

E 388D • Introduction to Digital Humanities

Instructor: Sherman, A.

Unique #: 38345

Semester: Autumn 2026

Cross-lists: AMS 391, HIS 381, INF 383H

Areas:

Restrictions:

Computer Instruction:

Description: This course is a hands-on introduction to the digital humanities (DH). DH, at this point a decades-old inter-discipline, is “a nexus of fields within which scholars use computing technologies to investigate the kinds of questions that are traditional to the humanities, or . . . [ask] humanities-oriented questions about computing technologies” (Kathleen Fitzpatrick, “Reporting from the Digital Humanities 2010 Conference”). Defining those “kinds of questions” entails critical reflection on the meanings of both “the digital” and “the humanities.” That reflection is not just theoretical but practical, institutional, and political. Linking computation and the humanities has, of course, become especially charged with the technical, sociocultural, and political-economic acceleration dubbed “artificial intelligence,” a major (but far from the only) topic in DH now. We will learn to formulate DH questions and address them with DH methods through project-based exercises in creating and interpreting digital resources and tools, particularly through student-run workshops. Students will learn how both computation can further humanities research and how our understanding of computing technologies is deepened by humanities research.

No prerequisites are required for this course.

Texts: See schedule below.

Requirements & Grading: Plus/minus grades are used.

Assignments	Percent of Total Grade
1. Class attendance and participation	10
2. Discussion questions	25
a. Discussion posts: ask a question synthesizing all the week’s readings and reply to another student’s question	20
b. Discussion leading: with one or more partners, lead a discussion of the week’s readings	5
3. Workshop: teach your classmates how to responsibly and critically use a computational tool	30
a. Proposal: Describe the tool and a dataset you will use to teach it	10
b. Plan: Offer a plan for the workshop and meet with me	15
c. Workshop: conduct the workshop	5
4. Final project: Write at least 3500 words describing a dataset and analyzing it to address a DH question. Note: you may combine your final project with that for another course, pending instructor approval.	35
a. Grant proposal: present your project in a grant proposal as if you were seeking funding	10
b. Final presentation: briefly present your project	5
c. Final paper: 500 words describing a dataset and 2500-3500 words making an argument about it.	20

Schedule:

Week 1 (8/27) Introduction: The (Digital) Humanities

Readings due:

- The humanities
 - Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Introduction” in *Truth and Method* (1960)
 - Stuart Hall, “Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies” (1992)
 - Rens Bods, “Modern Era: The Humanities Renewed” in *A New History of the Humanities* (2013) **Note:** Read the introduction and at least one section on a discipline (or disciplines) of your choosing
- The digital humanities
 - Alan Liu, “Toward a Diversity Stack: Digital Humanities and Diversity as Technical Problem” (2020)

- Lauren Klein et al., “Provocations from the Humanities for Generative AI Research” (2026)
- AI and the humanities (**optional**):
 - Ted Chiang, “ChatGPT is a Blurry JPEG of the Web” (2023)
 - Matthew Kirschenbaum, “Facsimile Machines” (2024)
 - Arvind Narayanan and Sayash Kapoor, “Introduction” and “The Long Road to Generative AI” in *AI Snake Oil* (2024)
 - Emily M. Bender and Alex Hanna, “An Introduction to AI Hype” and “It’s Alive! The Hype of Thinking Machines” in *The AI Con* (2025)
- The history of DH (**optional**):
 - Edmund A. Bowles, “The Role of the Computer in Humanistic Scholarship” (1965)
 - Cynthia Selfe, “Computers in English Departments: The Rhetoric of Technopower” (1988)

Week 2 (9/3) Origin Stories: Data

Readings due:

- Lisa Spiro, “[‘This is Why We Fight’: Defining the Values of the Digital Humanities](#)” (2012)
- Jessica Marie Johnson, “Markup Bodies: Black [Life] Studies and Slavery [Death] Studies at the Digital Crossroads” (2018)
- Roopika Risam, “Introduction: The Postcolonial Digital Cultural Record” in *New Digital Worlds: Postcolonial Digital Humanities in Theory, Praxis, and Pedagogy* (2019)
- Catherine D’Ignazio and Lauren Klein, “What Gets Counted Counts” in *Data Feminism* (2020)
- Christo Buschek and Jer Thorp, “[Models All the Way Down](#)” (2024)
- Optional:
 - John Unsworth, “[What is Humanities Computing and What is Not?](#)” (2002)
 - David M. Berry, “The Computational Turn: Thinking about Digital Humanities” (2011)
 - Tara McPherson, “[Why are the Digital Humanities So White? Or, Thinking the Histories of Race and Computation](#)” (2012)
 - Meredith Hindley, “[The Rise of the Machines](#)” (2013)
 - Alison Booth and Miriam Posner, “Introduction: The Materials at Hand” (2020)

