

KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGY: FROM SOCRATES TO THE DIGITAL AGE

Newberry Library Humanities Seminar Fall 2014 Syllabus (Tentative)

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SEMINAR THEMES

Who produces knowledge? How is it organized? Who has access to it? This seminar explores the relationship between knowledge, technology, and power, and provides students with a chance to reflect upon and engage in the activity of creating, organizing, and accessing knowledge in a digital age. The seminar's cross-disciplinary readings represent literary, philosophical, and historical perspectives and invite reflection on the intersection of knowledge and technology, from Bram Stoker's use of communication technology in a vampire hunt to Johnson and Bayle's careful exercise of social commentary in encyclopedia entries, from Socrates' suspicions about the written word to Robert Darnton's dream of a national digital library.

Knowledge and technology informs both the content and the form of the seminar. We will trace the dominant trajectory in western thought regarding knowledge that begins with the ancient Greeks and then, drawing upon the work of Nietzsche and Foucault, critically interrogate how our categories come to seem natural, beyond history and human agency. At the same time, we will discuss the interplay of knowledge and technology in the 21st century, the value of the archive in a digital age, collaborative knowledge-creation online, and the ethics of digitization and digital preservation. We will consider the digital humanities not only as a way of using digital tools to conduct humanities research, but as a way of using humanities questions to address the digitization of culture. Seminar participants represent a generation of future scholars and knowledge practitioners who will be thinking about the limits and possibilities of digital research and publishing, and we will think critically about the impact of digitization on the future of the humanities and the future of the archive.

The seminar will meet every day for the first six weeks of the fall semester. During that time, designated assignments will help students decide upon and hone the topic for their individual research project. During the second part of the semester, we will continue to meet once or twice a week as a seminar with some shared readings and technology tutorials as well as to engage in peer consultation and review of the projects. These sessions will be augmented by meetings between the instructors and individual students for tailored help and feedback.

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

The themes and issues of the seminar will help build a community of scholars among the students and promote thoughtful and rigorous reflection on the nature of "doing scholarship" in our digital age, all while working in the context of an archive-centered research library. As such, the seminar does not prescribe (or preclude) any particular topics for their individual research projects, although students will be encouraged to think carefully about the genres of their materials and about the modes and mechanisms of how the ideas that they are engaging are transmitted.

We anticipate that the seminar theme will invite student research projects on topics that include: the history of the book, Chicago print culture and periodicals, the historical contexts of encyclopedias, Native Americans and the digital preservation of oral cultures, print media and literacy in the context

of American religious history, maps and the digital mapping of historic cities, the politics of genealogical research, the ethics of letter preservation, pamphlet propaganda, etc.

In addition, students might decide to explore topics that connect to the professors' research interests, including: evil and the problem of evil, memory and memorialization, communitarian experiments in American history, loyalty, western virtue ethics and comparative virtue ethics, romanticism in 19th century letters (literature but also philosophical and religious discourse), British women novelists and playwrights, the rise of the novel, theater history in London.

Students will be encouraged to explore the possibilities of digital publishing for their own research, complementing traditional research papers with digital maps, interactive timelines, multimedia texts, online forums, and dynamic web pages to supplement their arguments. We will host students projects on a shared course website, and students will create individual pages to present their multimedia. By experimenting with new forms of digital publishing, students will actively engage and participate in the democratization of knowledge in a digital age.

In the first weeks of the seminar, students will be given mini-research assignments that will require them to get into the collections, to practice finding and calling materials. Short writing assignments will prompt them to think through possible avenues of thought, and to consider several potential topics initially. At every turn, students will share the fruits of their research with their classmates, for the purposes both of honing their presentation skills and for receiving widespread feedback. Students will also be asked to keep a research blog, to regularly chronicle their experiences with their projects as they unfold.

Once they have isolated the particular topic for their research project, students will be asked to prepare a review of the relevant secondary literature, in order to situate their project in a larger community of discourse. This will also be shared with the seminar, so that the students have a sense of the other projects, and the significance of the other projects being undertaken. Students will be matched with members of the scholarly community at the Newberry (librarians, but also, potentially, visiting scholars in residence), who will serve as research mentors.

Students will prepare annotated bibliographies and a formal research prospectus. These will be completed by late October/early November, in time for the Newberry advisors meeting, at which point students will make short, formal presentations about their projects to the visiting campus representatives. You will turn in several rough drafts at various stages, and there will be an end-of-term symposium for students to present their research projects to each other, the library staff and other interested parties.

