Digital Humanities in Religious Studies

REL 315-001 | Fall 2020 | 3 Credit Hours Seminar

Tuesday-Thursday, 11-12:15pm
Manly Hall 210 and Zoom

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Office: Manly 315B
Office Hours: Mondays, 2-4pm (**Zoom**); Thursdays, 9-11am (**Slack**)
Due to Covid-19, in-person office hours will only be scheduled in cases of great need.

Course Description

This cross-disciplinary course introduces students to the methods of the digital humanities by applying those methods to the study of religion. Students will learn a variety of digital methods and tools and apply those to data drawn from religious studies. Students do not need a background in computing or religious studies.

Course Objectives

- course will introduce students to the theories and methods of the digital humanities
- course will introduce students to the ethics of acquiring, analyzing, interpreting, and presenting data within the context of religious studies
- course will provide students opportunities to apply theories and methods from digital humanities to religion "data"
- course will present data as contested, complex, and ethically charged

Student Learning Outcomes

- Students will create a digital portfolio to showcase their work over the semester
- Students will review an existing digital humanities project
- Students will experiment with methods from the digital humanities to explore different aspects of religious cultures
- Students will discuss issues of working with data and digital technologies for studying culture and identity
- Students will create a final project that uses the methods from the course to explore and analyze a dataset from multiple angles

Required Software

Please download and install the following:

- **Slack** - https://slack.com. The desktop software is optional, but greatly improves the experience. Our course meeting room is: https://rel315workspace.slack.com/
- **Tableau** - **DO NOT PAY MONEY!**
  - Tableau offers free one year licenses for students, which you can request using your ua.edu email address. https://oit.ua.edu/software/tableau/
  - Download both Desktop and Prep
- **Atom** - https://atom.io/
  - Because you need a plain text editor in your life.

You will be setting up and managing an online portfolio in WordPress for this course. Please sign up for an account with Reclaim Hosting - https://reclaimhosting.com/.

Required Texts

The readings for this course are available online or I will provide PDF documents through Box. The following two titles are available as open access volumes through MIT Press.

- Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein, **Data Feminism,** https://data-feminism.mitpress.mit.edu/
- Anne Burdick, Johanna Drucker, Peter Lunenfeld, Todd Presner and Jeffrey Schnapp, **Digital_Humanities**, https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/digitalhumanities

Class Requirements

Participation (30 points)

The course is structured with Tuesdays as "theory" day and Thursdays as "lab" day. This means we will read and discuss writing in the field on Tuesday (like your usual humanities seminar course) and you will do hands-on computational work on Thursday. You will meet the participation requirement by doing the readings, participating in discussion (as outlined below), doing the homework, and using your online Portfolio.

WordPress Portfolio (10 points)
Your first assignment will be to create a portfolio in WordPress. The portfolio provides space for you to share what you have learned and to begin speaking with others who are examining issues of computation and culture. You will submit your assignments by posting them to your blog.

I recommend you make your site public, as showing your work and engaging with other people in the field is a great way to start networking. However, I will listen to arguments why your site or a particular assignment should remain private. Regardless, you will need to create an admin account for me on your sites so that I can help troubleshoot and verify your work.

Rubric will be distributed in class.

Weekly discussion of readings (10 points)
For each Tuesday meeting, your homework is to read the assigned texts and come to class prepared to discuss them. This could mean having a question to ask about what the text means or how it relates to other readings in this class or your other classes. Or you think the author makes a point that has implications for other readings or our technical assignments. Or you have a disagreement with one of the readings that you would like to discuss, which gives us all a chance to question our own assumptions and those of the author. You can either share these during class or post them to Slack by 10am on Tuesday morning (to give everyone a chance to review before class).

You will earn one point per week for contributing to our discussions for a total of 10 points. You get 2 free pass weeks for those times when you need a break.

Weekly lab reports (10 points)
For each Thursday lab, you will have a homework assignment asking you to demonstrate your attempts to tackle the technical challenge of the week. These will be graded on a ✓+, ✓, 0 scale (Done well - 1 point, attempted - .5 points, nothing posted - 0 points). Posts are due by the beginning of class the following Tuesday.

Your 2 lowest marks will be dropped.

Review of DH Project (20 points)

During the first half of the semester, you will give a presentation and written review (posted to your blogs) of an existing digital humanities project. This will be a collaborative project, meaning you will pair up with one or two classmates to do the review and presentation.

Present in class on September 15. Rubric will be distributed in class.

Three Written Reflections on DH in the study of religion (30 points)

There are 3 modules in the course
- Presentation of digital projects (**Due September 24** at the start of class.)
- "Data" as it relates to religious studies and the digital humanities (**Due October 29** at the start of class.)
- Uses of computational analysis (**Due November 19** at the start of class.)

