Digital Literary Studies: History and Principles
English 507, University of Victoria, Spring 2012, CRN: 26850
Meeting Time: Thursday, 8:30-11:20, in CLE C316
Course Site: web.uvic.ca/englblogs/507s2012
Instructor: Jentery Sayers, Assistant Professor, Department of English
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DESCRIPTION

This course gives you an opportunity to combine the hands-on production of multimodal scholarly communications with critical approaches to literature, new media, and digital culture. Here, by "multimodal," I mean a material communication that demands more than one form of perception (e.g., distant reading, casual listening, scanning, or close watching) through more than one medium (e.g., audio, electronic text, image, video, or a database). With this definition in mind, throughout the term we will ask how creating knowledge through algorithms, networked environments, graphical expressions, and dynamic texts influences the theory and practice of literary studies. In so doing, we will intertwine three primary threads in digital literary studies (DLS): (1) the legacies of electronic literature (where DLS implies studying literature that is "digital-born"), (2) computational approaches to literary criticism (where DLS implies using digital technologies to interpret literature and/or compose scholarly communications), and (3) critical frameworks for computational culture (where DLS implies examining the recursive relationships between digital technologies and cultural assumptions, practices, and formations).

Questions will include: Today, how do fields like literary studies, media studies, and software studies overlap and differ? How do we talk about the materiality of digital objects? How do people in English departments learn to collaborate through technologies? How do we combine thinking and making? What is a literary approach to interfaces? What are the implications of using computers to help us read, analyze, and construct texts? How are peer review and attribution changing in an age of social networks? And how might the histories of digital humanities be traced through the codex, print literature, and old media? In the face of such a barrage, we will anchor our attention in particular digital projects (e.g., HyperCities, *Vectors*, Mapping Du Bois, *A Humument*, the Deena Larsen Collection, MediaCommons, and the Electronic Literature Collection). We will also have the unique opportunity to alpha test a platform (i.e., Scalar) specifically architected for scholarly communication in the humanities.

By the term's end, you will create, revise, and share a "proof of concept" for your own digital project. Ideally, this project will relate to your own, ongoing research (e.g., work you've done in another seminar). And by the semester's end, you will acquire a basic familiarity with: (1) modeling, proposing, evaluating, and presenting a digital project, (2) the histories of electronic writing, (3) the annotation of video and audio, (4) networking, visualizing, and versioning your authoring processes, (5) composing neo-geographical maps (e.g., in Google Earth), (6) data visualization, graphical expression, and interaction design in the humanities, (7) the Dublin Core ontology, (8) markup and stylesheet

languages (e.g., HTML and CSS), (9) the emulation of computer environments, (10) current issues in computational culture and digital literary studies, and (11) speculations about the future of the book. But for now, the only technical competence expected is knowing how to send an email.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the seminar's end, you will be expected to:

- Document the iterative development of your learning in a networked environment (i.e., Scalar) through various modes of expression (e.g., video, audio, images, text, maps, and graphs),
- Review the work of other digital humanities practitioners, provide feedback on that work (e.g., through face-to-face conversations as well as commentary in Scalar), and formally evaluate it (e.g., through a written review of an existing digital project),
- Persuasively present your work during a collaborative roundtable (conducted during our last seminar meeting), consisting of at least three people, for a duration of at least thirty minutes (with a question-and-answer period of fifteen minutes),
- Produce a digital project, which is multimodal in character, combines thinking with making, and somehow engages digital literary studies in a provocative and well-researched fashion, and
- Concretely articulate current issues related to electronic literature, the future of the book, and computational criticism and culture.

SEMINAR FORMAT

With a few exceptions, each of our seminar meetings will involve the following:

- Lecture: I will speak for thirty to sixty minutes, introducing us to terms, histories, and issues for future discussion.
- Workshop: For approximately sixty to ninety minutes, we will collectively experiment with a particular language, tool, platform, or approach related to digital literary studies. Between meetings, you will be asked to apply what you learned during these workshops.
- Seminar Discussion: For fifteen to thirty minutes, we will chat as a group about the workshop and/or lecture. Discussions will generally occur toward the end of a seminar meeting.

