

## Introduction to Digital Humanities

DHUM 70000  
Fall 2019  
MA Program in Digital Humanities  
CUNY Graduate Center  
Wednesdays 4:15pm–6:15pm - Room 5417

### Faculty

#### **Dr. Matthew K. Gold**

mgold@gc.cuny.edu  
<http://mkgold.net>  
@mkgold

#### **Dr. Kelly Baker Josephs**

kjosephs@york.cuny.edu  
<https://kbjosephs.net>  
@kbjosephs

Course Blog: <http://cuny.is/dhintro19>  
Course Group: <http://cuny.is/group-dhintro19>  
Course Hashtag: #dhintro19  
Email the class: [dhintro18@groups.commonscuny.edu](mailto:dhintro18@groups.commonscuny.edu)

### Advisory Fellows:

Micki Kaufman (MA in DH);  
Andi Çupallari (MS in Data Analysis/Vis)

### Course Overview

In this introduction to the digital humanities (DH), we will approach the field via a Caribbean Studies lens, exploring how an understanding of the digital based in the growing area of digital Caribbean studies might shape the larger field of DH.

The course aims to provide a landscape view of DH, paying attention to how its various approaches embody new ways of knowing and thinking, new epistemologies. What kinds of questions, for instance, does the practice of mapping pose to our research and teaching? How does the concept of mapping change when we begin from the Global South? When we attempt to share our work through social media, how is it changed and who do we imagine it reaches? How can we visually and ethically represent various forms of data and how does the data morph in the representation?

Over the course of this semester, we will explore these questions and others as we engage 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 labor 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.

Central themes in the course will emerge from our focus on the Caribbean – in particular, how various technologies and technical approaches have been shaped by colonial practices; how archives might be decolonized and how absences in the archives might be accounted for; and how concepts like minimal computing might alter the projects we build.

Though no previous technical skills are required, students will be asked to experiment in introductory ways with DH tools and methods as a way of concretizing some of our readings and discussions. Students will be expected to participate actively in class discussions and online postings (including on our course blog) and to undertake a final project that can be either a conventional seminar paper or a proposal for a digital project. 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.

Note: this course is part of an innovative “Digital Praxis Seminar,” a two-semester long introduction to digital tools and methods that will be open to all students in the Graduate Center. The goal of the course is to introduce graduate students to various ways in which they can incorporate digital research into their work.

### **Learning Objectives**

- Students will become acquainted with the current landscape of the field of digital humanities and digital Caribbean studies.
- Students will become conversant with a range of debates in the field of DH through readings and discussions.
- Students will create a social media presence and begin to prepare their own digital portfolios.
- Students will create a proposal for a digital project for possible development in the Spring.
- Students will become familiar with the resources available at the Graduate Center to support work on digital teaching and research projects.

### **Requirements and Structure:**

Students in the course should complete the following work during the semester:

### **Reading and Discussion (Weekly)**

Students should complete all weekly readings in advance of the class meeting and should take an active part in class discussions.

### **Blogging (5 posts)**

- Students are responsible for writing five blog posts on our shared course blog. These should be posted by Monday night so that peers have the weekend to respond before class.
  - two short responses to our weekly readings or in-class discussions. Post your thoughts, reactions, questions, responses;
  - one post about a workshop you have attended, with the goal of helping other students understand what they may have missed and/or what you found valuable about it;
  - one post about a praxis assignment;
  - one post about your final project.
- Students who are not writing blog posts on a given week should comment on and respond to the posts of other students.

### **Workshops (3 workshops)**

- In connection with (GC Digital Initiatives)[<http://cuny.is/cunygcdi>], we will be offering skills workshops throughout the semester (<https://gcdi.commons.gc.cuny.edu/calendar/>). Students are responsible for attending a minimum of three workshops over the course of the semester. You are free to go to as many as you'd like pending space limitations. To satisfy this requirement, students can also attend workshops offered by the Interactive Technology and Pedagogy Program, the Teaching and Learning Center, the GC Library, and the Quantitative Research Center.

### **Praxis Assignments (2 Assignments)**

During the semester, we will ask you to complete two praxis assignments. These exercises are meant to be beginner-level; our interest in having you complete them lies in getting you to experiment with new tools. Your results do not have to be necessarily significant or meaningful; the important thing is to engage the activity and gain a better understanding of the kinds of choices one must make when undertaking such a project. We ask you to think, too, about both the strengths and the limitations of the tools you are trying out.

