The Digital Humanities: An Introductory Course in Cultural Studies

This course considers the impact of digital media on the humanities and the interaction between the two. We begin with an overview of some important hypertext theorists to provide insight into how hypermedia can enrich our understanding of the humanities. Turning to recent projects in the digital humanities, we will explore and critique these instantiations of hypermedia and consider how they could enrich a classroom. We will then return to the theoretical, considering the place of art and literature in cyberspace. Throughout the course, we will articulate the values of “analog” humanities we wish to preserve in new media while considering what opportunities new media present that are not possible using the old.

Class time will be devoted to writing exercises and discussions of the digital humanities. We will talk about theoretical matters regarding hypertext and look at concrete examples together. Important information about how to conduct a research project will be provided in class as well. The main course requirement is an inquiry-based research paper that you complete in stages during the semester. There will be reading and reflection assignments to do, and a final exam.

Course Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In class assignments and quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written assignments</td>
<td>30% (total)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
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Course Standards

In order for this classroom community to function, all members must adhere to these rules:

- **Attendance** – On-time attendance is a strict requirement of the course. Students with more than two absences automatically fail. There is no such thing as “excused absences” and doctor’s notes are not necessary. Students who miss less than 20 minutes of class (arrive late, take a break, or leave early) are recorded as late, the equivalent of one-third of an absence. Missing more than 20 minutes counts as an absence. Deadlines are in effect even if you are not in class.

- **Decorum** – Please limit your comments and questions to the material at hand, helping to progress the matter of discussion without distracting the class from it. You should not hold side conversations. All electronic devices must be turned off (silenced is not sufficient); this includes phones, pagers, games, laptops, handhelds, players or recorders. You must pay attention; eating and sleeping are not permitted. Visitors need the advance approval of the instructor.

- **Honesty** – Cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated and may result in punishment that includes failure of the course. You may not use notes or other materials during quizzes or exams. Please be advised that a person who allows someone to cheat (by allowing someone to see a test paper or communicating test questions, for instance) is just as guilty as the person who does the cheating and will be equally punished.

- **Originality** – By handing in work for this class (assignments, quizzes, exams, or other projects) you attest that they are your own original effort. The work you hand in must never have been handed in to fulfill the requirements of another class.

- **Plagiarism** – Plagiarism is a serious offense to the instructor and the university that at the least will be punished by failure of the course. By handing in assignments, quizzes, or exams, you attest that they are your own original work. You are reminded that to best combat plagiarism, you should close all source materials when writing. In addition, you must cite all sources outside of your own experience. You must never use someone else’s words in your own document unless you use quote marks and an appropriate citation system. Further information will be provided in class.
Tentative Assignment Schedule

10/21 Introduction and in-class writing

10/28 Read Jay David Bolter, “The Computer as a New Writing Space.” Response 1 due; use MLA style.


11/11 Read Katherine Hayles, “_____.” Response paper 3 due; use MLA style.

11/18 Read George Landow, from “Reconfiguring the Author.” Textual observations due – type notes on yourself and one other person as you browse through a digital cultural artifact. What do you do, what do you think, what do you feel? How does the digital representation help or hinder the experience?

11/25 Letter due – explain your understanding of the impact digital culture has on the humanities, your reaction to this impact, and your interest for further inquiry. This is a relatively informal assignment and your ideas are of course tentative. Include a list of relevant background material that you will review.

12/2 Read background material. Begin library search to find sources for your paper.

12/9 Preliminary bibliography due. Which sources (aside from background sources) will you use for your paper? List at least ten potential, scholarly sources from books and articles. Use MLA style.

12/16 Scripted interview due. Write a script as if you are a television host reporter, and imagine the responses of two or three of your sources from your bibliography. Write what your sources would say in response to your topic, and as the interviewer write your responses and analysis of their ideas.

1/6 Formal proposal due, using MLA style. It has 5 parts: (1.) Preliminary title – at least 12 words. (2.) Background and context of the project, citing appropriate sources. (3.) Description of what problem it attempts to solve and your preliminary thesis. (4.) Qualifications – why you want to do this job, and what expertise you bring to the project. (5.) Bibliography – revised and expanded from 12/9.


1/20 First draft of paper due. Should be around 1,500 words at this point. Use MLA style. Support your thesis statement with outside sources. Bring a copy to class for in-class revision exercise.

1/27 Second draft due. Bring copies of your paper for you group; take home copies from group members.

2/3 Read and write comments on your group’s papers before class. Hand in revision plan at end of class.

2/10 Get revision plan back and take final exam.

Final papers of 3,000 words in MLA style are due before March 30, 2009 at 5 pm.

No late papers will be accepted.