

Digital Humanities

Professor Jessica Pressman

ECL 562 |Spring 2025

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This is an exploratory learning experience in understanding how literature and literary studies change with new media technologies and practices. This course provides an introduction to media studies and theory as well as the umbrella term and emergent field known as “Digital Humanities.” Lead by a scholar of electronic literature and co-founder of the Digital Humanities Initiative at SDSU, students will study the latest in digital literary studies (from big data to critical code studies, info-visualizations to podcasting, AI and more); they will learn from a roster of experts who will visit class to share their cross-disciplinary knowledge, and they will spend time in the Digital Humanities Center to make, play, and experiment. This course provides a foundation— or a bridge— for taking your English major out into the digital economy/ecology and recognizing the importance of a humanities education.

This course focuses on born-digital literature as an entrypoint into understanding the importance of humanities research, education, and knowledge work in a digital age. We will learn how analog objects and infrastructures support and enable the digital; we will learn how archiving is a vital component to digital history. We will do this learning through an exciting new and hands-on collaboration with SDSU’s Special Collections and the Digital Humanities Center.

Learning Objectives:

- Assess, evaluate, and interpret information (including visualizations, data and text) presented in a variety of digital formats
- Recognize and articulate how medial formats and contexts (including orality, print, and digital) shape information and its reception
- Analyze interface design and recognize the relationships of power mediated through it
- Critically assess how digital media inform knowledge, identity, and culture
- Reflect on how changes in medial contexts impact literature and learning.

Administrative Information

Email: jpressman@sdsu.edu <i>*Do not expect a response within 24 hours</i>	Course Website: https://spring2025-ecl562.jessicapressman.com/
Office: AL 261 Office hours: Th 10-11, and by appointment Additional times and dates by appointment; email me for an additional appointment (in-	Course Meeting: T, Th, 11:00-12:15 Room: NE 278B

person or on Zoom) out of the regular office hours timeslot.	
English Subject Librarian (for help with research, citations, bibliography, etc.)	Markel Tumlin mtumlin@rohan.sdsu.edu
Digital Humanities Librarian: Digital Humanities Center (Love Library 61, bottom floor)	Dr. Pamela Lach plach@sdsu.edu
Special Collections Librarian	Anna Culbertson aculbertson@sdsu.edu

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change... and probably will change!

ASSIGNMENTS:

The assignments for this class are low-stakes but plentiful so that you have a chance to practice writing regularly, get feedback on your work, and revise. Revision is an important part of our assignment requirements. All assignments build upon each other, so there is no “busy work”; you can use your blogs posts for the midterm or final, for example.

Participation 20%

Weekly Blog 25%

2 Short Creative-Critical Experiments: 15% each, 30% total (approx. 1500 words= 3-4 pages, double-spaced)—these can be rewritten for a better grade

Final Essay Proposal 1%

Final Essay 24% (2000-3000 words, 8-10 pages, double-spaced)

Extra credit: up to 1%

Participation 20%

This is your class, and your participation is vital to its success. You must attend all class meetings in order to receive full credit for participation. Come to class prepared to discuss the text in depth; this means having read the entire text before class. I expect you to speak and listen.

- Your participation grade includes *engaging in dialogue* in class. This means speaking and listening actively, attentively, and respectfully. (If you have fear of speaking in public, this seminar is a good place to learn to address that fear. Please come see me early in the term to discuss strategies for dealing with this fear).
- Your participation grade includes a meeting with the professor.

Grading Rubric for Classroom Participation

A= attend class regularly, prepared to participate, and participate actively (generously and generatively) in class discussion

B= attend class regularly, prepared to participate
 C=attend class regularly

Weekly Blog 25%

You will write (approx. 350-500 words) blog responses to the reading (any text and any idea/section from that text) and each provide a comment on a peer’s blog each week (due before the next week’s class meeting, so before Thursday). The goal of the blog posts is to extend the conversation and coverage of the course by allowing you to 1) express, share, and comment upon interests, questions, and concerns related to the readings and also to 2) enable the professor to address and incorporate these topics in that week’s meeting. It is also a place to draft ideas and text for use in your essays.

–**Blog posts are due on Monday at 6pm weekly; late posts will not receive credit.**

- A comment on a peer’s blog each week is due before Thursday at 11:00

–You will be given an overall grade for blog posts, based on completion and content, not a grade for each post. Rubric for grading is available on our website and below.