Assignments due:

- Discussion post (and due in all following weeks unless otherwise noted)

Workshop in class on OpenRefine

Week 3 (9/10): Labor

Readings due:

- Melissa Terras and Julianne Nyhan, “[Father Busa’s Female Punch Card Operatives](#)” (2016)
- Lauren Klein, “Dimensions of Scale: Invisible Labor, Editorial Work, and the Future of Quantitative Literary Studies” (2020)
- Astrid J. Smith and Bridget Whearty, “All All the Work You Do Not See: Labor, Digitizers, and the Foundations of Digital Humanities” (2023)
- Karen Hao, “Disaster Capitalism” in *Empire of AI: Dreams and Nightmares in Sam Altman’s OpenAI* (excerpt) (2025)
- Optional:
 - Roberto Busa, “The Annals of Humanities Computing: The Index Thomisticus” (1980)
 - Matthew Kirschenbaum, “What Is ‘Digital Humanities,’ and Why Are They Saying Such Terrible Things about It?” (2014)

Assignments due:

- Sign up for discussion leading
- Sign up for workshop

Workshop in class on R for data analysis

Week 4 (9/17): Visualization

Readings due:

- Johanna Drucker, “Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display” (2011)
- Whitney Battle-Baptiste and Britt Rusert (eds.), “Introduction,” “Introduction to the Plates,” and “Plates” in *W.E.B Du Bois’s data portraits: visualizing Black America: The Color Line at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (2018)
- Lauren Klein, “What Data Visualization Reveals: Elizabeth Palmer Peabody and the Work of Knowledge Production” (2022)
- Ama Bemba Adwetewa-Badu, “The Role of Poetry: Genre, Data Visualization, and a Reframing of African Literature through Transition Magazine, 1960s-70s,” *Research in African Literatures* 55, no. 4 (2025): 1-20.
- Optional:
 - Sinclair, Stéfan, Stan Ruecker, and Milena Radzikowska, “[Information Visualization for Humanities Scholars](#)” (2013)
 - Kim Brillante Knight, “‘Danger, Jane Roe!’ Material Data Visualization as Feminist Praxis” (2018)
 - Katherine Hepworth and Christopher Church, “Racism in the Machine: Visualization Ethics in Digital Humanities

Workshop in class on R for visualization

Week 5 (9/24): Feature Selection

Readings due:

- Franco Moretti, "Operationalizing: or, the Function of Measurement in Modern Literary Theory" (2013)
- Karen Kelsky, *The Professor is In* (excerpt) (2015)
- Tanya Clement and Stephen McLaughlin, "Measured Applause: Toward a Cultural Analysis of Audio Collections" (2016)
- Melanie Walsh, "Tweets of a Native Son: The Quotation and Recirculation of James Baldwin from Black Power to #BlackLivesMatter" (2018)
- Tess McNulty, "Pranks and the Viral Canon: On Top-Creator Content from YouTube to TikTok" (2025)
- Find and read one more article or chapter related to this topic and to your own interests. In your discussion questions, include a full citation of that article plus a link, then briefly summarize it (at least the argument, audience, and method) and briefly analyze how it relates to the required readings.

Week 6 (10/1): Making Meaning I (Scale and Bias)

Readings due:

- Katherine Bode, "Why You Can't Model Away Bias" (2020)
- Ted Underwood, "Machine Learning and Human Perspective" (2020)
- Kaspar Beelen et al., "Bias and Representativeness in Digitized Newspaper Collections: Introducing the Environmental Scan" (2023)
- Andrew Prescott, "Bias in Big Data, Machine Learning and AI: What Lessons for the Digital Humanities?" (2023)
- Tess McNulty, "[What's On Top of TikTok?](#)" (2023)
- Find and read one more article or chapter related to this topic and to your own interests. Discuss it in your discussion questions, as you did in week 5.
 - Optional: Adam Hammond, "The Double Bind of Validation: Distant Reading and the Digital Humanities' 'Trough of Disillusionment'" (2017)

Week 7 (10/8): Making Meaning II (Race, Ethnicity, Sexuality)

Readings due:

