visit the “Final Project” tab at eCollege.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7/8	7/9 Forum 1	7/10	7/11 Forum 1 Forum 2	7/12	7/13	7/14
7/15 Forum 2	7/16	7/17	7/18 Forum 3	7/19	7/20	7/21
7/22 Forum 3	7/23	7/24	7/25 Unit 1 Response Paper (RP)	7/26	7/27	7/28
7/29 Unit 1 RP (responses)	7/30	7/31	8/1 Unit 2 Response Paper (RP)	8/2	8/3	8/4
8/5 Unit 2 RP (responses)	8/6	8/7	8/8	8/9 Final Project		

### Unit 1: Definitions and Debates in the Digital Humanities (Weeks 1-2)

*Objectives:* Familiarize yourself with various definitional debates surrounding the digital humanities and arrive at your own working definitions of DH.

FORUM	to get the conversation started	to keep the conversation moving
1	post to Forum 1 before midnight, Tues. 7/9	post to Forum 1 before midnight, Thurs. 7/11
2	post to Forum 2 before midnight, Thurs. 7/11	post to Forum 2 before midnight, Mon. 7/15
3	post to Forum 3 before midnight, Thurs. 7/18	post to Forum 3 before midnight, Mon., 7/22
RP	to get the conversation started	to keep the conversation moving
Unit 1	submit to Unit 1 RP before midnight, Thurs, 7/25	respond to Unit 1 RP before midnight, Mon, 7/29

### Unit 2: Exploring and Critiquing Projects (Weeks 3-4)

*Objectives:* Explore and critique some prominent digital humanities projects. Gain a sense of the field through an analysis of the projects produced under its aegis.

RP	to get the conversation started	to keep the conversation moving
Unit 2	submit to Unit 2 RP before midnight, Thurs, 8/1	respond to Unit 2 RP before midnight, Mon, 8/5

### Unit 3: Planning and Implementing Projects (Week 5)

*Objectives:* What (specific) contributions can the Digital Humanities make to your research and/or teaching interests?

Project	for instructor review	to share with classmates
Final	submit to FP "Dropbox" before midnight, 8/8	submit to FP "Discussion" before midnight, 8/8

## DETAILED SCHEDULE

All of your reading assignments can be found in Gold's collection *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, at the links in our Zotero Group Library at [https://www.zotero.org/groups/english\\_697-dh/items/collectionKey/4WNWNNFT](https://www.zotero.org/groups/english_697-dh/items/collectionKey/4WNWNNFT), or in Doc Sharing (eCollege). The Zotero Group Library links are also available in our Webliography.

### WEEK ONE: DEFINING THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES

#### Unit 1: Definitions and Debates in the Digital Humanities (Weeks 1-2)

*Objectives:* Familiarize yourself with various definitional debates surrounding the digital humanities and arrive at your own working definitions of DH.

#### READ

- *Debates in the Digital Humanities:* "Introduction: The Digital Humanities Moment" (Gold), "What is the Digital Humanities, and What's It Doing in English Departments?" (Kirschenbaum), "The Humanities, Done Digitally" (Fitzpatrick), "An Interview with Brett Bobley" (Gavin and Smith)
- *Inside Higher Ed:* "The Promise of the Digital Humanities" (9/28/11); "Byte the Humanities" (3/27/13) (at our Zotero Group Library)
- *Time needed:* minimal, as assigned chapters and articles are very brief and accessible

#### WATCH/EXPLORE

"Readings" like these (sometimes video, interactive texts) may be unfamiliar to many students. For that reason, many of the items on our schedule include the estimated time you might expect to devote to these activities. I back off from this detail later in the term, when you are likely to have become increasingly familiar with the course, the topic, and one another and thus in a better position to estimate these timeframes yourself. It also becomes increasingly less possible for me to estimate such times for you as you begin working more independently toward your final project.

- *WhatisDigitalHumanities.com* (<http://whatisdigitalhumanities.com/>): Spend some time with this page, exploring the various ways people are defining DH. Remember you are working toward your own definition of DH, so you should try to find definitions that you seem most useful to you in developing an approach to DH that will be most beneficial to your work as a teacher and/or scholar.

*Description:* An interactive, extensive list of definitions. "Refresh the page to get a new definition. Quotes were pulled from participants from the Day of DH between 2009-2012" (Heppler).

*Time needed:* Try to limit yourself to about 15-30 minutes for this exercise.

#### DISCUSS (all of the above)

As I explained in the "Assignments and Evaluation" section the syllabus, the interactive Forums house the bulk of our in-class discussions through the first couple weeks of the term. Prompts for each Forum are included below.

#### **Forum #1:** Introduce Yourself!

Tell us a little about yourself, including your interests as a teacher and a researcher. I'm sure we'd also like to hear about your educational experiences and plans, as well as anything more personal you'd like to include. Pets, travel, hobbies, family, etc? After you post something about yourself, find out something about your classmates. Interact with them. That's what this is all about!

