MHC 401 Honors Thesis Colloquium
Spring 2014: Digital Research Methods
T 3:00-5:40 PM
http://macaulay.cuny.edu/eportfolios/honorsthesis14/

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This semester of the Honors Thesis Colloquium is designed to expose you to emerging digital research methods in the humanities and social sciences, provide you with the skills to develop a digital project that expands the reach and scope of your thesis research, and encourage you to think critically about public engagement with scholarly research in the 21st century. Using methodologies culled from digital scholarship across the disciplines, we will collectively and broadly re-orient ourselves in relationship to our own research, seeking a more capacious vision of the ways in which our newly acquired expertise might have the greatest impact. We will then consider how your individual thesis projects might not only feed back into the expansion of those scholarly conversations and communities from which they were first derived, but the strategies by which each of you might most effectively bring your work into the public eye. This process of experimentation and discovery will not only mirror current debates in the academy over best research practices in the technological age, it will also hone your own skills as you prepare to take on the postgraduate world.

Required Readings and Course Materials

All of the reading material for this course can be found on the class eportfolio—some as links, some as direct downloads. Some downloads may be password-protected; the password will be given to you in class. Please also bring in $15 for a ticket to BEGINAGAIN.

Course Policies

Attendance is required. Please plan on being present every week, except in cases of absolute emergency. If you're not going to be in class, please let me know.

I have a thing about starting on time. Despite my best efforts to be chill, latecomers drive me absolutely bonkers. Issues like this one are easily exacerbated with such a tiny class. Please be in class and ready to go at 3 PM.

Laptops are required each week for awesome class activities, unless otherwise directed. Try to keep your use of electronic devices limited to what is most appropriate; I abhor the under-the-table texting thing, which is never as hidden from view as you might think.

Teamwork: We are a small group, and we're going to divide up the reading and other labors of the course in order to cover more ground. This means your attendance and participation is essential to everyone's success. If you can't be present in a given week, and you were assigned a unique reading, please post notes to the class eportfolio in advance of the session you will miss.

Cite your sources: keep track of where text, images, audio, and video come from, and publicly cite these digital sources in your writing and creations as relevant. Don't steal ahem, "borrow" stuff that is labeled "all rights reserved"—if you'd like to use it, contact the creator and explain that you'd like to use it for educational purposes, or seek out Creative Commons-licensed sources as an alternative. In general, be a decent person and make your digital research footprint clearly visible; your sources would probably appreciate recognition. Finally, clearly distinguish between your own voice and the voices of others in everything you produce for this class—we don't want any accidental acts of plagiarism.

Be in touch. If you need help, if something is limiting your ability to participate, if you want to share materials or ideas— contact Lindsey and Jenny early and often!

Assignments

How this work will be assessed will be collectively determined at the first class.

A revised written thesis. Your written work from the fall semester should be revised and expanded with your advisor's guidance. *Complete your revisions by 18 February.*

A digital thesis project. Designed and implemented in consultation with Lindsey, Jenny, and your peers, this project should substantively expand the reach and scope of your written thesis project. The platform and tools for this project are up to you to choose. *The final version of your digital project is due 20 May.*

A public presentation of your research. Develop a 10-15 minute presentation of your research project, and give this presentation to at least one audience. *Everyone will present at the annual Macaulay Research Event, in May (exact date TBD). Those accepted will present at NCUR, 3-5 April.*

Class participation. We're a small team, but together we can accomplish great things! Please actively participate on the class eportfolio, and come to each week's session prepared to discuss and debate. *Ongoing.*

A digital reading journal. This semester, you'll keep an online reading "journal" (or "map," or "timeline") in some sort of digital space: Mural.ly, Tumblr, Twitter, Google Doc, Dipity, Tiki-Toki, a Macaulay eportfolio, or whatever platform best suits you. (If you have trouble choosing a tool for this assignment, check in with Lindsey or Jenny.) This should be a space separate from any other digital presence you might have. It doesn't necessarily have to have your full name attached, but it should be publicly accessible. Think of it as a combination scrapbook and/or freewriting space. Items to include: quotes from your reading that pique your interest, questions you have, related multimedia, ideas you want to bring up in class, links to yours and others' posts on the class eportfolio, whatever else seems relevant. *Add content at least once a week, complete by 20 May.*

Weekly Schedule

Do This BEFORE Our First Class (due January 28)

First, read an article (links also available on the class eportfolio):

Colby reads Katherine Harris, "Play, Collaborate, Break, Build, Share: 'Screwing Around' in Digital Pedagogy: The Debate to Define Digital Humanities… Again"

Kerishma reads Jentery Sayers, "Tinker-Centric Pedagogy in Literature and Language Classrooms"

Laura reads Matthew Kirschenbaum, "What is Digital Humanities and What Is It Doing in English Departments?"

Second, write a post on our class eportfolio that a) explains the core ideas of your assigned article and b) responds to those ideas. You have all been added to the class eportfolio.

