

Fall 2012
CUNY Graduate Center
M 4:15pm – 6:15pm
Room 3212

Debates in the Digital Humanities: Towards a Networked Academy
MALS 75400/ASCP 81500/ENGL 89020

Dr. Matthew K. Gold
mattgold@gmail.com
mkgold.net
@mkgold

Course Group: <http://commons.gc.cuny.edu/groups/dhdebates-towards-a-networked-academy/>

Course Blog: <http://dhdebates12.commons.gc.cuny.edu/>

Course Hashtag: #dhdebates12

Course Description:

The dramatic growth of the Digital Humanities (DH) over the past half dozen years has helped scholars re-imagine the very nature and forms of academic research and teaching across a range of scholarly disciplines, encompassing the arts, the interpretive social sciences, and traditional humanities subject areas. This course will explore the history of the digital humanities, focusing especially on the diverse pioneering projects and core texts that ground this innovative methodological and conceptual approach to scholarly inquiry and teaching. It will also emphasize ongoing debates in the digital humanities, such as the problem of defining the digital humanities, the question of whether DH has (or needs) theoretical grounding, controversies over new models of peer review for digital scholarship, issues related to collaborative work on digital projects, and the problematic questions surrounding research involving “big data.” The course will also emphasize the ways in which DH has helped transform the nature of academic teaching and pedagogy in the contemporary university with its emphasis on collaborative, student-centered and digital learning environments and approaches. Along the way, we will discuss broad social, legal and ethical questions and concerns surrounding digital media and contemporary culture, including privacy, intellectual property, and open/public access to knowledge and scholarship. Students will be expected to participate actively in class discussions and online postings (including on blogs and wikis) and to research and write, either individually or in collaboration, a final multimedia presentation on a key topic in the digital humanities. Students completing the course will gain broad knowledge about and understanding of the emerging role of the digital humanities across several academic disciplines and will begin to learn some of the fundamental skills used often in digital humanities projects.

Requirements:

- Weekly readings, blog/twitter writing

- Weekly explorations of DH tools and projects
- 2 Class Presentations – one on a DH tool, one on a DH-related book/project/topic not covered in class
- Final Project: DH Proposal

Assignments will be posted on the course website under the “Assignments” tab.

Regular participation in class discussions across the range of our online course spaces is essential. A significant part of our course will involve experimentation and play with various digital humanities tools. There will also be an emphasis throughout the course on online participation through various projects and weekly online discussions that will contribute to your final grade.

Immediately following the first class, all students should register for accounts on the following sites: [CUNY Academic Commons](#), [Twitter](#), and [Zotero](#). Remember that when you register for social-networking accounts, you do not have to use your full name or even your real name. One benefit of writing publicly under your real name is that you can begin to establish a public academic identity and to network with others in your field. However, keep in mind that search engines have extended the life of online work; if you are not sure that you want your work for this course to be part of your permanently searchable identity trail on the web, you should strongly consider creating an alias. Whether you engage social media under your real name or whether you construct a new online identity, please consider the ways in which social media can affect your career in both positive and negative ways.

Books to Purchase:

Note: I encourage you to purchase books via the link to Amazon at the bottom of the GC's Mina Rees Library homepage (<http://library.gc.cuny.edu/>), which nets a 5 percent contribution to the Mina Rees Library for book and electronic resource purchases for the benefit of all GC students.

Fitzpatrick, Kathleen. *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy*. New York: New York University Press, 2011.

Gold, Matthew K. *Debates in the Digital Humanities*. Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2012.

Kirschenbaum, Matthew G. *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2008.

Monmonier, Mark S. *How to Lie with Maps*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Moretti, Franco. *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History*. London: Verso, 2005.

Ramsay, Stephen. *Reading Machines: Toward an Algorithmic Criticism*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011.

Suber, Peter. *Open Access*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2012.

Additional readings will be made available online or through library reserve.

