History and Principles of Digital Literary Studies, Fall 2010

Draft Syllabus

English 503: Special Studies I / CRN 12715
Wednesday 6:30-9:20 p.m., CLEA B215
Instructor: Ray Siemens, x7272, siemens@uvic.ca
Co-Instructors: Cara Leitch, Julie Meloni, Bridget Sweeney, and Meagan Timney

Description

An accepted foundation for work in humanities computing is knowledge representation, which draws on the field of artificial intelligence and seeks to produce models of human understanding that are tractable to computation. In activities of the computing humanist, knowledge representation manifests itself in issues related to archival representation and textual editing, high-level interpretive theory and criticism, and protocols of knowledge transfer—all as modelled with computational techniques. In turn, the results of modelling the activities of the humanist and the output of humanistic achievement with the assistance of the computer are found in what are often considered to be the exemplary tasks associated with humanities computing: the representation of archival materials, the analysis or critical inquiry originating in those materials, and the communication of the results of these tasks.

This course investigates the intellectual traditions and methodological foundations associated with a computational approach to literary studies and criticism. Historically based in practices associated with close reading and New Criticism, computational literary studies have demonstrated their impact far beyond these approaches, and have—through large text-base analysis, visualization techniques, and other methods that build on traditions in our field—suggested innovative critical approaches; further, applications of such practices alter traditional and emergent creative processes, and require significant reconsideration of methodological foundations.

Requirements

- Completion of all course readings, all of which are in the Blackwell Companion to Digital Literary Studies (Ray Siemens and Susan Schreibman, eds., Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), the Blackwell Companion to Digital Humanities (Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth, eds., Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), and/or online (linked cited, as below). The two Blackwell companions have been ordered for the bookstore, and purchase of some electronic resources may be required; details will be discussed in class.
- Ongoing Involvement in [1] a reading group and [2] an individual investigation for the duration of the course of a born-digital literary work (interactive fiction, digital poetry, and/or narrative-oriented computer gaming). Purchase of the new media work may be required; details will be discussed in class.
- Completion of Assignments:
o **Reading group [1] presentations and [2] outlines** (several: 30%, due throughout the term, as below).
  - **Presentations** are roughly 10-15 minutes in length per reading. Ideally, they will abstract and present an engaging overview of the assigned reading, and will identify useful comparison points among readings, accumulating cumulatively, over the course of the term; each presentation will also evaluate the assigned reading in the context of [1] current (sometimes more recent) critical work and [2] tools and projects exemplary of what is being addressed in the reading.
  - **Outlines**: provide a point-by-point overview of the presentation, and a bibliography of pertinent current critical work, tools, and projects. These are due on the Tuesday before the presentation, and will be submitted via the course discussion list (TBA) at that time. If you would like comment on the outline from me, please submit a draft outline via email to me directly no later than the Friday morning before the presentation.
  - **Note**: to suit the particular needs of this section, presentations will be the responsibility of assigned individuals, with the class as a whole functioning as reading group. As such, attendance at all meetings of the seminar is required for a passing grade to be issued for participation in the reading groups.

o **Individual project report (30%)**
  - **Digital literature project** (assigned week 3, due during class in weeks 11-13): A work of interactive fiction, digital poetry, or narrative-oriented computer gaming will be chosen (with equal distribution across all three of these categories) and will be the subject of a 30 minute presentation that will [a] discuss it in the context of our seminar's inquiry of literary computing, [b] demonstrate the new media object to the class, and [c] evaluate it as literature. Outlines of your presentation are due on the Monday before the presentation, and will be submitted to me via electronic mail at the address above at that time. If you would like comment on the outline, please submit no later than Monday morning.

o **Research paper (40%)**: A 10-page research paper, with annotated bibliography, on a topic of your choosing as it pertains to the matter of the course. Please discuss the topic of your paper with me, during office hours, before week 11. The research paper is due at our last meeting.

  - **Note**: All assignments must be completed, and a passing grade received in each, for a passing grade in this course to be issued.

**Policies**

- Policies governing our interaction in the course are adopted from that of extant bodies, as below:
  - English Department's [*Graduate Handbook*](#):
    - Attendance (section 8.2)
    - Grading and Marking (sections 8.4 and 8.5)
      - With reason, late papers will be accepted with penalty, and in extenuating circumstances extensions will be granted.
Letter grade and percentage equivalents, department-adopted standard:
A+ (90-100), A (85-89), A- (80-84), B+ (75-79), B (70-74), &c.

UVic Calendar (2010-11): Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Outline

- **Week 1** (September 8): **Course Introduction**
  - Introduction to the course; discussion of humanities computing and digital literary studies.
  - Readings for active discussion (open discussion):
    - Alan Liu. “Imagining the New Media Encounter.”
    - Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth. “Introduction.”
    - Thomas Rommel. “Literary Studies.”
    - Other readings, on DH and DLS evolution:
  - Other readings, basic principles:
    - Steve Ramsay. “Databases.”

- **Week 2** (September 15): **(Sub)Disciplinary Engagements** (Led by Meagan Timney)
  - Action: Discuss digital literature project.
  - Readings for active discussion (following reading group presentation):
    - Reference point: Tanya Clement and Gretchen Gueguen. “Annotated Overview of Selected Electronic Resources.”

- **Week 3** (September 22): **Form, Response**
  - Action: Prospectus for digital literature project received.
  - Readings for active discussion (following reading group presentation):
    - 1. Christian Vandendorpe. “Reading on Screen: The New Media Sphere.”
    - 4. Gregory Crane, David Bamman, and Alison Jones. “ePhilology: When the Books Talk to Their Readers.”

- **Week 4** (September 29): **Form - Again, Anew** (Led by Cara Leitch)
  - Readings for active discussion (following reading group presentation):

**Week 5 (October 6): Toward Digital Literature**
- Readings for active discussion (following reading group presentation):

**Week 6 (October 13): In Medias Res? (Led by Bridget Sweeney)**
- Readings for active discussion (following reading group presentation):
  4. Andrew Mactavish. “Licensed to Play: Digital Games, Player Modifications, and Authorized Production.”

**Week 7 (October 20): Methodological Foundations, 1 (Led by Julie Meloni)**
- Readings for active discussion (following reading group presentation):

**Week 8 (October 27): Methodological Foundations, 2 (Led by Cara Leitch)**
- Readings for active discussion (following reading group presentation):
  1. Ian Lancashire. “Cybertextuality and Philology.”
  2. G. Sayeed Choudhury and David Seaman. “The Virtual Library.”

**Week 9 (November 3): Methodological Foundations, 3 (Led by Julie Meloni)**
- Readings for active discussion (following reading group presentation):

**Week 10 (November 10): Reading Break, no meeting**

**Week 11 (November 17): Digital literature presentations [Presenter(s): TBA]**

**Week 12 (November 24): Digital literature presentations [Presenter(s): TBA]**

**Week 13 (December 1): Digital literature presentations [Presenter(s): TBA]**
- Research paper due