Remember our goals: *to get the conversation started and KEEP the conversation.* See "Schedule at a Glance" for deadlines.

#### **Forum #2:** Defining the Digital Humanities

Respond to assigned readings (see “Read” above) and selected DH project (see “Watch/Explore” above). These discussion posts needn’t be formal or long. A paragraph or two per post should be enough. The idea here is to have a conversation with your classmates about your evolving understanding of DH and what DH might help us do in our various areas of English studies. Think about how you would respond in an in-class discussion, and try to mimic that in our online forum.

Remember our goals: *to get the conversation started and KEEP the conversation*. See “Schedule at a Glance” for deadlines.

## **WEEK TWO: THEORIZING THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES**

### **Unit 1: Definitions and Debates in the Digital Humanities (Weeks 1-2)**

*Objectives:* Familiarize yourself with various definitional debates surrounding the digital humanities and arrive at your own working definitions of DH.

#### **READ**

*Debates in the Digital Humanities:* “Developing Things” (Ramsay and Rockwell), “A Telescope for the Mind?” (McCarty), and one other from Part II (your choice)

*Time needed:* minimal, as assigned chapters are brief and accessible (though less accessible and brief than last week’s assigned chapters)

#### **WATCH**

- Lecture: Tara McPherson’s “Expanding the Scholarly Imagination: Experiments in the Digital Humanities” (<http://youtu.be/7khMY94TkjA>)
- *Time needed:* about two hours, including viewing lecture and synthesizing notes afterwards

#### **EXPLORE**

- *Vectors Journal* (discussed in McPherson’s lecture): (1) read short introduction, (2) select a topic of interest to you (from issues listed at <http://vectors.usc.edu/archive/>), (3) read short introduction to the issue you selected, and (4) “read” at least one project, attempting to wrap your arms around the creator/designer’s goals, the relevance/significance of those goals, and how well the resulting project works to address those goals.
- *Kairos*: “Making Meaning at the Intersections” (Summer 2013); “The Olive Project” (Spring 2011)
- *Time needed:* an hour or so, though you may need to set a timer; it is easy to spend an entire day exploring projects like these! **Spend the majority of the time you have available for this on *Vectors***. However, pass your eyes and cursor across the *Kairos* articles, as these pieces also exemplify much of what McPherson describes as “multimodal” scholarship (DH!). You may wish to return to these or other examples available at our Zotero Group Library as you develop your Unit 1 Response Paper (due next week).
- **NOTE:** All the videos (McPherson) and articles (from *Vectors* and *Kairos*) listed above are available in our Zotero Group Library ([https://www.zotero.org/groups/english\\_697-dh/items/collectionKey/4WNWNNFT](https://www.zotero.org/groups/english_697-dh/items/collectionKey/4WNWNNFT))

#### **DISCUSS**

##### **Forum #3: Theorizing the DH (with examples)**

Respond to assigned readings (see “Read” above) and selected DH project (see “Watch/Explore” above). These discussion posts needn’t be formal or long. The idea here is to have a conversation with your classmates about your evolving understanding of DH and what DH might help us do in our various areas of English studies. Share examples and your thoughts on how the selected examples may exemplify (or challenge) your evolving definition of DH.

Remember our goals: *to get the conversation started and KEEP the conversation*. See “Schedule at a Glance” for deadlines.

## **WRITE!**

**Unit 1 Response Paper is due Wednesday, 7/24 (next week).** See “Unit Response Papers” for detailed prompt and everything else you will need to complete this assignment wrapping up Unit 1 and preparing ourselves for Unit 2.

## **WEEK THREE: CRITIQUING THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES**

### **Unit 2: Exploring and Critiquing the DH (Weeks 3-4)**

*Objectives:* Explore and critique some prominent digital humanities projects. Gain a sense of the field through an analysis of the projects produced under its aegis.

**NOTE: This week, you move from the Forum to the Response Papers.** In the Forums, your graded contributions have been those informal, regular discussion posts you submitted to Forums 1-3. From this point forward, your graded contributions will be your more formal writing assignments: Response Papers for Units 1 and 2, then your Final Project.