Because this course explores themes of digital humanities research and publishing, we hope to encourage students to support traditional research papers with supplemental digital materials, including: digital maps, interactive timelines, multimedia text, online forums, and dynamic webpages. In addition, we will invite each student to participate as HASTAC scholars during the semester, recording and reflecting on their experience within an online community of digital humanists. During various student presentations (to librarians, seminar participants, general public, etc), we will encourage students to explore other forms of technology, including a visual or multimedia component to their presentation.

COURSE AND PROGRAM GOALS

We have designed the seminar with the following goals in mind. By the end of the seminar, students will:

- Have an understanding of how knowledge has been understood and circumscribed in the west, beginning with Socrates and moving through the work of Michel Foucault to recent scholarship on the digital humanities.
- Have had an opportunity to actively discuss the opportunities and challenges posed by recent technological advances with respect to scholarship in the humanities
- Be knowledgeable about an array of forms of digital presentation and publishing.

The seminar is further designed to support the ACM program's learning goals:

- To develop abilities as researchers—formulating interesting and researchable questions; successfully locating, understanding, critically evaluating, and synthesizing materials from the rich Newberry collections; and effectively creating a substantial, well-written and documented research paper.
- To develop skills as members of a research community, capable of discussing complex texts in an open-ended seminar setting; sharing the results of research and writing with peers; and offering and receiving suggestions for revisions.
- To develop an understanding of how a major research library operates through job placements and by participating in the community of scholars at the Newberry.
- At the end of the program, students should have an appreciation for the value of research and critical use of primary sources and how a community of scholars maximizes the ability of a single scholar to produce high quality work in the humanities and social sciences. Students can expect to have the ability to formulate a proposal, to find and sift information, and to conduct research at a high level, leading to a substantive senior thesis project or graduate-level work. Students should be confident in their abilities to work with archival material, to synthesize a variety of sources, and to write effectively.

PROPOSED STRUCTURE OF SEMINAR

Students will be asked to read *Library: An Unquiet History* by Matthew Battles and “Reading, in a Digital Archive of One’s Own” by Jim Collins during the summer in preparation for the seminar.

Week One: Introduction of Seminar Themes & The Library

Readings: Robert Darnton’s “Library in the New Age,” Mustapha Mond’s speech (excerpt from *Brave New World*) and Matthew Battles’ *Library: An Unquiet History*.

Themes: The role of libraries in society, questions of access, and the idea that textual instability isn’t unique to the digital age.

Assignments: 1) Begin research blogs. 2) Design your dream library. What are its collections? How is it organized? 3) Create a concept map, either on paper or digitally, that illustrates a network of ideas/topics you are considering for your research project. Where can you identify patterns and connections in the topics that interest you? Then, get into the holdings and create a short bibliography for one of your possible topics.

Library: Orientation sessions with librarians. Student “interviews” for library positions.

Week Two: **Knowledge, Truth & the Written Word (Philosophy)**

Reading: Plato's *Phaedrus*, Freud's essay on Writing and the Mystic Pad. Secondary articles on knowledge and the ancient Greeks and Plato in particular.

Themes: How we talk about knowledge: dialogue, the pursuit of truth, and Socrates' suspicions about the written word.

Assignments: 1) Blog entries. 2) Paper #1 on *Phaedrus*, using dialog as a brainstorming tool and comparing discussion formats and venues (in person, phone, email, blog, etc).

Library: Additional orientation sessions with librarians.

Week Three: **The Order of Things: Dictionaries & Encyclopedias (History)**

Readings: Excerpts from Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morals*; preface to Foucault's *The Order of Things*; excerpts from Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* and other dictionaries and encyclopedias (by Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire, Diderot, Pierre Bayle, etc.) as well as selections from *The Oxford English Dictionary* and *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*. Essay by Jennifer Howard, "In the Digital Era, our Dictionaries are Reading Us" (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2013). Jorge Luis Borges, "The Library of Babel" (1941). Vannevar Bush, "As We May Think" (1945).

Themes: Approaching ideas genealogically; the politics of organizing knowledge.

Assignments: 1) Paper #2 on an encyclopedia entry; explore how other dictionaries/encyclopedias have defined this term. Then, discuss how the entries can be a forum for criticism/commentary on language and/or social issues. 2) Choose a term that interests you. Look it up in a dictionary/encyclopedia, then prepare a bibliography with 5+ other resources from the Newberry Library on that topic. How did you find those sources? How did the library's organizational structure guide you to those sources?

Seminar Guest: Presentation by Danny Greene (Newberry Library) on the Encyclopedia of Chicago.

Week Four: **Communication, Technology & Power (Literature)**

Readings: Bram Stoker's *Dracula*; Addison and Steele's *The Spectator* (Newberry Collection); excerpts from Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Marlene Manoff's "Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines."

