Drowning in Data: Introduction to Digital Humanities

English XXX, Fall 20XX
Monday/Wednesday:

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Office Hours: MW 1-2:45 and by appointment.

What are we doing here?

This class is an introduction to some of the key topics, theories, and conversations that underlie digital scholarship. It does so through an exploration of perhaps the most fundamental underlying concept in digital scholarship: the idea of "data." To do so, the course is divided into three units touching on data in slightly differing ways. In the first, we look at the ways we organize ideas and material objects, thinking about both benefits and critiques. The second will build off the first, concentrating on ways to critically interpret both data and the methods that data is encoded in through looking at real-world examples. Finally, for the third the lessons learned in the first two will be put into practice by intrepreting our own data sets.
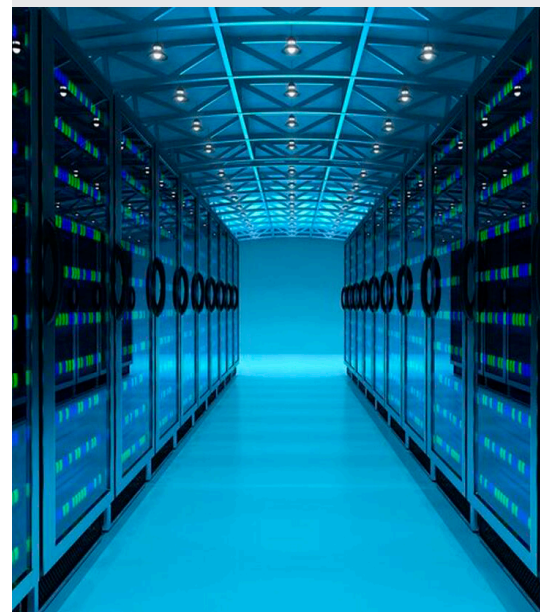
All three units will exist within the framework of a game where you'll be asked to on the role of new volunteers in an activist group (which you will name). That group has realized the potential of data-driven journalism to shape opinion, but lacks the tools and methods to do so. Your job as new volunteers will be to learn everything you can about the role of data in forming decisions and shaping opinions, and then to put that knowledge to work in the service of your cause.

Required Texts

All the required texts will be available in the Learning Management System or via links provided in this syllabus.

Contents

Requirements and Grading

A detailed description of each assignment will be posted in Avenue to Learn and explained in class, and will take the form of directives from the directorship of your various activist groups. Feedback – both from myself and your fellow students – will also happen in class during our collaborative workspace meetings, and more formal grades will be posted to Avenue to Learn.

20%: Classification Assignment
20%: Metadata Assignment
20%: Online Messaging Assignment
25%: Weekly Journal
15%: Class Participation

During our first week, we'll also discuss what you want your group to be like as an organization – what sort of actions they're trying to do in the world, what their goals are, and how they might think data will fit into both of those things.

My goals for you

- You should be able to describe, discuss, and evaluate the role of emerging computational tools and methods within the humanities and society at large.
- You should be able to debate the benefits and drawbacks of these computational tools as well as their applications
- You should be able to evaluate and apply the DH tools and methods explored in the course to your specific disciplinary field or method of study.
- You should exercise and develop your skills as an analytical reader, critical thinker, and articlate academic writer.

Attendance

Since the instruction and discussion for this class takes place in the classroom, not being in class is equivalent to not taking the course. So if I can't honestly say you've completed the course because you haven't been attending you'll end up with an F in the class. Hopefully everyone will make every effort to attend all the class sessions and this won't be needed, but if I mention to you that I've noticed a pattern of absenses you should take it as a warning that you're at risk of missing so much class that I can't give you a passing grade.

That said, I know that some of you have extracurricular activities that are considered excused. For the university's complete attendance and excused absence policies, please check http://dummyuniversity.edu/attendance. If you're going to miss class for what you feel is an excusable reason, contact me via email and let me know; that way, we both have a record of the fact you were absent and why. I'm not likely to ask, but if I do feel like I need further documentation I'll ask for it once I receive your email.