Grading Rubric for Blog

Your Blog Grade is based on 2-parts:

1) a completion grade, and 2) a content grade

The completion component of the blog grade requires you to have the following number of posts:	The content component of the blog grade is based on the following grading rubric
A= 11-13 posts B= 8-10 posts C= 6-7 posts D= 4-5 posts F= 3 or less	A= Post contains a focused thesis or question and close reading of a passage, B= Post contains a close reading of content but no focused question or thesis C= Post contains no analysis of text (no close reading), just summary and undirected ideas D=Post contains little substantive thinking as content

2 Short Creative-Critical Experiments: 15% each, 30% total

These assignments are an opportunity to practice implementing the practical, hands-on, tools-based learning of our class. These short assignments allow you to experiment with DH tools in low-stakes ways.

The assignment has 2 parts:

1) You will use a tool to produce some kind of “product” (an info-visualization, an interactive story, etc.)

2) You will write a short (500-1000, 1 page single-spaced) word explanation of what you did, what you learned, and why this process mattered for the larger learning objectives of our class. In other words, you need to develop a thesis-based argument for the project.

***YOU CAN REVISE these short assignments for a better grade, and you are encouraged to do so. Revision is due before next discovery is due** See the READING SCHEDULE for revision deadline.*

Final Project Proposal: 1%

This assignment helps ensure that you are on the right track for your final project and enables me to give you feedback that can assist in your development. You will write a 150 word abstract of your final project **explaining your argument, purpose, and proposed media format**. The abstract should contain a thesis statement, brief explanation of your purpose, and a description of the project (including proposed media format and rationale for that design).

Final Project: 25%

The goal of this final project is to present the culmination of your learning by way of sharing your takeaway and passion from the class: what most interested and inspired you? This project provides an opportunity to explore your primary interests from the course in a creative-critical project that uses *at least one* DH tool/method to present an argument about *at least one* DH project or text from the syllabus.

-You will craft an argument/thesis about the project/text/or dataset and then explore that argument using a DH tool.

-You will write a (6-8 pages/1500-2000 words) essay that explains your purpose and practice.

-Your essay can be presented within the digital tool/method or as text that accompanies and explains the visualization/project.

Whatever format your project takes, it MUST contain the following:

1. a thesis statement
2. close-reading explication of a text
3. engagement with (not just citation of) at least 2 secondary sources (they can be from our reading list or “suggested/additional reading” list)

*****For examples, see our website*****

Grading Rubric for essays (similar to blog posts)

A= Essay contains a strong, focused thesis and close reading that supports it in a lucid, compelling manner

B= Essay contains a thesis and some close reading, demonstrating understanding and insight

C= Essay contains little analysis of the text (close reading) and/or lacks a coherent thesis, contains mostly summary, generalizations, and unconnected ideas

D=Essay contains little substantive thinking

Extra Credit: up to 1%

I offer extra credit throughout the term for attending events related to our learning. To receive credit, you need to attend the event AND write a short blog post about what you learned.

NOTE: ***Late essays are docked 1/3 of a grade for each day late***

READING SCHEDULE

****NOTE: Schedule might change****

Part I: DH for English Majors

Week 1: Introductions

January 21: intro to the class

January 23: intro to each other

Week 2: What is Digital Humanities

January 28: Anne Burdick, Johanna Drucker, Peter Lunenfeld, Todd Presner, and Jeffery Schnapp, *Digital Humanities* (MIT Press, 2012): Chapter 1 (pp. 1-26)

January 30: **Visit the Digital Humanities Center and meet Dr. Pam Lach (DH Librarian)**

-Susan Hockey, "The History of Humanities Computing" in *A Companion to Digital Humanities*, ed. Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, John Unsworth (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004)

-Matthew K. Gold, "Digital Humanities" in *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media* (2014)

Explore DH tool of the week: "Torn Apart/Separados" (2018)

<https://idrh.ku.edu/digital-humanities-projects/torn-apart-separados>

Week 3: Literary Studies as DH

February 4: Jessica Pressman and Lisa Swanstrom, "[The Literary and/as Digital Humanities](#)" (2013)

Thomas Rommel, "Literary Studies" in *A Companion to Digital Humanities* (2004)

February 6: N. Katherine Hayles and Jessica Pressman, "Making, Critique: A Media Framework," introduction from *Comparative Textual Media* (2013)

Explore DH tool of the week: EdWordle

Week 4: The Book as Technology, Medium, Artform

February 11: Michelle Levy and Tom Mole, "Introduction" to *The Broadview Introduction to Book History* (Broadview Press, 2017): xiii-xx.