You should arrive to each meeting having read the required texts / projects and, if you wish, the optional ones, too. In the course outline, I list all required and optional texts. Those qualified as optional are just that; they are simply provided to give you additional contexts for the lecture and workshop, especially if you wish to further pursue the topic (e.g., distant reading, digital materiality, or data visualization) of a particular meeting.

REQUIRED TEXTS, TOOLS, and PLATFORMS

There is no textbook for this seminar. Almost all readings are available online and will be disseminated via links from the course website. Texts that are not available online will be distributed during seminar meetings. That said, you are not required to purchase any books or journal issues. Since most of the technologies we will be using are free and open source, you will also not be required to purchase any tools, apps, or platforms (even though I might recommend some that are not free but are worth purchasing for research purposes). If you decide to pursue any of the topics listed in the course outline, then you might want to purchase the related texts, too (especially if they intersect with your project for the semester).

ASSESSMENT and ASSIGNMENTS

Projects in this seminar are expected to be well-researched (making use of sources that are additional to any research bibliography that I may have provided), appropriately documented following the MLA bibliographic style, carefully proofread, and professionally presented.

Letter grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

90-100 = A+   Projects in this range are especially sophisticated and perceptive pieces of work that make an original contribution to scholarship. They are of publishable quality.

85-89 = A   Projects in this range are perceptive and original, but may require substantial revision for publication. They would normally be accepted as conference presentations.

80-84 = A-   Projects in this range are adequate on the graduate level both with regard to the quality of content and writing and to research and presentation.

76-79 = B+   Projects in this range have significant weaknesses in some areas, though still meet graduate standards.

68-75 = B   Projects in this range are marginally acceptable at graduate level.

Below is a list of the assignments for this seminar, together with a description of what is expected for each. Please note that the requirements are subject to minor changes as the seminar progresses. If I do make a change to any of the assignments, then I will notify you well in advance.

Log (40%)

Throughout the semester, you will use Scalar to keep a log documenting the iterative development of your learning. Consisting of at least eight relatively short contributions, the log will be passcode-protected, and it will not be discoverable by search engines. However, your log will be visible to everyone else in the seminar, and you will be expected to comment on contributions published by your peers. I will openly comment on your logs, but marks will never be posted in Scalar. Your log will be assessed holistically, meaning your work will be given one grade (at the semester's end) based on its: (1) consistency, (2) development over time, (3) integration of seminar discussions, lectures, and workshops, (4) quality, and (5) ultimate relation to your final project. There will be a prompt for each entry in your log, and it will be related to a particular workshop and/or lecture. It will be circulated at least one week prior to its due date. Log entries should be submitted before seminar on the day they are due. Early in the term, we will also develop a model for how to network your logs in a shared space, tag them with descriptive metadata, and visualize relationships across them. If, at any point after our sixth meeting in the term, you would like an interim grade for your log, then feel free to ask. My intention for holistically assessing your log is not to keep you in the dark about your academic progress; it is to treat a log as it should be treated: as a genre that develops and increases in complexity over time. Please note that the tone and style of your logs can be less formal than, say, a seminar essay intended for an academic audience. Logs should also be self-aware and reflective in character.

Though subject to change, the log will consist of the following entries: (1) workflow, (2) workflow in action, (3) metadata, (4) granulation, (5) map, (6) text analysis, (7) review, and (8) assessment. Prompts will be posted on the course website.