For each section, you will write a 500-1000 word blog post responding to the question posed at the beginning of the module. These will be graded and worth 10 points each.

Rubrics will be distributed in class.

Final Project (20 points)

Your final project is to write a 2000-word blog post and data review that explores a research question of our dataset. You may need to bring in additional data to answer your question, but analysis of the data should be at the center of your response.

Due December 11 @ Noon. Rubric and details will be distributed in class.

Attendance in a Hybrid Course

This course is "Hybrid," meaning that your attendance and participation can be either in person or virtual, by way of Zoom. To do this, we are going to structure the course as "remote first", meaning that our primary platform for interacting will be Zoom. If you have to quarantine, you should be able to continue participating in the course.

What does "attendance" look like?

Attendance for this course means appearing during our scheduled class periods either by joining the Zoom call or coming to the meeting room in Manly Hall. If you choose to come to the classroom, you will need to bring along your computer so that you can "call in" for full class participation.

At times, we may need to suspend all classroom meetings due to heightened risk of infection. Should that happen, we will all meet via Zoom alone.

What if I get sick?

If you are sick and unable to attend class, please contact me via email as soon as you can. We will work out an alternative plan for you to complete the course requirements.

What do I need to be successful?

Concretely, you will need a computer, web camera, and a reliable internet connection. Let me know if any of these presents a challenge for you.

Beyond that, your sense of adventure and a willingness to fail. Learning technical skills requires trying, retrying, and accepting productive failure. Do not get discouraged if something is not working. Often the best course of action is to step away for a while.

Use our Slack channels and my office hours to ask questions along the way. We are all in this together.

Grading Scale

This course is designed so that you can calculate your grade at any point by adding up the total number of points that you have earned to date.

A+	97-100	C	70-75
A	90-96	D+	66-69
B+	86-89	D	60-65
B	80-85	D-	50-59
C+	76-79	F	below 50

Schedule of Readings

Unit 1: Introductions

Thursday, Aug. 20 | Welcome - Syllabus, Goals, etc.

Homework: Due Tuesday, August 25
- Complete Pre-Course Survey (if you haven't already)

- Sign up for Reclaim Hosting - https://reclaimhosting.com/getting-started/
    - Select that you would like hosting "myself: just my site(s)"
    - Select that your website size is "Under 2 GB"

- Sign into Slack channel with your ua.edu email address - https://join.slack.com/t/rel315workspace/signup
    - Say "hi" in the general channel

Tuesday, Aug. 25 | What is DH?
- *Digital_Humanities*, Ch. 1
- McPherson, Tara, "Why Are the Digital Humanities So White?

Thursday, Aug. 27 | Lab 1 - WordPress

- First steps with WordPress

    Homework: **Due Tuesday Sept. 1 by 11am**
    - Complete Lab 1

Unit 2: Digital Presences

Question: What difference does the interface make?

Tuesday, Sept. 1 | Argument, Narrative, Platform

- *Digital_Humanities*, Ch. 2
- Look at two (at least) of the following DH projects
    - Lincoln Logarithms: Finding Meaning in Sermons
    - Slave Voyages
    - The Valley of the Shadow
    - The Preservation of Favoured Traces
    - Mapping Shakespeare's London
    - [Re]Activate Mama Pina's Cookbook

Thursday, Sept. 3 | Lab 2 - Leveraging the web

- McLuhan, *Understanding Media* [**Selections in UA Box**]

- Mozilla Foundation, "HTML Basics"

Homework: Due Tuesday, September 8 @ 11am
- Complete Lab 2

Tuesday, Sept 8 | Accessibility, Ability, and the Web
- Microsoft Inclusive Design, (download the Inclusive 101 toolkit)
- "Universal Design and the Problem of "Post-Disability" Ideology **[in UA Box]**

Thursday, Sept. 10 | Lab 3 - Accessibility

[Guest Presentation]

Homework: Due Tuesday, September 15 @ 11am
- Complete Lab 3
- Prepare your Review presentations

Tuesday, Sept. 15 | Review of DH Projects
In class presentations

Thursday, Sept. 17 | Lab 4 - Data, Tidy Data
- Hadley Wickham, "Tidy Data"

Homework: Due Tuesday, September 22 @ 11am
- Complete Lab 4

Unit 3: Data

Question: What counts as data for the study of religion? What can and cannot be captured as data?