Themes: The power of reading, the danger of knowledge, the social life of information, serial publishing, knowledge communities, cafe culture and mass print, the democratization of knowledge.

Assignments: 1) Paper #3 on the publishing history of a chosen text. 2) Project topic.

Seminar Guest: Craig Carey [<http://www.craigcarey.net/>], Assistant Professor in the Department of English at The University of Southern Mississippi. His primary areas of research include nineteenth-century American literature, book history, and media studies. His recent scholarship focuses on the intersection of authorship and technology, specifically the role of new media in shaping historical ideas about writing, editing, and stylistic markup. His teaching also shares common ground with the digital

humanities, infusing literary study with broader notions of media literacy and experiments in digital pedagogy. He currently teaches courses in nineteenth-century American literature, print culture, and media history.

Week Five: The Digital Age

Reading: "What are the digital humanities?" (Readings TBD)

Themes: The digital humanities, online publishing, anonymity, collaboration, and multimedia authoring. How does technology open new possibilities for knowledge organization?

Assignments: 1) Paper #4 on where you stand on the digital humanities. 2) Student-guided explorations of online resources for humanities research, including: HASTAC, NITLE, Orlando Women's Writing, 18th Connect, NINES, 19th Century British Library Newspapers, Google Scholar, Digital Humanities Quarterly, DHCommons, and the Reading Experience Database. 3) Student-guided explorations of digital humanities projects, including: The Blake Browser, City of Lit, Keywords, The Walt Whitman Archive, 18th Century Commons, Virtual Harlem, St. Olaf Civic Stories Project, The NORA project, The Pathways Project, Plato's Allegory of the Cave in Second Life, and What Jane Saw. 4) Collaborative Image-Text Assignment connected to seminar themes. 5) Project prospectus.

Seminar Guest: Jon Winet, Associate Professor of Intermedia in the University of Iowa School of Art & Art History and Director of the Digital Studio for the Public Arts & Humanities. Jon's research includes the AIDS Quilt Touch [<http://www.aidsquilttouch.org/>], City of Lit mobile web app [<http://dsph.uiowa.edu/vwu/ucol/project/>], "First in the Nation," a hybrid art-journalism media project exploring the spectacle of American presidential electoral politics [<http://dsph.uiowa.edu/fitn>], Novel Iowa City [<http://www.dailyiowan.com/2011/07/05/Metro/23988.html>], and "Our Las Vegas" [<http://ourlasvegas.wordpress.com/>], collaborative projects which use technology to build community and investigate contemporary culture.

Week Six: Mapping Information

Readings: Archival maps (Newberry Collection) and digital maps (Hypercities, etc.)

Themes: Texts + images, digital mapping.

Assignments: Create a map (paper or multimedia) as a way to present information on a chosen topic.

Post-Seminar Meetings: Academic Publishing & Student Presentations

During the second half of the semester, we plan to meet with students weekly as a group. We will include a handful of readings on academic publishing, intellectual property, and digital publishing, including excerpts from Kathleen Fitzpatrick's *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy* and Anne Balsamo's *Designing Culture*.

In addition, we will conduct writing workshops, facilitating active, collaborative exchange between students within the writing process. Drawing on Professor Draxler's experience as a Writing Center director, we can introduce methods for community-based writing and hold mini-workshops on academic writing and publishing.

We will also hold weekly technology tutorials that provide students with a 20-minute introduction to digital tools that may facilitate the multimedia component of their research project. These optional tutorials will include: Wordpress, Prezi, Video Recording/Editing, Digital Mapping, Google Drive, Zotero, and Omeka.

EXPECTATIONS AND GRADING STANDARDS.

The grade for your work in the seminar will be calculated according to the following breakdown

Seminar Preparation and Participation	20%
Short Papers	20%
Research Blog and Miscellaneous Writing	10%
Research Paper – Successful completion of stages (prospectus, outline, drafts, peer review, etc.): 20%; Final paper: 30%	50%

The research project is the heart of the Newberry experience, and we have a series of assignments, activities, and tutorials that will help you through the process of researching, writing, revising, and creating a digital component for your project. The balance and blend of the digital project and research paper will be flexible, negotiated student by student, and project by project. The project could be a traditional research paper with a handful of online multimedia supplements, or it could be an all-digital museum exhibit. We expect you to take a collaborative approach to your writing process, drawing on the expertise and insight of your peers, your instructors, library staff, and Newberry fellows, and giving frequent updates to faculty mentors and the class as a whole. Each draft of your project will help you to hone your writing skills, improve the link between media and audience, and reflect on your own writing process.