Project Proposal (10%) and Final Project (30%)

You have three choices for a final project in this seminar. Please note that final projects are more like "proofs of concept" than complete, polished works. (A proof of concept exhibits the potential of a given project, including the potential of its model or method. It works, it makes an argument, and it suggests that—with more time, research, labor, and content—it could contribute important knowledge to a specific community of practice.) Like a seminar essay, your proof of concept will not be publishable at the semester's end. That said, please embrace the speculative, trial-and-error character of project production. Acknowledge what you do not know, what you hope to learn, what requires experimentation, and what you would do in the future (if given the opportunity). Here, then, are your three options:

* Multimodal Essay (3000 – 5000 words plus video, audio, or images; an abstract (~300 words); an annotated bibliography; and a statement of future development (~150 words))

For this approach, you should address a pressing issue in digital literary studies. The essay should be published entirely in Scalar and expressed digitally through a combination of text, video, images, and/or audio. (In the case of audio and video, the requirement of 3000

– 5000 words can be met by providing a transcript for content authored primarily by you.) The essay should demonstrate competencies in how to use multiple modes of knowledge production to articulate a persuasive argument. Your object(s) of inquiry (e.g., your primary sources) need not be digital. For instance, you are welcome to examine print texts or analog media; however, some of your methods must be digital in character. This option differs from the Scholarly Exhibit (below) in that your argument should be more explicitly stated, and it should be oriented toward a particular scholarly journal (which you will need to identify). It also does not require the remediation of any artifacts; instead, existing content on the web can be embedded in the context of your Scalar essay or integrated into an audio or video production. Additionally, it differs from Data Visualization (below) in that your primary argument will be expressed through modes other than graphs, maps, clouds, or the like. This option does not require "data" in any conventional sense.

In your proposal for this project, you must include: (1) an annotated bibliography, (2) a statement (~250 words) on how you are designing / modeling the essay for Scalar, (3) an abstract (~300 words) explaining your method, argument, and primary object(s) of inquiry, (4) at least one sample paragraph / track / scene, and (5) an appropriate journal for publication purposes. I will mark the proposal as soon as possible, returning comments to you within three days of submission.

* Scholarly Exhibit (artifacts with metadata, a project description (~500 words), 2000 – 4000 words of narrative, and a statement of future development (~150 words))

This approach entails the remediation of existing print, analog, or digital artifacts related to literary studies but not currently available online. Artifacts not only need to be converted into a digital format; they also need to be accompanied by, or encoded with, appropriate metadata (e.g., TEI or Dublin Core). They should then be uploaded to an online archive (e.g., Internet Archive), exhibited in Scalar, and put into conversation through a scholarly narrative. The exhibit should demonstrate competencies in the scholarly curation, display, and interpretation of artifacts in a digital form. This option differs from the Multimodal Essay (above) in that you need to remediate artifacts. Your argument need not be explicit, either. For instance, your exhibit might aim to communicate a certain aspect of literary history. This option differs from Data Visualization (below) in that you will be expected to construct a narrative across your artifacts, rather than registering them in bulk. Also, no visualizations are required.

In your proposal for this project, you must include: (1) at least three remediated artifacts with the appropriate metadata, (2) a statement (~250 words) on how you are designing / modeling the exhibit for Scalar, (3) a project description (~500 words) explaining the relevance of the artifacts to literary studies, their historical context, and how they were remediated, and (4) an annotated list of at least three scholarly exhibits influencing the project. I will mark the proposal as soon as possible, returning comments to you within three days of submission.

* Data Visualization (appropriately modeled data, at least one visualization, a project description (~500 words), an interpretation (2000 – 4000 words), an annotated bibliography, and a statement of future development (~150 words))

This approach understands data visualization broadly to include geographical maps, graphs, clouds, radial visualizations, text analysis, and cultural analytics. It entails gathering data related to literary studies, expressing it graphically and in bulk (through one or more visualizations), and interpreting that expression in text. Data needs to be provided independently of the visualization itself (e.g., in a spreadsheet), and ideally the visualization is generated automatically based on a specific model (e.g., using Yoyant, Many Eyes, D3, or Google Spreadsheets) and embedded in (or linked from) Scalar. The text-based interpretation of the visualization should be published in Scalar. Additionally, it should convey how a distant reading of the data tells scholars something they did not already know (or helps them speculate toward a new line of inquiry), with references to existing scholarship on the primary object of inquiry. It should also demonstrate a modest degree of visual literacy. The visualization itself should be relatively easy for audiences to navigate and interpret, preferably in a fashion not typically afforded by print scholarship. This option differs from the Multimodal Essay in that it requires data and the primary argument is expressed via the visualization. It differs from the Scholarly Exhibit in that the model itself should be automated to compile an expression, and the interpretation should focus (at least in part) on what is gained from a distant reading of a dataset.
In your proposal for this project, you must include: (1) preliminary data (exact amount depends on the project), (2) a statement (~250 words) on how you are designing / modeling the interpretation for Scalar, (3) a project description (~500 words) explaining the method, relevance to literary studies, and findings, and (4) an annotated bibliography. I will mark the proposal as soon as possible, returning comments to you within three days of submission.