Conferences and Office Hours

I think being available to you for conferences outside of class is incredibly important. I keep my

posted office hours, and I am also available for appointments if you contact me via email. If you have any questions regarding grades this is the only way we can discuss them, as I do not talk about grades over email. However, for more general questions regarding the readings or assignments I will check my email once per day during the week and respond to any emailed questions within 24 hours.

Disabilities

If you have a disability and do not have the appropriate paperwork from the disability services office please take the time to contact them, read their policies, and get the help you need. There are a lot of things I can do to help you be successful in this class if I know about them, but if I don't there's very little I can do to help after your grade has been turned in.

Non-Discrimination

I will not tolerate descrimination or harrassment in my classroom. If you have any questions regarding what the university considers descrimination, it can be found at http://www.dummyuniversity. edu/descrimination. Beyond that, though,I want to point out that data is often used to propegate the mistaken beliefs that underly descrimination broadly and personal animus narrowly. It is never objective. Part of the work in this classroom will be to pull apart our expectations regarding the medieval and to get at what was actually believed.

While it's not the direct subject of this course, there will be times that I will touch on things, like the Shirley Card in the development of facial recognition or the master-slave designation in hardware design, that stem from time period where racism and descrimination was an accepted norm. If you want to come speak to me privately about anything we read, please do so. I want you to feel comfortable in this class, and if anything we're reading worries you don't be quiet about it; let me know.

Academic Integrity

I believe that all of you have every intention of doing your best in this class. And I don't generally like to play the heavy. But I want to stress something just so we're all on the same page.

Every piece of graded work in this course should be created by your and created for this course. You are responsible for understanding what plagiarism is,what cheating is, and how to avoid them both. If you don't know what is meant by "plagiarism" or "cheating" in regarding to a particular assignment or the course as a whole, please be sure to contact me immediately. As I said above I'm always happy to answer questions, but if I don't know you have questions I have to assume your actions were deliberate.

Academic dishonesty defeats the purpose of your time here. If you haven't earned it the letter grade you receive is ultimately meaningless. It also hurts your fellow students and is an insult to me as your instructor. If I become aware of a case of academic dishonesty, of whatever stripe, you will fail the course.

Course Readings

Date	Readings and Assignments Due
	(NB: Assignments and group meetings are indicated in red)
August 23	Course Introduction
August 25	Cohen, Hamilton, and Turner. "Computational Journalism." *Communications of the ACM*, 54(10): 66-71; "Critical Making: Conceptual and Material Studies in Technology and Social Life." *The Information Society*, 27(4): 252-260 The "rules" of the data journalism game, selection of topics and organization name.
August 30	Bowker and Star. *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences.* (1-16, 31-32, 53-64)
September 1	Finding information – research using a shared Google Doc for organization/structure.
September 6	Kitchin. "Conceptualising Data." *The Data Revolution: Big Data, Open Data, Data Infrastructures & Their Consequences*. 1-26; Olshannikova, Olsson, Huhtamaki, and Karkkainen. "Conceptualizing Big Social Data." *Journal of Big Data* (available at https://journalofbigdata.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40537-017-0063-x)
September 8	Finding examples of social data and adding them to the existing class notes/Google Doc.
September 13	Rosenberg, Daniel. "Data Before the Fact." In *Raw Data is an Oxymoron* (15-40).

