Research in the Digital Humanities

DigHT 315, Winter 2020
MW12:00-1:20pm, 1131A JFSB
https://briancroxall.net/w20dh

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00-2:30 pm; and by appointment

*** I reserve the right to modify this syllabus. And believe me, it'll get modified.**

Course Description

If you Google "undergraduate research," you get one thing, over and over again: students in lab coats. It's an accepted part of training for students in the sciences to work as part of a team to learn something new. The students might contribute only in small ways, and they work under the direction of a faculty member, but it doesn't change the fact that they are investigating something that the professor *does not yet know*.

What does undergraduate research in the humanities typically look like? Rather than hours in a lab, it involves hours in a library. Rather than working in a team, it generally means working on your own. And, in my experience, it tends to mean reading the work of other scholars—which the professor almost certainly knows already—on a subject and then synthesizing them to inform your interpretations of one text or another. There's absolutely nothing wrong with this form of research; indeed, it prepares you for any number of different things one does IRL.

While situated firmly in the humanities, this course aspires to something different. We will work *together* to investigate something that *I do not yet know*: what the co-occurrence of characters is within Charles Schulz's comic strip, *Peanuts*. We will investigate this, as well as many other questions that we collectively identify, using digital humanities methods, seeking to answer questions that other scholars have not yet considered. In the end, we will choose a project that we can tackle on as a final research experience.

By the end of the course, we will all have more experience in humanities research, digital humanities methods, and working collaboratively.

Course Goals

- To strengthen your testimony of the gospel
- To make it possible for you to demonstrate an advanced level of knowledge in a chosen area (chosen by me, alas) and to conduct original research in that area
- To collaborate on research in a field that has traditionally privileged individual scholarship
- To improve your long-form writing
- To learn specific technologies for digital humanities research, including the command line, GitHub, Zotero, XML encoding according to TEI/CBML standards, the MALLET package for Java, Gephi, and the Stylo package for R
- To practice interpreting the results of computational text analysis

Texts

The **required** texts for this course are the following:

- Charles Schulz, *The Complete Peanuts: 1950-1952* (ISBN: 978-1606997635)
- Charles Schulz, *The Complete Peanuts: 1971-1972* (ISBN: 978-1683962007)
- Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (ISBN: 978-0060976255)

You are welcome to purchase these books from the BYU Store; I've also provided links if you prefer to buy them on Amazon. You're welcome to read these texts as ebooks, on whatever device you'd like. Whatever you do, be sure that you have your copy of the text by the assigned dates.

There are a number of texts that are only available from Course Reserves or online. **You *must* have a copy of these texts on the day we discuss them, whether a hard copy or a copy on a portable device**.

Assignments

Participation: While you will almost always have reading and other work to do outside of class, I firmly believe that most of the learning in this class happens in our collective conversation (see D&C 88:122). As such, you need to come to class prepared to engage vigorously with the day's material, as well as with your peers and me.

DH Project Report: As a class, we will consider some of what goes into a digital humanities project. You will choose two such projects to become an expert on. You will write a paper about them and also give a presentation to the class on your projects.

Daily Comics Discussion: For each day that we are reading Schulz's work, you will be responsible for choosing three to four strips to draw our attention to. You will spend extra time on those strips and be bring two or more questions to the class to focus our discussion on them.

Annotated Bibliography: Throughout the semester, we will read secondary literature about Schulz's work, comics scholarship, and digital humanities. We will all contribute to a shared Zotero library to create an annotated bibliography.

TEI Markup: Each of us will contribute to a digital edition of Schulz's strips, using XML according to the TEI and/or CBML standard(s). As a class, we will decide on how we will tag the strips. You will write a reflection on the assignment when it is completed.

Peanuts Across Time: You will write an essay, comparing and contrasting two volumes of *Peanuts*.

Topic Modeling: Collectively, we will conduct topic modeling on Schulz's work. You will contribute to a report on what you learn through the assignment.

Stylometry: Collectively, we will conduct stylometry on Schulz's work, contrasting the voices of the different characters to one another. You will contribute to a report on what you learn through the assignment.

Network Analysis: Collectively, we will conduct network analysis on Schulz's work, considering the co-occurrence of the different characters. You will contribute to a report on what you learn through the assignment.

Final Project: Working together, we will identify a project to close out our semester.

Grades

Assignments will be worth the following points:

Participation: 125
DH Project Report: 100
Daily Comics Discussion: 50
Annotated Bibliography: 150
TEI Mark-Up: 150
Peanuts Across Time: 150
Topic Modeling: 50
Stylometry: 50
Network Analysis: 50
Final Project: 125

Grades will be calculated with this range:
899-875 B+ 874-825 B 824-800 B- etc.