Final Presentation (20%)

Your final presentation will assume the form of a collaborative roundtable, consisting of at least three people in the seminar and conducted during our last meeting of the semester. Roundtables of three will last thirty minutes, and (if necessary) roundtables of four will be forty minutes. Each will have a question-and-answer period of fifteen minutes. By "collaborative" roundtable, I mean its design *and* implementation should be collaborative in character. How you present (including content, style, and technologies used) is up to you. However, please keep in mind two things: (1) you should reflect on and assess what you learned during the entire seminar (meaning it is not solely about your final project), and (2) everyone participating in the roundtable will be given the same grade (meaning collaboration is key). Please do not use the roundtable as an opportunity to read text from your final projects.

POLICIES

Late Submissions

Barring exceptional circumstances, I will not accept your Final Projects after the due date.

Belated log entries will negatively influence your final Log grade. Since log entries are intended to build upon each other, I recommend that you do not fall behind on the entries. Also, I will not comment on entries submitted after the due date.

The Final Roundtable can only occur during the final meeting of the semester.

If the Project Proposal is submitted late, then there will be a 7% penalty per day. I will not provide any comments on proposals submitted seven days after the due date.

Absences

You should regularly attend seminar. If you must be absent for an extended period of time, please inform me as far ahead of time as possible. Cases of continuous, unexplained absence may result in a penalty to your grade or your ineligibility to complete the course. Attendance and active participation in discussions and workshops are part of fulfilling the course requirements.

Laptops

Laptops are welcome in the seminar. In fact, if you have one, then I recommend bringing it to each meeting. It will be especially useful during workshops.

Extensions

No extensions will be given except in extreme—and verifiable—circumstances.

Learning Climate

The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing, and protecting a positive, supportive, and safe working and learning environment for all its members. Students and faculty members are expected to adhere to the UVic human rights policy. Students should alert me immediately if they have any questions about this policy and its application, or if they have concerns about course proceedings or participants.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the UVic academic integrity policy. Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade for the given assignment and may additionally result in a failing grade for the course. By taking this course, students agree that all submitted assignments may be subject to an originality review.

Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Resource Centre for Students with a Disability (RCSD) as soon as possible. The RCSD staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner you let us know your needs, the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

Email

With the exception of holidays and weekends, I respond to student emails within twenty-four hours.

SEMINAR OULTINE (INCLUDING REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL READINGS)

Although it is subject to change, below is the course outline as of Meeting 1. Please note that the prompts for each assignment are (or will be) provided on the index page of the course website. Links to the readings listed below are provided on the course site, too.

January 5th (Meeting 1)

> No Required Readings

> No Lecture or Workshop

> Seminar Discussion: What do you expect (or need) from this seminar? What do you want to do?

January 12th (Meeting 2) – Course Overview

> Required Reading: (1) Turkel, "How-To," and (2) Sayers and Dietrich, "Authoring and Publishing with Scalar: Some Considerations for Context-Sensitive Design" (distributed by email)

> Optional Reading: (1) Kirschenbaum, "What is Digital Humanities and What Is It Doing in English Departments?", (2) Bogost, "Getting Real," (3) McPherson, "Media Studies and the Digital Humanities," (4) Rommel, "Literary Studies," and (5) W3C (CSS, RDF, and HTML, in particular)

> Log Due: Workflow (text only, 500-1000 words)

> Workshop: The Anatomy of the Scalar Platform and How to Use It

> Lecture: "What's Wrong with Digital Humanities?"