Course Schedule (subject to change):

August 27 Introductions

September 3 No class (Labor Day)

Reading:

- Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Introduction)
- John Unsworth, "[The Importance of Failure](#)"

Playing:

- Join the Commons course group and blog
- Install MAMP or XAMPP on your computer
- Install WordPress

September 10 Defining the Digital Humanities

Reading:

- *Debates in the Digital Humanities*: Introduction, Part I: Defining the Digital Humanities + Matthew Kirschenbaum, "Digital Humanities As/Is a Tactical Term"
- Gold, "Digital Humanities" from *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media and Textuality*
- Susan Hockey, "[The History of Humanities Computing](#)" from [A Companion to Digital Humanities](#)
- [The CUNY Digital Humanities Resource Guide](#)

Writing:

- Write a blog post on our public course blog that either proposes a definition of digital humanities or explores interesting similarities and differences between our readings

Playing:

- Install a new theme on your WordPress blog

September 17

No Class

September 24

Reading:

- *DHDebates*: Practicing and Teaching sections

Writing:

- Blog post on any aspect of our reading

Playing:

- Explore DH-related websites and teaching websites and suggest new links/features/resources for our own class site.

October 1

Rethinking the Academy (Guest: Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Director of Scholarly Communication, Modern Language Association)

Reading:

- Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence*
- [Hacking the Academy](#): Hacking Scholarship section

Writing:

- Write a blog post on new forms of scholarly communication, perhaps reflecting on what happens in the “playing” assignment

Playing

- Take part in a public open peer review experiment.

October 8

No class

October 10

Rebuilding the Academy (Guest: Katina Rogers, Senior Research Specialist, Scholarly Communications Institute, University of Virginia)

Reading:

- *Alt-Academy: Alternative Academic Careers for Humanities Scholars: Essays* by Julia Flanders, Lisa Spiro, Doug Reside, Tom Scheinfeldt, Gilbert/Graham/Johnson
- Bethany Nowviskie, "[Praxis, Through Prisms: a Digital Boot Camp for Grad Students in the Humanities](#)" and "[It Starts on Day One](#)"
- *Hacking the Academy: Hacking Institutions* section
- Paul Jay and Gerald Graff, [Fear of Being Useful](#) (Inside Higher Ed, Jan 2012)
- Kaustuv Basu, [The Radical New Humanities PhD](#) (Inside Higher Ed, May 2012)
- Anthony Grafton, [No More Plan B](#) (AHA, Oct 2011)
- [Executive Summary](#) [pdf], [Pathways Through Graduate School and Into Careers](#)

Writing:

- Write a blog post proposing a few ways in which graduate education should be reformed in light of our readings

Playing

- Experiment with a DH tool selected from the [Bamboo DiRT Wiki](#)

October 15: DH in Practice: "Distant Reading"

Reading:

- Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History*
- Stephen Ramsay, *Reading Machines: Toward an Algorithmic Criticism*
- DH Debates: Matthew Wilkens, "Canons, Close Reading, and the Evolution of Method"
- Stanley Fish, "[Mind Your Ps and Bs: The Digital Humanities and Interpretation](#)"
- Optional Reading: Allison, et. Al. "[Quantitative Formalism: An Experiment](#)" (PDF)

Writing:

- Optional blog post on our readings

Playing

- Experiment with an algorithmic reading/analysis tool chosen from the [Bamboo DiRT Wiki](#)

October 22: DH in Practice: DH in the Archives (Guest: Steve Brier, CUNY Graduate Center)

Reading:

- Ben Vershbow, "Hacking the Library" (video)
<http://cunydhi.commons.gc.cuny.edu/2011/11/28/ben-vershbow-on-nypl-labs-hacking-the-library-video/>
- Steve Brier and Joshua Brown, "The September 11 Digital Archive." *Radical History Review*. Issue 111 (Fall 2011) (on readings page)
- Claire Potter, "Because it is Gone Now: Teaching the September 11 Digital Archive" (*OAH Magazine of History*, Vo. 25, No. 3: 31-34. (on readings page)
- Canterbury Earthquake Digital Archive (<http://www.ceismic.org.nz/>)
- Kenneth Price, "Edition, Project, Database, Archive, Thematic Research Collection: What's in a Name?" *DHQ* – <http://digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/3/3/000053/000053.html>)