Course Policies

Communication: The best time to get in touch with me is during my office hours. I consider this *your* time, and I encourage you to make use of it. During the Winter 2020 semester, my office hours will be from 1:00-2:30 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I'm happy to make appointments at other times—just ask.

After office hours, the next best way to get in touch with me is by sending me an email. I will do my best to respond to any email within 24 hours, although I try to take an email hiatus on the weekend. I will often respond more quickly, but it's *not* something you should count on.

Participation: I won't mince words: this is a small class and it relies on your active, collaborative, and engaged participation. You should come to every class having carefully read, annotated, and considered any reading and be ready to discuss it with your colleagues. Your thoughts and questions will provide the starting point for many of our discussions. **Your active participation *will* be factored into your final grade for the course.** If you're reluctant to speak up in a group setting, please talk to me in office hours, and we'll figure out a way for you to participate.

Participating in class, of course, requires that you be present. You may miss **three** class sessions without penalty. Each additional absence beyond these three will lower your final grade in the course. "Attendance" of course means more than your body being in a seat. You must also be mentally present: attentive and ready to actively discuss the reading. Please note that I make no distinction between "excused" from "unexcused" absences, so use your absences wisely (or not at all!).

Assignments: Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due **at the beginning of class.** If you will miss class the day an assignment is due it is still your responsibility to it in **before** class. **Late work will not be accepted**, except at my discretion and with a significant penalty.

Late Instructor: In the unlikely event that I am late to class, you should feel free to leave 10 minutes after its scheduled start. Don't count on this happening…unless I break my jaw again.

Final Exam: Our final is scheduled for **Tuesday, April 21 from 2:30-5:30 pm.** BYU policy forbids me from changing the final's time. Please add this date to your calendar now, so you don't miss the exam.

Some Words about Technology

Phones: This should go without saying, but let's say it anyway: please put your phone and other devices on silent before class.

Laptops / Classroom Computers: It will often be useful for you to bring a laptop to class. Just don't get distracted.

Technical Snafus: This course relies heavily on access to computers, specific software, and the Internet. At some point during the semester, you WILL have a problem with technology. To succeed in college and in your career, you should develop work habits that take such snafus into account. Start assignments early and save often. Always keep a backup copy of your work saved somewhere secure. It is **entirely your responsibility** to take the proper steps to ensure your work will not be lost irretrievably; if one device or service isn't working, find another that does.

This said, I'll be asking you to do a number of new, exciting, and complicated things. If things don't work and I can't make them work, I will not hold that against you. (It has *definitely* happened before.) What's more, I'm more than happy to answer questions about during class or in my office hours. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness; it's a sign that you, like me, are learning.

Acknowledgments

Despite what you might think, professors don't know everything. This course is the product of my talking to and reading the work of colleagues. This year owes a particular debt to Amy Schulz Johnson, who first approached BYU's Office of Digital Humanities about doing linguistic analysis of her father's work. Similarly, we would have much less to work with without the efforts of my ODH colleagues, Jeremy Browne and Jesse Vincent. The former did the work to create the corpus of Schulz's work and the latter loaded the corpus into WordCruncher. As I was starting to plan the course, I also spoke with Kerry Soper who gave me some valuable insights into teaching comics.

The structure of this course riffs on those that I taught in Winter 2018 and 2019. When designing that first course, I specifically consulted syllabi from Ted Underwood and Natalie Houston. I first brainstormed the TEI assignment with my very good friend Elli Mylonas, and she has continued to be a critical ally in the years since. I talked broadly about the overall structure of the course with Mark Sample and Kathleen Fitzpatrick. Lisa Rhody has the best thoughts about topic modeling and suggested that I remember that GitHub exists. Maciej Eder and Christof Schöch kindly provided advice about stylometry. And special thanks to the students in the previous iterations of this course, who have proven that small, weird classes can have amazing outcomes. Thanks, y'all!

BYU Policies

Honor Code

In keeping with the principles of the BYU Honor Code, students are expected to be honest in all of their academic work. Academic honesty means, most fundamentally, that any work you present as your own must in fact be your own work and not that of another. Violations of this principle may result in a failing grade in the course and additional disciplinary action by the university. Students are also expected to adhere to the Dress and Grooming Standards. Adherence demonstrates respect for yourself and others and ensures an effective learning and working environment. It is the university's expectation, and every instructor's expectation in class, that each student will abide by all Honor Code standards. Please call the Honor Code Office at 422-2847 if you have questions about those standards.

Preventing Sexual Misconduct

In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Brigham Young University prohibits unlawful sex discrimination against any participant in its education programs or activities. The university also prohibits sexual harassment-including sexual violence-committed by or against students, university employees, and visitors to campus. As outlined in university policy, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking are considered forms of "Sexual Misconduct" prohibited by the university.