Seminar Discussion: What questions do you have about Scalar? What didn't we cover that you think it can or should do?

January 19th (Meeting 3) – Modeling & Metadata

Required Reading: (1) McCarty, "Knowing...: Modeling in Literary Studies," and (2) McGann, "Marking Texts of Many Dimensions"

Optional Reading: (1) Besser, "The Past, Present, and Future of Digital Libraries," (2) Drucker, SpecLab, (3) the Text Encoding Initiative, (4) Meloni, "Working with APIs," (also: Part 2, 3, & 4), (5) Brown, et al., "Going Electronic," (6) Galey and Reucker, "How a Prototype Argues," and (7) McGann, "Texts in N-Dimensions and Interpretation in a New Key"

Log Due: Workflow in Action (screencast with vocal track, or 500-1000 words with screenshots)

Workshop: Modeling Collaboration and Inquiry in Scalar: Paths, Dublin Core, and the Resource Description Framework

Lecture: "Toward a Speculative Humanities"

Seminar Discussion: What to consider when authoring in collaborative, networked environments?

January 26th (Meeting 4) – The Materiality of Electronic Writing

Required Reading: (1) Kirschenbaum et al., "Digital Materiality: Preserving Access to Computers as Complete Environments," (2) Hayles, "Electronic Literature: What Is It?", and (3) Wendy Chun, "The Enduring Ephemeral, or the Future Is a Memory"

Optional Reading: (1) Kirschenbaum, *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination*, (2) Wendy Chun, *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory*, (3) Hayles, *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*, (4) Willett, "Electronic Texts: Audiences and Purposes," (5) Open3DP, (6) Loftus, "The Author's Desktop," and (7) Sayers, "Every Click Leaves a Trace: Literature in an Age of Attention Accumulation" (distributed by email)

Log Due: Metadata (screencast with vocal track, or 500-1000 words with screenshots)

Workshop: Emulating and Exhibiting Contexts: Mini vMac, Omeka, and the Deena Larsen Collection

Lecture 1: "Three Histories of Writing Today: Digital? Electronic? Or the Interface?"

Lecture 2: "What to Do with Uncle Buddy?"

Seminar Discussion: In the case of electronic writing, what are the differences between storage, memory, and inscription? Why should we care?

February 2nd (Meeting 5) – Distant Reading and NeoGeo

Required Reading: (1) Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," (2) Presner, et al., HyperCities, (3) Hillier, et al., Mapping Du Bois, and (4) Jenstad, et al., Map of Early Modern London

Optional Reading: (1) Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, (2) Moretti, "Network Theory, Plot Analysis," (3) Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*, (4) Guldi, "The Spatial Turn in Literature," and (5) Scholars' Lab, "Spatial Humanities: Step by Step,"

Log Due: Granulation (500-1000 words with screenshots, focusing on a work in the ELC, Vol. 1 or 2)

Workshop: Google Earth and Maps: A Model of or a Model for?

Lecture: "Close, Distant, and a Combination"

Seminar Discussion: What does distant reading imply about scholarly labor? How do we read with computers? To what effects?

February 9th (Meeting 6) – Data Visualization

Reading Due: (1) Jessop, "Digital Visualization as a Scholarly Activity," (2) Drucker, "Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display," (3) Ramsay, "Algorithmic Criticism," and (4) The Brown University Women Writers Project

Optional Reading: (1) D3: Data-Driven Documents, (2) TimeFlow: Analytical Timeline, (3) Many Eyes, (4) Manovich, "Cultural Analytics," (5) Google Refine, (6) Mr. Data Converter, (7) Pajek, (8) McGhee, "Getting Started with Data Visualization," (9) Junar, and (10) SIMILE.

Log Due: Map (embedded in Scalar, with a 250-word description)

Workshop: Experimenting with TAPoR

Lecture: "Do We Need 'Data' in Digital Literary Studies?"

Seminar Discussion 1: What should be the key components of visual literacy in digital literary studies?

Seminar Discussion 2: How's the project going? What project are you reviewing? Share thoughts and progress.

* Note: You should have met with me during office hours or by appointment at least once by now.