Finally, set up a digital reading journal, and send Lindsey and Jenny the URL.

Class 1 – 28 January – (Literary) Texts Are Objects That We Can Manipulate

Introductions. Writing of scholarly biographies and adding them to the class web site. Verbal reports on advance reading. Collaborative annotation and discussion of Aimee Bender, "The Rememberer." A brief look at TEI and XML markup. Examination and analysis of existing digital scholarly projects.

For Next Class:

- Write a post on the class eportfolio about the ways in which you already use technology in your research (be that in school or out in the world).
- Everyone reads Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties" and Benjamin Kunkel, "Socialize Social Media! A Manifesto." Be ready to discuss both readings in class.
- Start aggregating content in your digital reading journal.
- Continue revising your written thesis project.

Class 2 – 4 February – Critical Multimedia and Social Networks

What kinds of research material can be gleaned from social media? Conversely, how can social media be used to creatively present the fruits of our research? In-class analysis of social media experiments—YouTube video remixes, Twitter novels, Facebook feeds for literary characters, etc. Collaborative multimedia project on Granovetter.

For Next Class:

- Colby reads Nicholas Hookway, "'Entering the Blogosphere': Some Strategies for Using Blogs in Social Research"
- Kerishma reads Nootje Marres, "The Redistribution of Methods: On Intervention in Digital Social Research, Broadly Considered"
- Laura reads Edwards et. al., "Digital Social Research, Social Media and the Sociological Imagination: Surrogacy, Augmentation and Re-Orientation."

Come prepared to explain your assigned article to your peers.

- Continue revising your written thesis project.
- Continue aggregating content in your digital reading journal.

Class 3 – 11 February – Digital Ethnography

Guest speakers Karen Gregory and Kara Van Cleaf, Macaulay ITFs and Graduate Center doctoral candidates in Sociology, will present their digital ethnography work and discuss their research practices with us. Discussion of the week's reading. Collaborative activity (details TBD).

For Next Class:

- Everyone reads Ben Blatt, "A Textual Analysis of *The Hunger Games*."
- Respond to Blatt's article with a brief post of your own on the class eportfolio. What are the strengths and limitations of this kind of comparative analysis? If you were to conduct a similar analysis of your thesis's primary sources, what parts of the text (parts of speech, repeated words, etc) would you analyze and why?
- Complete your revisions on your written thesis project.
- Continue aggregating content in your digital reading journal.

Class 4 – 18 February – Textual Analysis and Data Visualization

All revisions to your written thesis should be submitted to your advisor by this date.

Collaborative in-class exploration and discussion of the work of Lev Manovich and the Software Studies Initiative. In-class data visualization projects using your own thesis research.

For Next Class:

- Everyone reads both the "Introduction" and one individually-assigned chapter of Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* (Verso, 2007).
  - Colby reads "Trees"
  - Kerishma reads "Maps"
  - Laura reads "Graphs"
- Use your assigned Moretti chapter to guide you in the creation of a visual representation of a literary work (a novel, a poem, or a short story) that you know really well—ideally, a canonical piece of literature that is not part of your thesis.
- Bring your visual representation with you to class next week.
- Continue aggregating content in your digital reading journal.

Class 5 – 25 February – Maps

Visual representation assignment: show-and-tell and peer response. Class discussion of Moretti. Collaborative activities using a variety of digital mapping projects and tools. Reflection on the first third of the course and initial brainstorming on individual digital projects.

For Next Class:

- Draft a two-page proposal for your digital thesis project
- Share your proposal with the class, either as a post on the class eportfolio, or as a Google Doc.
- Continue aggregating content in your digital reading journal.

Class 6 – 4 March – Preparing to Present

Jenny leads a discussion on how to give good conference presentations, including how to create strong and engaging visual materials. Class edits and offers feedback on digital project proposals. Visualizing and organizing your digital thesis project.

For Next Class:

- Revise your digital thesis project proposal.
- Share the final version of your proposal with the class, either as a post on the class eportfolio, or as a Google Doc.
- Everyone reads Andrew McKinney, "Content Management Systems, Value, and the Interface as a Site of Production," and leaves a thoughtful comment on his post.
- Continue aggregating content in your digital reading journal.

Class 7 – 11 March – Information Architecture

Discussion and comparison of content management strategies. What are the politics of content management? How do digital structures shape audience response? In-class examination and assessment of past digital thesis projects.

For Next Class:

- Be ready to present!

Class 8 – 18 March – Practice Presentation Day

10 to 15-minute presentations on your thesis research, in front of a live audience. Thesis advisors, former thesis students, and other members of the Macaulay community will be on hand to provide you with both verbal and written feedback on the style and content of your presentation.

For Next Class:

- Begin creating your digital thesis project!
- Revise your presentation in preparation for NCUR
- Continue aggregating content in your digital reading journal.