University policy requires all university employees in a teaching, managerial, or supervisory role to report all incidents of Sexual Misconduct that come to their attention in any way, including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Incidents of Sexual Misconduct should be reported to the Title IX Coordinator at t9coordinator@byu.edu or 422-8692. Reports may also be submitted through EthicsPoint at titleix.byu.edu/report or 1-888-238-1062 (24-hours a day).

BYU offers confidential resources for those affected by Sexual Misconduct, including the university's Victim Advocate, as well as a number of non-confidential resources and services that may be helpful. Additional information about Title IX, the university's Sexual Misconduct Policy, reporting requirements, and resources can be found at titleix.byu.edu or by contacting the university's Title IX Coordinator.

Student Disability

Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere that reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the University Accessibility Center (UAC), 2170 WSC or 422-2767. Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified, documented disabilities. The UAC can also assess students for learning, attention, and emotional concerns. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the UAC. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures by contacting the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-285 ASB.

Mental Health

Mental health concerns and stressful life events can affect students' academic performance and quality of life. BYU Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS, 1500 WSC, 422-3035) provides individual, couples, and group counseling, as well as stress management services. These services are confidential and are provided by the university at no cost for full-time students. For general information please visit caps.byu.edu; for more immediate concerns please visit help.byu.edu.

Draw something.

Schedule

Complete all assigned reading **before** coming to class. Please keep in mind that all reading assignments are subject to change. **The canonical version of the schedule is on the class website.** All page numbers refer to the editions/ISBNs that I have ordered. For some readings, you will find the in the Course Reserves system, indicated by CR.

What are the Digital Humanists Doing?

Jan. 6 M — Introductions. Syllabus.

Jan. 8 W — John Unsworth. "Scholarly Primitives: what methods do humanities researchers have in common, and how might our tools reflect this?" 13 May 2000.
Tom Scheinfeldt. "Where's the Beef? Does Digital Humanities Have to Answer Questions?" *Debates in the Digital Humanities.* 2012.
David Parry. "The Digital Humanities or a Digital Humanism." *Debates in the Digital Humanities*. 2012. Read only the final 8 paragraphs, starting with "I have become convinced over the last few years that Benjamin's…"

Jan. 13 M — Miriam Posner. "How Did They Make That?" 29 August 2013.
Miriam Posner. "How Did They Make That? The Video!" 17 April 2014.
Luise Borek et al. "Activities" from "Taxonomy of Digital Research Activities in the Humanities (TaDiRAH)." 26 September 2017.

Jan. 15 W — Stephen Ramsay. "Humane Computation." *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016*.
Ted Underwood. "Distant Reading and Recent Intellectual History." *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016*.
"Text Analysis." *Tooling Up for Digital Humanities*. c. 2011. (Make sure you read all seven pages; they are all short, but you'll need to click through on the links.)

Jan. 20 M — **MLK holiday. No class.**

Jan. 22 W — **DH Project Presentations**
Scott McCloud. *Understanding Comics*, chapter 1.

Considering and Computing Comics

Jan. 27 M — **DH Project Papers Due**
Charles Schulz. *The Complete Peanuts, 1950-1952*, beginning – end of December 1950.
McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, chapter 2.

Jan. 29 W — Schulz, *1950-1952*, January 1951 – end of April 1951.
McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, chapter 3.

Feb. 3 M — Schulz, *1950-1952*, May – end of October 1951
McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, chapter 4.

Feb. 5 W — Schulz, *1950-1952*, November 1951 – end of February 1952
Ian Milligan and James Baker. "Introduction to the Bash Command Line." *Programming Historian*. 20 September 2014.

Feb. 10 M — Kevin S. Hawkins. "Introduction to XML for Text." 11 Jan. 2015.

Create an account at GitHub.com and download the GitHub desktop client.
Daniel van Strien. "An Introduction to Version Control Using GitHub Desktop." *Programming Historian*. 17 June 2016.

Feb. 12 W *TEI by Example*.
- "Module 0: Introduction." Sections 1, 2, and 3.1, and 8.
- "Module 1: Common Structure and Elements." Sections 1, 2, 3 (opening paragraph), 3.3 (opening paragraph), 3.3.1

Feb. 17 M **President's Day. No class…but you're still stuck with me twice this week.**

Feb. 18 T **Monday schedule.**
John A. Walsh. "Comic Book Markup Language: An Introduction and Rationale." *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 6.1 (2012).

Feb. 19 W TEI workshop

Feb. 24 M

Feb. 26 W

Mar. 2 M

Mar. 4 W

Mar. 9 M

Mar. 11 W

Mar. 16 M

Mar. 18 W

Mar. 23 M

Mar. 25 W

Mar. 30 M

Apr. 1 W

Apr. 6 M

Apr. 8 W

Apr. 13 M

Apr. 15 W Ted Underwood. "Digital Humanities as a Semi-Normal Thing."

Apr. 21 T **Final Exam, 2:30-5:30pm**