****Extra Credit: 2/11 at 4pm- Joanna Brooks talk on making intellectual work in DH Center****

February 13: Watch "In the Beginning was the Word" (UCSB), History of the page animation

Explore DH tool of the week: Timeline JS: <https://timeline.knightlab.com/>

Additional Reading: Amaranth Borsuk, *The Book* (MIT Press, 2018)
Richard Darnton, “What is the History of Books?” (1984) [PDF]

Week 5: Special Collections & Electronic Literature

February 18- **Visit Special Collections with Anna Culbertson** (Marsh Science Fiction Room, in Love Library 160)

February 20: Scott Rettberg, “Electronic Literature” in *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media* (2014)

Explore DH tool of the week: Electronic Literature Organization’s Collections of e-literature: <https://collection.eliterature.org/>

Week 6: Electronic Literature

February 25: Asynchronous lesson–no class meeting. Watch Professor’s lecture on Electronic Literature and Patchwork Girl (from Fall 2024).

February 27: Shelley Jackson, *Patchwork Girl* (1995, digital hypertext)

Explore DH tool of the week: -Watch archival video of Shelley Jackson reading/traversing , *Patchwork Girl* <https://scalar.usc.edu/works/pathfinders/traversals>

Week 7: Electronic Literature

March 4: Shelley Jackson, *Patchwork Girl* (1995, digital hypertext)

-N. Katherine Hayles, “Flickering Connectivities in Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* : The Importance of Media-Specific Analysis” (2000)

March 6: Shelley Jackson, *Patchwork Girl* (1995, digital hypertext)

Explore DH tool of the week: Student work on *Patchwork Girl* on the E-Lit Studio computer

Part II: DH METHODS

Week 8: Big Data & Distant Reading

March 11: Franco Moretti’s [*Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* \(Verso, 2005\), Chapter 1 \(pp. 1-33\).](#) [PDF]

March 13: Lev Manovich and Jeremy Douglass's "cultural analytics" projects, in particular the following: Art history: [Mondrian and Rothko](#), watch [video](#) (5 minutes) Manga: [1 million manga pages](#), Cultural Analytics Lab, "[4535 Time Magazine Covers, 1923-2009](#)"

Explore DH tool of the week: "HyperMedia Berlin"

Additional Reading: Franco Moretti, *Distant Reading* (Verso, 2013) OR *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* (Verso, 2005).

****March 13: Extra credit event: attend any part of the March 13: Networked Narratives conference in the DH Center ****

**** Project 1 Due, Sunday 3/16, at midnight, posted to the blog****

Week 9: Critical Code Studies

March 18: **Mark Marino visits**, Mark Marino, excerpt from *Critical Code Studies* (2020)

March 20: Mark Marino, excerpt from *Critical Code Studies* (2020)

Explore DH tool of the week: [Taroko Gorge remixes](#) & [make your own](#)

Week 10: Interface & Visualizations

****Monday, March 24--N. Katherine Hayles and Rita Raley talk in DH Center, 4:30pm****

March 25: excerpt from Steven Johnson, *Interface Culture*, "Chapter 1: Bitmapping, an introduction" (1997): pp. 11-41. [PDF]

Johanna Drucker "[Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display](#) (*DHQ* 2011)

March 27: **Voyant workshop with Dr. Pam Lach in DHC**

Explore DH tool of the week: Voyant

Additional Reading: Johanna Drucker, *Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production* (Harvard UP, MetaLab, 2014)

Edward Tufte, *Visual Display of Quantitative Information* (1983), Chapter 1: "Graphical Practice" [PDF]

****SPRING BREAK****

**** Project 1 Revisions Due, Sunday 4/5, at midnight, emailed to professor****

PART III: DH MAKING

Week 11: Archives & Media Archaeology—Working in Special Collections

April 8: **Special Collections: Anna Culbertson**—what is a finding aid

-Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka, "Introduction: An Archaeology of Media Archeology" (2011): pp. 1-21 [PDF]

April 10: **Special Collections: Anna Culbertson**—E-lit archive— archive theory
-Anastasia Salter and John Murray, "E-Lit after Flash: The Rise (and Fall) of a 'Universal' Language" in *Contexts, Forms, and Practices: Electronic Literature as Digital Humanities*, eds. Dene Grigar and James O'Sullivan (Bloomsbury, 2021)