February 16th (Reading Break)

February 23rd (Meeting 7) – Communicating Your Work

Optional Reading: Pecha Kucha 20×20

Log Due: Text Analysis (linked from or embedded in Scalar, with 250-word description)

Workshop 1: Drafting a Project Proposal and Needs Assessment

Workshop 2: How to Conduct Pecha Kucha Presentations

Lecture: "Common Elements of a Digital Humanities Project"

Seminar Discussion: Related to the production of a proof of concept, what are your concerns? What should we do on March 8th?

March 1st (Meeting 8) – Humanities Interaction and Interface Design

Required Reading: (1) Victor, "Magic Ink," (2) Victor, "Explorable Explanations," and (3) Bourriaud, from *Relational Aesthetics* (circulated in class)

Optional Reading: (1) Drucker, "Humanities Approaches to Interface Theory," (2) Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, (3) Daniel, "The Database: An Aesthetics of Dignity," (4) Daniel, "Hybrid Practices," (5) Kaplan, *Precision Targets*, and (6) Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries

Log Due: Review (750 – 1000 words, selected project needs to be approved before evaluation is submitted)

Workshop: Creating a Reactive Document with a JavaScript Library

Lecture: "Literature as Context Production"

Seminar Discussion: What should a "literary" interface do? How (if at all) should it differ from our more familiar (e.g., commercial) interfaces?

March 8th (Meeting 9) – Wild Card

Reading, Lecture, Workshop, and Seminar Discussion collectively determined by graduate students on February 23rd.

No Log Due

March 15th (Meeting 10) – Peer Review

Required Reading: (1) Fitzpatrick, "Peer Review" (from draft version of *Planned Obsolescence*), (2) Nowviskie, "Why, Oh Why, CC-BY" and "Where Credit Is Due," and (3) MLA, "The Evaluation of Digital Work"

Optional Reading: CHNM, PressForward

Project Proposal Due (published in Scalar with links / embedded media as necessary)

Workshop: Peer Review of Proposals and Draft Materials

No Lecture

Seminar Discussion: Pecha Kucha Presentations

* Note: You should have met with me during office hours or by appointment at least twice by now.

March 22nd (Meeting 11) – Computational Culture Studies

Required Reading: (1) McPherson, "Why Are the Digital Humanities So White?, or, Thinking the Histories of Race and Computation," (2) Ang and Pothen, "Between Promise and Practice: Web 2.0, Intercultural Dialogue and Digital Scholarship," and (3) Liu, "Where Is Cultural Criticism in Digital Humanities?"

Optional Reading: (1) Latour, *Science in Action*, (2) Bowker and Star, *Sorting Things Out*, (3) Fuller, *Software Studies: A Lexicon*, (4) Nakamura, *Digitizing Race*, (5) *Computational Culture* 1.1, and (8) Bogost, "What Is Object-Oriented Ontology?"

No Log Due

No Workshop

Lecture: "Combining Theory with Practice in Digital Literary Studies"

Seminar Discussion: What are some challenges to combining theory and practice? What is the practice of culture in a digital age?

March 29th (Meeting 12) – The Future of the Book

Required Reading: (1) Sterling, "Eighteen Challenges in Contemporary Literature," and (2) Phillips, A Humument

Optional Reading: (1) Jackson, Skin, (2) Danielewski, House of Leaves, (3) Danielewski, Only Revolutions, (4) Loyer, Strange Rain, (5) kindle.amazon.com, (6) Bogost, "Persuasive Games: Exploitationware," (7) Barry, "Nuts and Bolts," and (8) Institute of Network Cultures, The Unbound Book

Log Due: Assessment (500-1000 words, with duplicated content from peers' logs)

Workshop: Releasing a Scalar Project into the Wild: Writing with the Cloud Crowd

Lecture: "The Book Unbound"

Seminar Discussion: Off You Go with a Manifesto (Inspired by Shannon Mattern)

April 5th (Meeting 13) – Final Presentations

Three Panels, 30 minutes (minimum) + 15 minutes Q&A each

April 19th – Final Project Due