

**ENGL 946/HIST 946: Interdisciplinary Reading Seminar in Digital Humanities**  
**Thursday 3:30-5:20 638 Oldfather Hall**  
**William G. Thomas**  
**University of Nebraska**  
**Fall 2011**

Office Hours:           Mondays and Wednesdays 1-3  
                              615 Oldfather Hall  
                              Department of History  
                              wgt@unl.edu  
                              402-472-2414

**Description:**

Digital Humanities (DH) is an interdisciplinary scholarly activity that attempts to bring digital technology into useful dialogue with the humanities disciplines (philosophy, history, religion, law, ancient and modern languages, literature, and art). DH centers on the investigation, analysis, synthesis, and presentation of knowledge using computational media. It studies how digital media affect the disciplines, as well as how knowledge is constructed, maintained, processed, understood, and communicated. Digital humanists create archival collections, databases, and digitized objects. They use computational methods to analyze humanities materials in digital form and address scholarly questions about these sources. They also often present their scholarship only in digital formats, making it accessible electronically and, more important, able to be transmuted, multiplied, revised, and reconstituted. Audiences and users, these scholars believe, may do different operations on the same materials resulting in multivalent outcomes. DH teaching involves methodological questions, narrative theories, computational programming, technical writing, group projects, and digital media productions. DH teaching often proceeds from authentic learning pedagogy in which students immerse themselves in the information and produce a tool, model, project, or representation. This graduate readings course surveys the work of DH scholarship, as well as the various theoretical and methodological reflections that have arisen in the field over the last few decades. Students will read leading critical works, examine seminal digital projects, and examine the works of leading digital humanities scholars.

**Guest Presenters for ENGL/HIST/MODL 946:**

This course will feature a series of guest presenters during a 4-week section of the syllabus. The guest will be a national or international scholar in Digital Humanities with a track record of innovative teaching, grant production, and digital scholarship, whose work is shaping the field. The guest faculty will review student work, meet in real time through digital conferencing with the course, present his/her research, and discuss in asynchronous formats the theories, methodologies, and key works in digital humanities scholarship. Students will have the opportunity to engage with leaders in the field and write a detailed assessment of the scholar's contribution to the field.

Robert Nelson:           University of Richmond Digital Scholarship Lab, Director  
                              <http://dsl.richmond.edu/>  
Stefan Sinclair:           McGill University, Associate Professor  
                              <http://stefansinclair.name/>  
Lisa Spiro:                NITLE Labs, Director  
                              <http://digitalscholarship.wordpress.com/>

## Assignments:

This course is primarily focused on reading, reflection, and discussion. Students can expect to spend most of their time in this course engaged in the close student of scholarly books, articles, and digital productions related to a broad range of topics in the digital humanities. In Week One students will be presented with a team assignment.

*The Challenge:* As a team the class will design, program, and prototype an iPad/iPhone app (IOS 5--<http://www.apple.com/ios/ios5/>) to advance the field of digital humanities for 4Humanities (<http://humanistica.ualberta.ca/>)--i.e. suggestions from 4Humanities scholars

- to digest "daily all news articles related to humanities and digital humanities from state and local sources in an easily accessible and manipulable way"
- to create "infrastructure (tools, apps, platforms, etc.) for allowing humanists to bring their work more naturally to the attention of the public. As an example, . . . an idea for mashing up such tools as Open Journal Systems, Omeka, the Simile widgets, etc., to create effective exhibition platforms or feeds."
- to create a tool for accessing, perhaps mobile-aware, "harvesting, packaging, and channeling a 'showcase' or 'gallery' of public-oriented humanities research and teaching."
- to imagine and execute a program to showcase "what might be done to promote the value of the humanities in K-12. In particular, . . . having students go into schools and present or partner with students . . . figure out what a fun humanities fair might look like, modeled on science fairs."

*The Resources:* University wide campus resources, including CDRH, New Media Center, Computing Innovation Group, Renaissance Computing Initiative, and global network of Digital Humanities scholars . . .

*The Deadline:* One month.

There are two individual essays for this course, which ask you to synthesize and critique readings in an informed manner. The specific topics which are of your choosing will likely arise from class discussions, but should focus on critical and theoretical engagement with the main lines of discussion and debate within the field. Select one of the weekly readings in the course and use 3-4 recommended readings to supplement a critical analysis of the main issues at stake.

Grades will be calculated using the following weight:

Assignment 1:	20 %
Essay 1:	20 %
Essay 2:	20 %
Participation/Posts:	30 %

## Grading Scale

A+	97-100	C+	77-79
A	94-96	C	74-76
A-	90-93	C-	70-73
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	84-86	D	64-66

B- 80-83            D- 60-63  
                                 F below 60

Late assignments will be marked down one half-letter grade per day that they are overdue. No assignments will be accepted more than one week late without permission from the instructor. Assignments will not be accepted in email format or as attachments, only as hard copy handed in at class session.