Tuesday, Sept. 22 | What are Data?
- Jenn Riley, "Understanding Metadata: What is Metadata, and What is it For?: A Primer", pp. 1-7
- Lincoln Mullen, "Where the Problem with Historical Data about U.S. Religion Really Lies"
- Russell McCutcheon, *Studying religion: an introduction*, Chapter 1 **[in UA Box]**

Thursday, Sept. 24 | Lab 5 - Finding Data

- Lincoln Mullen, "A Very Preliminary Taxonomy of Sources of Nineteenth-Century U.S. Religious Data"

  Kevin Walker: Library Resources - Data for the Study of Religion

  Homework: Due Tuesday, September 29 @ 11am
  - Complete Lab 5

Tuesday, Sept. 29 | Data Ethics

- Jessica Marie Johnson, "Markup Bodies: Black (Life) Studies and Slavery (Death) Studies at the Digital Crossroads" **[in UA Box]**
- Duarte, Marisa Elena, and Miranda Belarde-Lewis. "Imagining: Creating Spaces for Indigenous Ontologies."

Thursday, Oct. 1 | Lab 6 - Assessing data

- *Data Feminism*, Chapter 6
- Read the **summary** for the Longitudinal Religious Congregations and Membership File, 1980-2010 (State Level). http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/RCMSMGST.asp

  Homework: Due Tuesday, October 6 @ 11am
  - Complete Lab 6

Tuesday, Oct. 6 | Creating Data

- Anne Farris Rosen, A Brief History of Religion and the U.S. Census
- boyd, danah, and Kate Crawford. "Critical Questions for Big Data."

Thursday, Oct. 8 | Lab 7 - Let's make some data

- Christof Schöch, Big? Smart? Clean? Messy? Data in the Humanities

  Homework: Due Tuesday, October 13 @ 11am
  - Complete Lab 7

Tuesday, Oct. 13 | Representing Data

- Frederick Gibbs, "New Forms of History: Critiquing Data and Its Representations"
- Lauren F. Klein, "The Image of Absence: Archival Silence, Data Visualization, and James Hemings"

Thursday, Oct. 15 | Lab 8 - Cleaning data (Tableau Prep)

- Katie Rawson, Trevor Muñoz, "Against Cleaning"
- Trina Chiasson, Dyanna Gregory, et.al., *Data + Design*, "Preparing Data" section, pp. 100-148 **[in UA Box]**

    Homework: Due Tuesday, October 20 @ 11am
    - Complete Lab 8

Tuesday, Oct. 20 | Sharing Data

- *Data Feminism*, Chapter 7
- Greg Wilson, et. al., "Best Practices for Scientific Computing"

Thursday, Oct. 22 | Lab 9 - Graphs

- Trina Chiasson, Dyanna Gregory, et.al., *Data + Design*, "Visualizing Data" section, pp. 149-214 **[in UA Box]**

    Homework: Due Tuesday, October 27 @ 11am
    - Complete Lab 9

Unit 4: Analysis

Question: How do different modes of analysis transform data? What do those transformations reveal and conceal?

Tuesday, Oct. 27 | Types of computational analysis

- Richard Jean So, "All Models Are Wrong"
- Pacheco, Denise and Velez, Veronica Nelly, "Maps, Mapmaking, and Critical Pedagogy: Exploring GIS and Maps as a Teaching Tool for Social Change"

Thursday, Oct. 29 | Lab 10 - Questions of Where

- Matthew Ericson, "When Maps Shouldn't be Maps"

    Homework: Due Tuesday, November 3 @ 11am
    - Complete Lab 10

Tuesday, Nov. 3 | Logics of computational analysis

- Matthew Jockers, "Revealing Sentiment and and Plot Arcs with the Syuzhet Package"
- Joanna Swafford, "Messy Data and Faulty Tools"
- Benjamin Schmidt, "Do Digital Humanists Need to Understand Algorithms?"

Thursday, Nov. 5 | Lab 11 - Questions of Words

- Ted Underwood, "Where to start with text mining?"

    Homework: Due Tuesday, November 10 @ 11am
    - Complete Lab 11
    - Send me your research questions for final project (Slack or Email)

Tuesday, Nov. 10 | Why algorithms matter

- Noble, Safiya Umoja. "Google Search: Hyper-Visibility as a Means of Rendering Black Women and Girls Invisible."

Thursday, Nov. 12 | Lab 12 - Questions of Connections

- Scott Weingart, "Demystifying Networks"

    Homework: Due Tuesday, November 17 @ 11am
    - Complete Lab 12

Unit 5: Synthesis

Tuesday, Nov. 17 | What sort of DH for the study of Religion?

- Dinsman, Melissa. "The Digital in the Humanities: An Interview with Marisa Parham."

Thursday, Nov. 19 | Lab 13 - Discuss Projects

Week 15 (Nov. 23-27) : Thanksgiving - No Classes

Week 16 (Nov. 30 - Dec. 4) : Dead Week (Virtual) - Work on Final Projects