*However, just because you aren't being graded on your contributions to our informal discussions doesn't mean you can't continue conversing with your classmates.* Just move that online discussion from the Forum tab to the Response Papers area. **You can explore ideas for your Response Papers in the same discussion area you will use to submit your completed Response Papers.**

## **READ**

- *Debates in the Digital Humanities:* “Why Are the DH So White?” (McPherson, Part III), “Can Information Be Unfettered?” (Earhart), “Looking for Whitman” (Gold and Groom), “Where is Cultural Criticism in the DH?” (Liu), and at least two other selections (total) from Part III, IV, V, and/or VI.
- *Journal of Digital Humanities:* “Getting Started in Digital Humanities” (2011). Available at our Zotero Group Library
- *College English:* “Occupying the DH” (March 2013). You'll find this in Doc Sharing (eCollege)

## **EXPLORE**

- *Selected videos* (your choice) from National Endowment for the Humanities Office of Digital Humanities (NEH ODH) Project Directors Meeting, “Lightening Round: 2011” (see the list at “[NEH grant news, videos](#)”). You read about this meeting in the first week of class (see *Inside Higher Ed*'s “The Promise of the Digital Humanities”)

*Description:* The two-minute long videos collected here are from a September 27, 2011, meeting at the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington DC, bringing together 54 individuals leading DH projects awarded 2011 NEH ODH Start Up grants. The videos here offer a quick, exciting overview of the scope, quality, and variety of DH projects undertaken over the last few years. As the press release describes it, “Project directors will have just two minutes and three PowerPoint slides to introduce and explain their projects to the public. Come learn about developing mobile app platforms for history, capturing dance notation using an iPad, using gaming technology to teach the history of medicine, or applying crowdsourcing to culinary history ... all in just two minutes.” The videos offer “the public a sneak preview of 54 ground-breaking projects that apply cutting-edge technology to high quality research in the humanities” ([Rhody, 8/31/11](#)).

I selected 2011 primarily because this is the latest year of funded projects likely to have completed their granting period by this point and submitted their final projects. However, you may notice our own DH project “Remixing Rural Texas: Local Texts, Global Contexts” was among those awarded that year. ☺

If you haven't pinned down examples you'd like to incorporate into your Unit 1 Response Paper, you might find this exercise particularly useful. If you have already found the examples you need, you might still find this an efficient way to explore what's going on out there.

So here's what I suggest: take at this list of videos (see "NEH grant news, videos" above). Then,

- (1) select three to five projects of potential interest to you,
- (2) watch the selected videos (none are more than three minutes in length),
- (3) choose one of the five projects you selected and locate it in the NEH database (<https://securegrants.neh.gov/publicquery/main.aspx>), and
- (4) take a look at the actual project (and/or the white paper describing the project)

## UNIT 1 RESPONSE PAPER DUE THURSDAY!

### WEEK FOUR: CRITIQUING THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES

#### Unit 2: Exploring and Critiquing the DH (Weeks 3-4)

*Objectives:* Explore and critique some prominent digital humanities projects. Gain a sense of the field through an analysis of the projects produced under its aegis.

**NOTE: This week, you are submitting your final Response Paper (for Unit 2) and beginning your Final Project.** Of course the research and writing you've been doing all term should feed directly into the research and writing you'll do for these culminating assignments. That means you aren't really "beginning" your Final Project this week because you've been working on it all along.

However, you will be spending the majority of this week and next researching and writing. For that reason, our common reading assignment for this week is just one article (see below). You have plenty to do!

This week, however, I am also directing you to several resources I have pulled together for you, which you should find quite helpful as you prepare your Unit 2 RP and Final Project. I have designed both assignments in such a way that your Unit 2 RP will likely serve as an early draft of the introduction for your annotated bibliography (Final Project). *Viola!*

#### **Additional Support:**

- Visit with me by phone or face-to-face during my office hours. If that won't work for your schedule, I'm happy to set up another time. Let me know!
- Visit with one another about your projects as they develop. I encourage you to lean on one another by continuing your informal discussions, brainstorming, and support in our Response Paper and Final Project discussion areas. You can explore ideas for your Response Papers and Final Projects in the same discussion areas you will use to submit your Response Paper and Final Project when it is complete! Of course, I will only be grading your formal writing assignments at this point. However, that doesn't mean you can't take advantage of this super smart group. That just makes good sense, right?

#### **READ**

- CCC: "Meaningful Engagements (June 2013). You'll find this in Doc Sharing (eCollege)

#### **EXPLORE/READ**

A number of excellent DH projects (and articles about DH projects) and other important resources can be found in our Zotero Group Library collection called "Explore DH Projects" at [https://www.zotero.org/groups/english\\_697-dh/items/collectionKey/PCKD98UV](https://www.zotero.org/groups/english_697-dh/items/collectionKey/PCKD98UV)

I encourage you to call attention to other resources your classmates might find useful as well. Let's share these in our Unit 2 Response Papers discussion area and/or the Final Project discussion area.

**UNIT 2 RESPONSE PAPER DUE THURSDAY!**

## **WEEK FIVE: PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING DH**

### **Unit 3: Planning and Implementing Projects (Week 5)**

*Objectives:* What (specific) contributions can the Digital Humanities make to your research and/or teaching interests?

**FINAL PROJECT DUE THURSDAY!**