Explore DH tool of the week: DH Archival Tools
The Voice of the Shuttle
The Victorian Web

**** Project 2 Due, Sunday 4/5, at midnight, posted to blog****

Week 12: Making an Archive—Working in Special Collections

April 15: **Special Collections: Anna Culbertson**—layout series
- Marlene Manoff, "Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines" (2004)

April 17: **Special Collections: Anna Culbertson**—presentations

Explore DH tool of the week: Literary Archives
Walt Whitman Archive
Emily Dickinson Archive
Rossetti Archive
Women Writers Project

Week 13: Design & Tools Workshops—in DH Center

April 22: **Pam Lach -Design Workshop on Project Design**
April 24: **Pam Lach- Twine workshop**

Explore DH tool of the week: Twine

****Revisions of Project 2 Due, Sunday 4/27, email professor****

****Final Project Proposal Due, Sunday 4/27 at midnight, posted to the blog****

Week 14: Workshopping as a class in DHC

April 29: Workshopping projects together in DHC
May 1: Workshopping projects together in DHC

Week 15: Conclusion

May 6: Presenting final projects in DHC
May 8: Concluding discussion

*****May 9: DH Showcase= extra credit for attendance*****

*****Final Project Due, Wednesday, May 14 at midnight, posted to blog*****

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Communication

Students are provided with an SDSU Gmail account, and this [SDSU email address](#) will be used for all communications. University Senate policy notes that students are responsible for checking their official university email once per day during the academic term. For more information, please see [Student Official Email Address Use Policy here](#).

Medical-related absences

University policy instructs students to contact their professor/instructor/coach in the event they need to miss class due to an illness, injury, or emergency. Please inform me as soon as possible if you are missing class due to an illness or a Covid-related situation.

Finding Help on Campus

Need help finding an advisor, tutor, counselor, or require emergency economic assistance? The [SDSU Student Success Help Desk](#) is here for you. Student assistants are available via Zoom Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM to help you find the office or service that can best assist with your particular questions or concerns.

Other important resources:

- CAL Student Success Center: <https://cal.sdsu.edu/student-resources/student-success>
- College of Education Student Success Center: <https://education.sdsu.edu/oss>
- Center for Student Success in Engineering: <https://csse.sdsu.edu/>
- CoS Student Success Center: <https://cossuccess.sdsu.edu/>
- FSB Student Success Center: <https://business.sdsu.edu/undergrad/advising>
- HHS Advisors: <https://chhs.sdsu.edu/student-resources/advising/>
- IVC Student Success and Retention: https://ivcampus.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/retention
- PSFA Advisors: https://psfa.sdsu.edu/resources/student_advisors

Accommodations

SDSU via the [Student Ability Success Center \(SASC\)](#) provides accommodations for students with documented disabilities or medical conditions covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In keeping with current public health guidance, I cannot provide arrangements to students without an ADA-qualified disability or medical condition.

If you are a student with a disability and are in need of accommodations for this class, please contact the Student Ability Success Center at sascinfo@sdsu.edu (or go to sdsu.edu/sasc) as soon as possible. Please know accommodations are not retroactive, and I cannot provide accommodations based upon disability until I have received an accommodation letter from the Student Ability Success Center. SASC registration and accommodation approvals may take up to 10-14 business days, so please plan accordingly.

SDSU as “safe space”

The CSU has affirmed its commitment to ‘protecting access, affordability, intellectual freedom, inclusivity, and diversity for all students . . . including supporting DACA students.’ Discrimination, harassment, or retaliation against students, faculty, and staff on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexuality, disability, nationality, immigration status and other categories of identity is prohibited. If you have concerns about your status at the university, please visit <http://studentaffairs.sdsu.edu/EOP/> for information or contact the Dean of Students or the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs in your College.”

Academic Honesty (especially in the age of AI & Chat GBT)

I take teaching seriously, and I expect you to take seriously your work as a student. That means that academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonest includes, but is not limited to: (a) using assignments that you wrote for another class, (b) representing work done by someone else as your own (i.e., plagiarism), and (c) copying someone else’s work on an assignment, basic cheating. Plagiarism and Cheating of any kind will result at least in an "F" for that assignment (and may, depending on the severity of the case, lead to an "F" for the entire course) and may be referred to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities for further action. If you have questions at all, you should consult me immediately.