Writing:

- Blog post on DH and archives
- Playing:

Playing:

Explore the following archives:

- <http://911digitalarchive.org/>
- <http://www.ceismic.org.nz/>
- <http://menus.nypl.org/>
- <http://socialarchive.iath.virginia.edu/index.html>

October 29: DH in Practice: Visualizing Big Data (Skype Guest: Lev Manovich, CUNY Graduate Center)

Reading:

- Lev Manovich, "Trending: The Promises and the Challenges of Big Social Data," "How to Compare One Million Images"
- Lev Manovich, "Media Visualization: Visual Techniques for Exploring Large Media Collections"
https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http%3A%2F%2Fsoftwarestudies.com%2F%2Fcultural_analytics%2FManovich.Media_Visualization.web.2012.v2.doc
- Lev Manovich, "What is Visualization"
<http://lab.softwarestudies.com/2010/10/new-article-is-visualization.html>

Writing:

- Write a blog post about our readings

Playing:

- Visualization projects: check out
“History Flow” - <http://www.bewitched.com/historyflow.html>
- Ben Fry, “On the Origin of Species: The Preservation of Favoured Traces”
<http://benfry.com/traces/>
- Explore the [Visual Complexity](#) websites

November 5: DH in Practice: Geospatial Humanities (Guest: Steve Romalewski)

Reading:

- Mark Monmonier, *How to Lie With Maps*

Writing:

- Blog post on this week’s reading

Playing:

- Explore the [Neatline](#) live sandbox, [CUNY Mapping Service](#) projects (especially [Welcome to 1940s New York](#)), [Bamboo DiRT mapping tools](#)

November 12: Digital Materiality (Skype Guest: Matthew Kirschenbaum)

Reading:

- Matthew Kirschenbaum, *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination*
- From *Tubes: A Journey to the Center of the Internet*: “Prologue,” “The Map,” “A Network of Networks,” “Where Data Sleeps”

Writing/Playing:

- Find and share a web-based resource related to digital materiality

November 19: Open Access/Open Source

Reading:

- Peter Suber, *Open Access*
- Samir Chopra and Scott D. Dexter, *Decoding Liberation*: Ch. 1 “Free Software and the Political Economy” and Ch. 2 “The Ethics of Free Software”
- Boone Gorges, “[I develop free software because of CUNY and Blackboard](#)” and “Free Software Development and the Commons”

Writing

- First draft of DH project proposal due

Playing

- Make some changes to a WordPress theme file; download the source code for an open-source application you use; explore [GitHub](#)

November 26: Theorizing DH

Reading:

- *Debates in the Digital Humanities*: Theorizing DH section
- [Journal of Digital Humanities 1.1](#): Conversations section on theory and DH

Writing:

- Blog post on DH and theory

Playing:

- Explore funded projects from the [NEH Office of Digital Humanities](#)

December 3: Critiquing DH/Future of DH

Reading:

- *Debates in the Digital Humanities*: Critiquing DH section, Envisioning the Future section

Writing:

- Blog post on future directions in the digital humanities
- If possible, post project abstract/project materials to our course group or blog for feedback

December 10: Project Management/Project Feedback

Reading:

- Tom Scheinfeldt, [Intro to Project Management Notes](#)
- Bethany Nowviskie, [Ten Rules for Humanities Scholars New to Project Management](#) (pdf)
- Sharon Leon, "[Project Management for Humanists](#)"

Writing:

- Post a project abstract/project materials to our course blog or group

December 17: Final Project Presentations