Our group on the CUNY Academic Commons includes an integration with the Dirt Directory (look for the Digital Tools link in the group), which can help lead you to new tools to try.

Assignment options:

1. Mapping Assignment (Due Oct 2 – required of all students)

## Praxis Assignment – Mapping

Create a map using one of the tools described in “Finding the Right Tools for Mapping.” You can create any map you’d like; we just want you to try to use one of these pieces of mapping software. Should you feel so inspired, we invite you to explore one of the following options:

- Create a map that in some way attempts to work against the constraints of maps (generally) or the particular mapping software you are using.
- Create a map of something that is not necessarily (or traditionally thought of as) mappable.
- Create a map related to issues of sovereignty as discussed in the “Visualizing Sovereignty” article.
- Create a map of a novel, an author’s works, or some other data using Google Maps, CartoDB, ARCGIS StoryMaps, or another mapping platform.

Please create a blog post describing your experiences.

Choose either:

2. Visualization Assignment (Due Oct 23)  
Description forthcoming

or

3. Text Analysis Assignment (Due Nov 6)  
Description forthcoming

**Final Projects:** Students may choose between **a)** writing a conventional seminar paper related to some aspect of our course readings; or **b)** crafting a formal proposal for a digital project that might be executed with a team of students during the spring semester. Guidelines for the proposal will be distributed later in the semester.

## Grading

Regular participation in discussions across the range of our face-to-face and online course spaces is essential.

- Participation and online assignments (40%)
- Final project (60%)

## Accounts

All students should register for accounts on the following sites: [CUNY Academic Commons], [Twitter], and [Zotero] (the library staff offers several very good intro workshops on Zotero that you are encouraged to attend).

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 a digital 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:**

You are required to purchase only one book for this course, though that book is also available in the library on reserve. All readings will be circulated via links on the web or via PDF.

- Benjamin, Ruha. *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*. Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2019.

Please check out our course schedule for our list of weekly assignments and readings. Readings marked (PDF) will be made available via the Files section of our course group.

## Course Schedule (subject to change)

Readings marked (PDF)\*\* can be found in our course group\*\*

### 8/28 - Introductions

Course syllabus and site

### 9/4 - Approaching the Digital Humanities, Thinking the Caribbean

#### *Readings*

- Matthew K. Gold, “The Digital Humanities Moment” - Debates in the Digital Humanities (2012)
- Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein, “Digital Humanities: The Expanded Field” Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016
- Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein, “A DH That Matters” Debates in the Digital Humanities 2019
- Kelly Baker Josephs and Roopika Risam, “Digital Black Atlantic Introduction” (draft) (PDF)
- David Scott, “On the Question of Caribbean Studies”

#### *Sites to explore*

- Torn Apart / Separados
- Caribbean Digital
- Create Caribbean Projects
- The Early Caribbean Digital Archive

#### **Assignment – blog post:**

- To what extent do these sites/projects reflect issues discussed in our readings?
- Or, If you were to center an understanding about what DH is around one of these projects/sites, how would DH be defined (or redefined)?

### 9/11 - Epistemologies of DH

#### *Readings*

- Kim Gallon, “Making a Case for the Black Digital Humanities”
- Kelly Baker Josephs, “Teaching the Digital Caribbean: The Ethics of a Public Pedagogical Experiment”

- Roopika Risam, “What Passes for Human? Undermining the Universal Subject in Digital Humanities Praxis”
- Daniel Paul O’Donnell, Katherine L. Walter, Alex Gil, Neil Fraistat, “Only Connect: The Globalization of the Digital Humanities” (PDF)
- D. Fox Harrell, “Cultural Roots for Computing”
- Ramsay, Stephen, and Geoffrey Rockwell. “Developing Things: Notes toward an Epistemology of Building in the Digital Humanities” Debates in the Digital Humanities: 2012, edited by Matthew K. Gold. University of Minnesota Press, 2012.