- María Coterá, "Nuestra Autohistoria: Toward a Chicana Digital Praxis" (2018)
- Richard Jean So and Hoyt Long, "Race and Distant Reading" (2020)
- Long Le-Khac and Kate Hao, "The Asian American Literature We've Constructed" (2021)
- Matt Warner, "A Queer Way of Counting: Bibliography and Computational Approaches to the Queer Novel" (2022)
- David Bamman et al., "Measuring Diversity in Hollywood through the Large-Scale Computational Analysis of Film" (2024)
- Find and read one more article or chapter related to this topic and to your own interests. Discuss it in your discussion questions, as you did in week 5.
- Optional:
 - Roopika Risam, "Beyond the Margins: Intersectionality and the Digital Humanities" (2015)

Week 8 (10/15): Text Analysis

Readings due:

- Andrew Piper, "Plot (Lack)" in *Enumerations* (2018)
- Lindsey Thomas and Abigail Droge, "The Humanities in Public: A Computational Analysis of US National and Campus Newspapers" (2022)
- Cornelis van Lit and Dirk Roorda, "Neither Corpus Nor Edition: Building a Pipeline to Make Data Analysis Possible on Medieval Arabic Commentary Traditions" (2024)
- Michael Gavin and Michael Witmore, "The Semantic Space of Good and Evil in Early Modern English: A Computational Study of Moral Contrasts" (2026)
- Optional:
 - Jo Guldi, "Addressing an Emergency: The 'Pragmatic Tilt' Required of Scholarship, Data, and Design by the Climate Crisis" (2023)
 - Aarthi Vadde and Richard Jean So, "Fandom and Fictionality after the Social Web: A Computational Study of AO3" (2024)
 - Anna Torres-Cacoullos and Elizaveta Senatorova, "A Digital Archaeology of Early Hispanic Film Culture: Film Magazines and the Male Fan Reader" (2024)

Assignment due:

- Workshop plan due for students teaching Mallet; meet at 1 PM before class in PAR 125

Workshop in class on R for word vectors

Week 9 (10/22): Topic Modeling

Readings due:

- Jeffrey Binder, "[Alien Reading: Text Mining, Language Standardization, and the Humanities](#)" (2016)
- Lisa M. Rhody, "[Topic Modeling and Figurative Language](#)" (2014)
- Andrew Piper, "Topoi (Dispersion)" in *Enumerations* (2018)
- Lisa Mendelman and Anna Mukamal, "The Generative Dissensus of Reading the Feminist Novel, 1995-2020: A Computational Analysis of Interpretive Communities" (2021)
- Optional:
 - David M. Blei et al., "Latent Dirichlet Allocation" (2003) Note: If you read this, focus on Figure 1 and on the applications.

Assignment due:

- Workshop plan due for students teaching Gephi; meet at 1 PM before class in PAR 125

Workshop in class on Mallet led by students

Week 10 (10/29): Network Analysis

Readings due:

- Sandeep Soni et al., "Abolitionist Networks: Modeling Language Change in Nineteenth-Century Activist Newspapers" (2021)
- Chelsea Canon et al., "Ethical and Effective Visualization of Knowledge Networks" (2022)
- Ainamar Clariana-Rodagut and Alessio Cardillo, "Quantifying Women's Marginalisation in Ibero-American Film Culture During the First Half of the Twentieth Century: A Network-Science Proposal" (2024)
- Optional:
 - Grahame A. Thompson, "Is All the World a Complex Network?" (2004)
 - Alex Wright, "The Web that Wasn't" in *Glut: Mastering Information through the Ages* (2007)
 - Bruce Robbins, "Not So Well Attached" (2017)

Assignment due:

- Workshop plan due for students teaching ArcGIS Online; meet at 1 PM before class in PAR 125

Workshop in class on Gephi led by students

Week 11 (11/5): Spatial Humanities

Readings due:

- N. D. B. Connolly et al., "Mapping Inequality: 'Big Data' Meets Social History in the Story of Redlining" (2018) and Robert K. Nelson and LaDale Winling et al., [Mapping Inequality](#) (2023). Note: Look at the maps and skim the essay about Austin, Texas, and look at the maps and introduction for one other city of your choice that has "Area Descriptions".
- Cameron Blevins et al., "[Gossamer Network](#)" (2021)
- Blanca Gómez Cifuentes et al., "Researching Spanish Dance in Time and Space: A GIS for La Argentina's Ballets Espagnols" (2022)
- Alexander Sherman, "Mapping Empire's Horror: Literary GIS and Colonial Spatial Logic" (2025)
- Optional:
 - John Cloud, "American Cartographic Transformations During the Cold War" (2002)
 - David Turnbull, with Helen Watson and the Yolngu community at Yirrkala, [Maps are Territories: Science is an Atlas](#) (2008)
 - Monica Muñoz Martinez, "Mapping Segregated Histories of Racial Violence" (2018)
 - Erin McElroy, "The Digital Humanities, American Studies, and the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project" (2018)
 - Cameron Blevins and Annelise Heinz, "'Separated, but Far from Alone': Forging Lesbian Networks in the 1970s-1980s" (2024)
 - Elizabeth Evans and Matthew Wilkens, *Gender and Literary Geography* (2025)