Class 9 – 25 March – Individual Consultations

No formal class meeting. Set up individual appointments with both Lindsey and Jenny (a total of two meetings) to discuss your digital thesis project, with an eye towards creating an intelligible project structure.

For Next Class:

- Read one article on audience:
    - Colby reads Jenny Kidd, "Digital Storytelling at the BBC: The Reality of Innovative Audience Participation"
    - Kerishma reads Alice Marwick and danah boyd, "I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately: Twitter Users, Context Collapse, and the Imagined Audience"
    - Laura reads Peter Levine, "A Public Voice for Youth: The Audience Problem in Digital Media and Civic Education"
- Continue developing your digital thesis project.
- Continue revising and preparing your NCUR presentation.
- Continue aggregating content in your digital reading journal.

Class 10 – 1 April – Overlapping Audiences

Verbal reports on this week's reading. Discussion: who is the audience for your written thesis? For your digital project? Where and how do those audiences overlap? Preparing for NCUR: final in-class consults on presentations, and we'll talk conference etiquette. NCUR logistics and planning.

Special Activity: National Conference on Undergraduate Research, Lexington KY, **2-5 April**.

Class 11 – 8 April – What We Learned

NCUR recap. What did we learn? What would we do differently next time, at least in an academic context? Two collaborative annotation and multimedia projects on audiences and public presentation, and the lessons learned from our trip to Kentucky.

For Next Class:

- Note: We are off for two weeks for spring break!
- <u>Everyone</u> reads:
  - o [Adam Fish and Ramesh Srinivasan, "Digital Labor is the New Killer App"](#)
  - o [Karen Gregory, "The Teaching of Labor and the Labor of Teaching: Reflections on Publicness and Professionalism"](#)
- Colby <u>also</u> reads :
  - o [Tara McPherson, "Why Are the Digital Humanities So White? Or Thinking the Histories of Race and Computation"](#)
- Kerishma <u>also</u> reads:
  - o [Stephen Ramsay and Geoffrey Rockwell, "Developing Things: Notes Towards an Epistemology of Building in the Digital Humanities"](#)
- Laura <u>also</u> reads:
  - o [Julia Flanders, "Time, Labor, and 'Alternate Careers' in Digital Humanities Knowledge Work"](#)
- Please develop a <u>comparison</u> between Fish and Srinivasan's article and your individually assigned article in some form—either a written post, or a chart, map, graph, tree, infographic or other visualization.
- Share your comparison on the class eportfolio.
- Continue working on your digital thesis project.
- Continue aggregating content in your digital reading journal.

Spring Break!

*Class 12 – **29 April** – Gender, Race, and Labor in Digital Research*

Guest speaker, Dr. Lauren Klein of Georgia Tech, will discuss her research practices with us. Comparison assignment: show-and-tell and peer response. Roundtable discussion of your homework reading. Collaborative project (details TBD).

For Next Class:

- Write a reflective post on the class eportfolio, considering how this week's activities and discussion might have an impact on your own work, both this semester and in the future.
- Continue working on your digital thesis project.
- Continue aggregating content in your digital reading journal.

Class 13 – 6 May – Art + Tech: Digital Research Methods Out In The World

This week, please be sure to meet with your thesis advisor, walk them through your digital thesis project, and get their feedback.

Field trip (hopefully to [Eyebeam: Art + Technology Center](#)) followed by a collaborative digital research activity conducted on [the High Line](#). Please bring a camera if you have one; we will also check out some tools from Macaulay.

Special Activity: Class trip to [3-Legged Dog](#) to see [zoe | juniper's dance/tech performance, "BEGINAGAIN."](#) **Our tickets are for Saturday, May 10, at 7 PM.** Please bring in $15 to cover the cost of your ticket.

For Next Class:

- Finish the blogging component of today's collaborative activities on the class eportfolio.
- Respond to "BEGINAGAIN" in a post on the class eportfolio.
- Continue working on your digital thesis project. Incorporate your advisor's suggestions!
- Continue aggregating content in your digital reading journal.

Class 14 – 13 May – Digital Thesis Project Work Session

Group work session on digital thesis projects—an ideal time to troubleshoot, ask for feedback, and simply use the pressure of the group environment to get a lot of stuff done. Lindsey will be on hand to help. Bring snacks to share!

Special Activity: Macaulay's annual Research Event. All of you will prepare presentations for this event. Exact date TBD.

For Next Class:

- <u>Finish</u> your digital thesis project and your digital reading journal.
- Everyone reads Brown et. al., "Published Yet Never Done: The Tension Between Projection and Completion in Digital Humanities Research"
- Write a post on the class eportfolio responding to Brown et. al.

Class 15 – 20 May – Reflections and Assessment

Discussion: just how should we assess or "grade" the work we've completed this semester? In-class presentation and discussion of digital reading journals and final projects—invite your friends and your advisors to come see what you've completed. Celebration.