## 9/18 - Mapping

### *Readings*

- Mark S. Monmonier, How to Lie with Maps (PDF)
- Olivia Ildefonso, “Finding the Right Tools for Mapping”
- Yarimar Bonilla and Max Hantel, “Visualizing Sovereignty”
- Mayukh Sen, “Dividing Lines. Mapping platforms like Google Earth have the legacies of colonialism programmed into them”

### *Explore the following mapping projects:*

- Slave Revolt in Jamaica, 1760-1761
- Mapping Inequality
- Renewing Inequality
- The Decolonial Atlas

## 9/25 - Data and Visualization

### *Readings*

- Jennifer Guiliano and Carolyn Heitman, “Difficult Heritage and the Complexities of Indigenous Data”
- Tressie McMillan Cottom, “More Scale, More Questions: Observations from Sociology”
- Jessica Marie Johnson, “A Review of ‘Two Plantations’”
- Johanna Drucker, “Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display”
- Lev Manovich, “What is Visualization?”

### *Sites to Explore*

- A Tale of Two Plantations

- Around DH in 80 days
- Data is beautiful: 10 of the best data visualization examples from history to today

## **10/2 - History and the Archive (Guest visit from Ada Ferrer)**

### *Readings*

- Linda M. Rodriguez and Ada Ferrer, “Collaborating with Aponte: Digital Humanities, Art, and the Archive”
- Marlene L. Daut, “Haiti @ the Digital Crossroads: Archiving Black Sovereignty”
- Jessica Marie Johnson, “Markup Bodies: Black [Life] Studies and Slavery [Death] Studies at the Digital Crossroads” (PDF)

### *Site to Explore*

- Digital Aponte

**Assignment: PRAXIS Mapping assignment due**

## **10/9 - No classes**

## **10/16 - No classes**

## **10/23 - Design / infrastructure**

### *Readings*

- Kelly Baker Josephs and Teanu Reid, “After the Collaboration” (PDF)
- Angela Sutton, “The Digital Overhaul of the Archive of Ecclesiastical and Secular Sources for Slave Societies (ESSSS)”
- Bethany Nowiskie, “Capacity Through Care”
- Susan Leigh Star, “The Ethnography of Infrastructure” (PDF)
- Miriam Posner, “See No Evil?”
- Stephen Jackson, “Rethinking Repair”
- Alex Gil “Interview with Ernesto Oroza”

**Assignment: PRAXIS Visualization assignment due**

## **10/30 - Access / Minimal Computing**

### *Readings*



- Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Generous Thinking* (PDF)
- Cristina Venegas, “Tourism and the Social Ramifications of Media Technologies”\*
- Johanna Drucker, “Pixel Dust: Illusions of Innovation in Scholarly Publishing”
- Alex Gil, “Design for Diversity: The Case of Ed”

*Sites to Explore*

- DHdebates site
- sx salon/sx archipelagos
- Open-Access publications on the CUNY Academic Commons
- Manifold

## 11/6 - Text

*Readings*

- Underwood, Ted. “A Genealogy of Distant Reading” *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2017.
- Klein, Lauren F. “Distant Reading after Moretti” *Lklein*, 2018.
- Ramsay, Stephen. “The Hermeneutics of Screwing Around; or What You Do with a Million Books” *Pastplay: Teaching and Learning History with Technology*, edited by Kevin Kee, University of Michigan Press, 2014, pp. 111–20.
- Witmore, Michael. “Text: A Massively Addressable Object” *Debates in the Digital Humanities: 2012*, edited by Matthew K. Gold. University of Minnesota Press, 2012.
- So, Richard Jean. “All Models are Wrong.” *PMLA*, vol. 132, no. 3, May 2017, pp. 668-673. (PDF)

**Assignment: PRAXIS text mining assignment due**

## 11/13 - Pedagogy

*Readings*

- Ryan Cordell, “How Not to Teach Digital Humanities”
- Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, “Review of Puerto Rico Syllabus: Essential Tools for Critical Thinking about the Puerto Rican Debt Crisis”
- Roopika Risam, “Postcolonial Digital Pedagogy” (PDF)
- Marta Effinger-Crichlow, “A Pedagogical Search for Home and Care”

*Multimedia to explore:*

- online DH syllabi (selections)
- #SXCD2018 - Session 3: Digital Caribbean Pedagogies
- Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities

**11/20 - Ruha Benjamin, Race after Technology**

*Readings*

Read **Race after Technology** in full

**11/27 - Open topic (TBA)**

Readings TBA

**Assignment: FINAL PROPOSALS DUE**

**12/4 - Student Presentations (Guest Professor visit)**

**12/11 - Student Presentations**

**12/18 - Final Projects due**