Assignment due:

- Workshop plan due for students teaching Distant Viewer; meet at 1 PM before class in PAR 125

Workshop in class on ArcGIS Online led by students

Week 12 (11/12): Media Analysis

Readings due:

- Marit J. MacArthur and Lee M. Miller, "Slow Listening: Digital Tools for Voice Studies" (2023)
- Taylor Arnold and Lauren Tilton, "Feast for the Eyes: Locating Visual Style in Network-Era American Situation Comedies" in *Distant Viewing: Computational Exploration of Digital Images* (2023)

- Justin Wigard et al., “Understanding Peanuts and Schulzian Symmetry: Panel Detection, Caption Detection, and Gag Panels in 17,897 Comic Strips through Distant Viewing” (2023)
- Optional:
 - Jonathan Sterne, “The mp3 as Cultural Artifact” (2006)
 - Marit J. MacArthur et al., “Beyond Poet Voice: Sampling the (Non-)Performance Styles of 100 American Poets” (2018)
 - Tanya Clement, “Introduction” from *Dissonant Records: Close Listening to Literary Archives* (2024)

Workshop in class on Distant Viewing Explore led by students

Week 13 (11/19): Making Meaning III (Openness)

Readings due:

- Kimberly Christen, “Does Information Really Want to be Free? Indigenous Knowledge Systems and the Question of Openness” (2012)
- Jennifer Guiliano and Carolyn Heitman, “Difficult Heritage and the Complexities of Indigenous Data” (2019)
- Stephanie Russo Carroll et al., “The CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance” (2020)
- Karen Hao, “How the Empire Falls” in *Empire of AI* (2025)
- Optional:
 - Domenico Fiormonte et al., “[Introduction](#)” in *Global Debates in the Digital Humanities* (2022)
 - Michelle Lee Brown et al., “Relation-Oriented AI: Why Indigenous Protocols Matter for the Digital Humanities” (2023)

Assignments due:

- Grant proposal (24 hours before class)
- Read assigned grant proposals before class

Workshop in class on evaluating and discussing grant proposals

Week 14 (12/3): Final Presentations

Assignment due:

- Final presentation
- No discussion post

Final projects due at the end of the final exam slot for the course: 12/12 at 10 AM

Learning Outcomes:

1. Student will be able to situate their own research interests relative to the history of the digital humanities (DH) and the most common (or most controversial) methods, practices, and technologies through reading and discussing scholarship and creating a final project.
2. Students will be able to talk through the theory, practice, and public discourse of DH through learning to use and think critically about various standards, applications, and tools by writing critical accounts of datasets and by leading a workshop on a DH tool.
3. Students will be able to express ideas in class discussions and projects in ways that can be understood by scholars in the multiple fields involved in DH due to the interdisciplinary constituency of the class itself.
4. Students will be able to teach workshops, new technologies, and thinking through new technologies by preparing and executing a plan to teach a workshop.
5. Student will be able to work better with others by honing teamwork skills through multiple group assignments.
6. Students will be able to prepare DH grants by practicing with a grant template and role-playing as grant evaluators.

Policies: *Documented Disability Statement:* The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at (512) 471-6259 (voice), or visit <https://disability.utexas.edu/2023/04/welcome/>

Honor Code: The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Academic Integrity: Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. Plagiarism = Failure. Fabrication = Failure. For additional information on Academic Integrity, see <https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/avoiding.php> and <https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-c/student-conduct-and-academic-integrity/>.

DH has de facto become one of the main fields in the humanities for thinking about generative AI and large language models (LLMs). We will be talking about generative AI throughout the course, including the methodological, ethical, and political issues involved.

For these reasons, students are invited to use generative AI for work in this course as a way to experiment with this technology. We will discuss in workshops the use of generative AI for programming, one of the most effective applications of this technology.

When submitting work, students must clearly identify any writing, text, or media generated by AI. This can be done in a variety of ways. In this course, parts of essays generated by AI should appear in a different colored font, and the relationship between those sections and student contributions should be discussed in cover letters that accompany the essay submission.

Religious Holy Days: By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Web Site: Canvas.