Course Readings

September 15th to October 6th
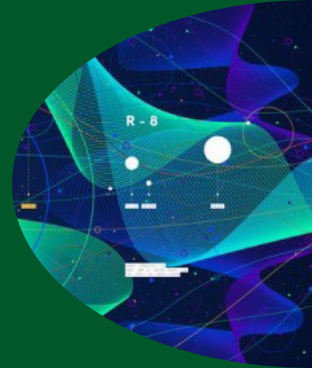
Date	Readings and Assignments Due
	(NB: Assignments and group meetings are indicated in red)
September 15	Presentation and discussion of classification systems to organize research around topics chosen in week 1 (Assignment 1).
September 20	Lanier. *You are Not a Gadget: A Manifesto* (3-14); Boyd "Critical Questions for Big Data: Provocations for a cultural, technological, and scholarly phenomenon" *Information, Communication, & Society* 15(5): 662-679.
September 22	Watch *The Joy of Data* and discuss on the differing conceptions of data can be utilized to accurately report on your topic.
	Individual Reflections on Assignment 1
September 27	Tufte. "Aesthetics and Technique in Data Graphical Design." In *The Visual Display and Quantitative Information* (2nd ed.) (177-190); D'Ignazio. "What would Feminist Data Visualization Look Like?" (Online at https://civic.mit.edu/feminist-data-visualization); Warden. "Why You Should Never Trust a Data Scientist" (Online at https://petewarden.com/2013/07/18/why-you-shouldnever-trust-a-data-scientist/)
September 29	Researching good and bad data visualizations. How could you build a visualization that achieves the goals of your group?
October 4	Borgman, "Data Scholarship in the Humanities." In *Big Data, Little Data, No Data: Scholarship in the Networked World*.
October 6	Regularizing and organizing the classification system and information that already exists in your Google Doc

Course Readings

October 11th to November 1st

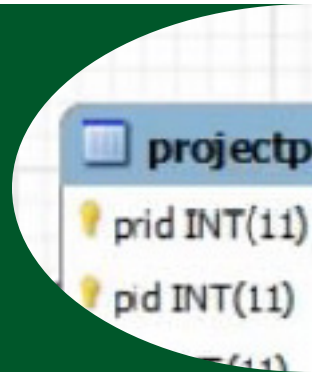| Date	Readings and Assignments Due
	(NB: Assignments amd group meetings are indicated in red)
October 11	Whearty. "Adam Scriveyn in Cyberspace: Loss, Labor, Ideology, and Infrastructure in Interoperable Reuse of Digital Manuscript Materials" in *Meeting the Medieval in a Digital World*.
October 13	Developing a structure to handle the information collected in the class Google Doc that matters for your group's topic.
October 18	Bond et. al., "A 61-million-person experiment in social influence and political mobilization"; Wihbey, "How does social media use influence political participation and civic engagement? A meta-analysis."
October 20	*Presentation and discussion of the structure developed to classify information about the topic of interest for your group and how it fits into existing metadata schemas.*
October 25	*Marhoon, "Using Memes to Fight Fake News"; Leetrau, "The Daily Mail Snopes Story and Fact Checking the Fact Checkers"; Streitfeld, "For Fact-Checking Website Snopes, a Bigger Role Brings More Attacks"*
October 27	Discussion and examples of how data can be used to support and refute "fake news."
	Individual Reflections on Assignment 2
November 1	Ramsay, Stephen. "Databases" In *A Compansion to Digital Humanities.*

Course Readings

November 3rd to November 24th

Date	Readings and Assignments Due
	(NB: Assignments and group meetings are indicated in red)
November 3	Research and population of a sql database as a prelude to final outcomes.
November 8	Grey, Bournegru and Chambers – "Delivering Data" (online at http://datajournalismhandbook.org/1.0/en/delivering_data.html)
November 10	Continuing development of the SQL databases and in-class development of final outcome – visualization, report, etc.
November 15	In-class development of final outcomes - reports and visualizations
November 17	In-class development of final outcomes - reports and visualizations
November 22	In-class development of final outcomes - reports and visualizations
November 24	NO CLASS

Course Readings

November 29th to December 12th

Date	Readings and Assignments Due
	(NB: Assignments and group meetings are indicated in red)
November 29	Presentation Day
December 1	Presentation Day
December 6	Presentation Day
December 8	Final thoughts and discussion - what worked, what didn't, what's next?
December 12	Final Reflection due in my inbox by 5pm.