Participation will be graded on the basis of the number and quality of in class contributions, engagements through discussion threads, and other expected commentary, as well as attendance. Quality of contributions to in class discussions will be evaluated for the sophistication of analysis and evidence of close readings. The highest standards of scholarly debate, respectful discourse, and community will be held in the seminar.

### **Course Readings:**

Ayers, Edward L. "The Pasts and Futures of Digital History," Virginia Center for Digital History, (<http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/PastsFutures.html>)

Borgman, Christine. Scholarship in the Digital Age: Information, Infrastructure, and the Internet. MIT Press, 2009.

Brown, John Seely, and Duguid, Paul. The Social Life of Information. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2000.

Bush, Vannevar. "As We May Think," Atlantic Monthly (July 1945).

Darnton, Robert, "An Early Information Society: News and the Media in Eighteenth Century Paris," American Historical Review Vol. 105 (February 2000).

Drucker, Johanna. SpecLab: Digital Aesthetics and Projects in Speculative Computing. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Ethington, Philip J. "Los Angeles and the Problem of Urban Historical Knowledge," American Historical Review (2000). <<http://cwis.usc.edu/dept/LAS/history/historylab/LAPUHK/>>

Latour, Bruno. Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory. Oxford University Press, 2005.

Lanier, Jaron. "Digital Maoism: The Hazards of the New Online Collectivism," Edge (May 2006)

Lessig, Lawrence. Code and Other Laws of Cyberspace, version 2.0. Basic Books, 2006.

McGann, Jerome. Radiant Textuality: Literature after the World Wide Web. Palgrave, 2002.

McNeely, Ian F. and Lisa Wolverson. Reinventing Knowledge: From Alexandria to the Internet. New York: W. W. Norton, 2008.

- Michel, Jean-Baptiste et al. "Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books," Science Vol. 331 (14 January 2011).
- McLuhan, Marshall. The Medium is the Message. Ginko, 2005.
- Morozov, Evgeny. The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom. Public Affairs, 2011.
- Moretti, Franco. Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History. Verso, 2007.
- Ramsay, Stephen. "Toward an Algorithmic Criticism," Literary and Linguistic Computing 18.2 (2003): 167-174.
- Rockwell, Geoffrey. "What is Text Analysis, Really?," Literary and Linguistic Computing 18.2 (2003): 209-220.
- Rosenzweig, Roy, "Scarcity or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era," American Historical Review, 108:3 (June 2003), 735-762.
- Schreibman, Susan, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth, A Companion to Digital Humanities. Blackwell Publishing, 2004. (online selections by Busa, Hockey, Jenson, and Kirschenbaum)
- Thomas, William G. III, and Edward L. Ayers, "The Differences Slavery Made: Two Communities in the American Civil War," American Historical Review, December 2003. (<http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/AHR>)
- Turkle, Sherry. Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other. New York: Basic Books, 2011.
- White, Richard. "What is Spatial History?" (working paper, Spatial History Project, 2010) (<http://www.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/pub.php?id=29>)
- Wu, Tim. The Master Switch: The Rise and Fall of Information Empires. New York: Knopf, 2010.

### **Course Schedule:**

August 25, 2011

Week 1: Introduction--What is Digital Scholarship

Readings: Christine Borgman, Scholarship in the Digital Age: Information, Infrastructure, and the Internet (MIT Press, 2009); CDH Busa

additional sources:

Abby Smith, "New Model Scholarship: How Will it Survive?" CLIR (2003)

Martha Brogan, "A Kaleidoscope of Digital American Literature," CLIR (2005)

Louis Menand, The Marketplace of Ideas: Reform and Resistance in the American University (W. W. Norton, 2010)

September 1, 2011

Week 2: Overview

Readings: Ian F. McNeely and Lisa Wolverton, Reinventing Knowledge: From Alexandria to the Internet. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008); Vannevar Bush, "As We May Think"

additional sources:

Alex Wright, Glut: Mastering Information Through the Ages

Elizabeth Eisenstein, The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe (Cambridge, 1983)

Alan Liu, The Laws of Cool: Knowledge Work and the Culture of Information (Chicago, 2004)

*Team Assignment Benchmark 1*

September 8, 2011

Week 3: Media

Readings: Marshall McLuhan, The Medium is the Massage (Ginko, 2005)

additional sources:

Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, Remediation: Understanding New Media (MIT, 1999)

Lisa Gitelman, Always Already New: Media History, and the Data of Culture (MIT, 2006)

September 15, 2011

Week 4: Texts

Readings: Jerome McGann, Radiant Textuality: Literature after the World Wide Web (Palgrave 2002); Stephen Ramsay, "Toward an Algorithmic Criticism"; Geoffrey Rockwell, "What is Text Analysis, Really?"; CDH Kirschenbaum

additional sources:

Alan Liu, "When Was Linearity: The Meaning of Graphics in the Digital Age,"  
digitalhistory.unl.edu (2008)

George Landow, Hypertext 2.0: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology (Johns Hopkins, 1997)

Richard A. Lanham, The Electronic Word: Democracy, Technology, and the Arts (Chicago, 1993)

Susan Hockey, Electronic Texts in the Humanities (Oxford, 2000)

September 22, 2011

Week 5: Data

Readings: Michel et al. "Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books"; Roy Rosenzweig, "Scarcity or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era"; John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid, The Social Life of Information (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2000)

additional sources:

James Gleick, The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood (Pantheon, 2011)

*Team Assignment Benchmark 2--Final Reports*

September 29, 2011

Week 6: Spatial Humanities

Readings: Richard White, "What is Spatial History?"; Philip Ethington, "Los Angeles and the Problem of Urban Historical Knowledge"; David Staley, "Historical Visualizations"

additional sources:

Bodenhamer et al., The Spatial Humanities: GIS and the Future of Humanities Scholarship (Indiana University Press, 2010)

Anne K. Knowles, ed. Past Time Past Place: GIS for History (ESRI, 2002)

Anne K. Knowles, ed. Placing History: How Maps, Spatial Data, and GIS are Changing Historical Scholarship (ESRI, 2008)

October 6, 2011

Week 7: Aesthetics (guest: Stefan Sinclair)

Readings: Johanna Drucker, SpecLab: Digital Aesthetics and Projects in Speculative Computing (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009)

additional sources:

Matthew Kirschenbaum, Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination (MIT, 2008)

Victoria Vesna, ed. Database Aesthetics (Minnesota, 2007)

David Staley, Computers, Visualization and History: How New Technology Will Transform Our Understanding of the Past (Sharpe, 2002)

Janet Murray, Inventing the Medium: Principles of Interaction Design as a Cultural Practice (MIT, 2011)

October 13, 2011

Week 8: Narrative (guest: Robert Nelson)

Readings: Franco Moretti, Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History (Verso, 2007)

additional sources:

Janet Murray, Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace (MIT, 2000)

George Landow, ed. Hyper/Text/Theory (Johns Hopkins, 1994)

Espen Aarseth, Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature (Johns Hopkins, 1997)

First Essay Due

October 20, 2011

Week 9: Theory

Readings: Bruno Latour, Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory (Oxford University Press, 2005)

additional sources:

N. Katherine Hayles, How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics (Chicago, 1999)

Bruno Latour, We Have Never Been Modern (Harvard, 1993)

Anthony Giddens, The Consequences of Modernity (Stanford, 1990)

William H. Sewell, Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation (Chicago, 2005)

October 27, 2011

Week 10: Short-Form Digital Scholarship (guest: Lisa Spiro)

Readings: Darnton, Thomas/Ayers, (Hunt/Censer), American Historical Review, selected digital articles; CDH Hockey, Jenson

additional sources:

Lev Manovich, The Language of New Media (MIT Press, 2001)

Jack Dougherty and Kristen Nawrotzki, eds., Writing History in the Digital Age, comments and reviews @ <http://writinghistory.trincoll.edu/>

November 3, 2011

Week 11: Law

Readings: Lawrence Lessig, Code and Other Laws of Cyberspace, version 2.0 (Basic Books, 2006)

additional sources:

Clay Shirkey, Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations (Penguin, 2009)

Henry Jenkins, Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide (NYU, 2008)

Yochai Benkler, The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom (Yale, 2007)

November 10, 2011

Week 12: Dystopia

Readings: Evgeny Morozov, The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom (Public Affairs, 2011); Jaron Lanier, "Digital Maoism: The Hazards of the New Online Collectivism," Edge (May 2006)

additional sources:

Jaron Lanier, You Are Not a Gadget (Knopf, 2010)

Nicholas Carr, The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains (W. W. Norton, 2008)

November 17, 2011

Week 13: Processes

Readings: Tim Wu, The Master Switch: The Rise and Fall of Information Empires (New York: Knopf, 2010)

additional sources:

John Palfrey, Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives (Perseus, 2008)

Jonathan Zittrain, The Future of the Internet and How to Stop It (Yale, 2008)

Alex Galloway, Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture (Minnesota, 2006)

November 24, 2011

Week 14: Identities

Readings: Sherry Turkle, Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other (New York: Basic Books, 2011)

additional sources:

Sherry Turkle, Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet (Touchstone, 1995)

Frontline, "digital\_nation: life on the virtual frontier" (WGBH, 2010)

@ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/digitalnation/>

Week 15: Future Directions--Presentations

Week 16: Final Essay Due