



Introduction to Digital Humanities and Social Sciences

In-Person

IRIS Center

SP2026

1/12/2025-5/1/2025

About the Instructor

Name: Dr. Margaret Smith

Phone: 618-650-2667

Email: margars@siue.edu

Office Hours: Monday, 11:30-1:00; Tuesday, 11:00-12:00; by appointment

Welcome

This course is an introduction into the theory, ethics, and practice of the digital humanities and social sciences. Emerging technologies transform society at every level, and we'll explore how digital tools offer us new ways of interrogating sources, evaluating evidence, and sharing our research with broad audiences. We'll also look critically at technology itself, using humanities and social science methods to evaluate how it shapes our lives for the better and for the worse. We'll explore DHSS scholarship and gain practical experience in using digital methods, including data visualization, text analysis, mapping, and digital storytelling. This class will explore aspects of technology that are difficult, unethical, and unjust. But we'll also look at how digital spaces can be joyful, funny, scholarly, and liberatory, and how they can help us imagine and craft new worlds.

As we learn about digital tools and methods, we'll work with content and projects that touch on local history and culture, from the Native American settlements at Cahokia beginning over a millennium ago to contemporary figures whose work reflects and remakes metro St. Louis. The region has a rich history of movement, exchange, and cultural production. Its history is also fraught with historical and contemporary injustices that have resulted in stark inequalities and sharp lines of economic and racial segregation. We'll look at how these histories are told, adapted, and/or silenced in digital projects and through digital media.

Bio

Hello! I'm a historian and digital humanist. My research explores critical questions around the relationship between the humanities (fields that engage with history and culture) and emerging technologies. I'm a historian of medieval and early modern Ireland, and I do a lot of work with historical data and all the thorny ethical and technical challenges it brings. I'm currently the interim director of the IRIS Center, SIUE's center for digital humanities and social sciences. You can often find me making something: a prototype of digital tool, a data quilt, or a new item of clothing.

Teaching Philosophy

This class is a laboratory. That's not just a designation in the catalog. This is a space to explore, tinker, build things, and sometimes fail. As a result, the grades in this course derive from your reflection about the tools we use and the things we build. You'll never be penalized because the technology doesn't work! My goal for you is that you develop the skills to critically interrogate the technologies we use and how they mediate (or fail to mediate) our sources and arguments.

Communicating with the instructor

E-mail is the best way to reach me. I check my SIUE e-mail account Monday to Friday from 9:00 to 5:00. You can expect an e-mail response from me within 24 hours, but I will generally not respond to e-mail on the weekend. If you haven't heard from me within that timeframe, please feel free to email again – I wear many hats, and sometimes my inbox gets cluttered. In return, please check your SIUE e-mail account regularly.

About the Course

Course description

Introduces students to several digital humanities and social sciences methods in context, including data visualization, data mining, digital archives, digital storytelling, digital editing, and GIS.

Prerequisite knowledge and credit hours

Prerequisites: ENG101 and ENG102 or equivalent

Course goals and objectives

- Learn about the ethical and methodological dimensions of the digital humanities and social sciences
- Practice entry-level digital humanities and social sciences skills including data management, interactive visualization, archiving, and mapping
- Learn how to use digital tools to address questions from an interdisciplinary perspective
- Learn how the humanities and social sciences can contribute to solving large-scale interdisciplinary problems
- Learn basic principles of successful collaboration and practice collaborative project management skills

Course textbooks and other course materials

There are no assigned textbooks for this course, but weekly course readings will be posted on Blackboard and the course website

Technology Privacy Information

Blackboard will be used to store class materials and post grades. View the [Anthology Blackboard Privacy Statement](#) to review how your data is being used and stored.

The primary technology for this course our course website, which is a WordPress website hosted by the university. You have complete control over whether your assignments are publicly viewable, and you may change your privacy settings for any course content at any time.

Course Requirements and Policies

Course activities/assessments

- **Read/Discuss**: Complete the readings ahead of each class and annotate them in preparation for our class discussions.
- **Tinker**: Complete the labs and tool-based assignments. These assignments are about learning from the process, not from the final product. If things go wrong, that's ok! But make sure that you pay attention to when and how things don't work.
- **Reflect**: Think and write critically about the tools and content we're engaging with.
- **Build**: As a culminating assignment, you will prepare a digital humanities project related to their humanities/social science interests. This involves primary and secondary research, discernment and proficiency in appropriate digital tools, the ability to clarify the project for non-specialist audiences, and an in-class presentation. The deadlines for this project are staggered throughout the semester, and a full assignment description will be provided in class.

Submitting work

Your assignments will be posted as blog posts to the course website. You may choose to post them publicly, privately, or with a password.

Academic integrity/plagiarism

Students are reminded that the expectations and academic standards outlined in the [Student Academic Code \(3C2\)](#) apply to all courses, field experiences and educational experiences at the University, regardless of modality or location.

Plagiarism is the use of another person's words or ideas without crediting that person. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated and may lead to failure on an assignment, in the class, or dismissal from the University, per the [SIUE academic dishonesty policy](#). Students are responsible for complying with University policies about academic honesty as stated in the [University's Student Academic Conduct Code](#).

Artificial intelligence (AI)

The use of artificial intelligence tools (especially generative AI) is ethically complicated and in many cases falls under the plagiarism policy. My goal for you in this course is that you develop your own tech ethics, including AI. Here are a few starting points for us:

- I will not require you to use AI, even to test or challenges its capabilities.
- You may not use generative AI for day-to-day assignments, where you're meant to experiment with technologies, build things, break things, and reflect on the process. Those are all activities that can only be productive if you do them yourself from start to finish.
- You may choose to use such tools for your final project, if you discuss it with me in advance. I'll want to see that you understand both the benefits and the drawbacks of the tool you choose, as well as that you're engaging with it critically in process and product.
- Editing tools like Grammarly are permitted for your regular writing assignments, but please know that I'm not assessing those for grammar and spelling (so long as I can understand the point you're making). Instead, I'm looking for thoughtful engagement with your experience of the tool or website and with the themes and questions we're addressing in class.

Grading

Grades will be given on a points scale; the class as a whole is worth 1000 points.

900-1000 points	A
800-899 points	B
700-799 points	C
600-699 points	D
below 599 points	F

There are 1000 points available in this course, broken down among these categories:

- **Read/Discuss**: 200 points total
- **Tinker**: 380 points total
- **Reflect**: 190 points total
- **Build**: 230 points total

Feedback and grading timeline

All grades will be posted on Blackboard. I will assign a letter grade at midterm and the course's end.

Late or Missed Assignments/Rewrites

Do not hesitate to contact me if you need an extension; in cases where you have not asked for an extension, late work is accepted up to a week after the due date with a 10% deduction for each day that it is late, including weekends.

Participation

Participation is key to your success and to that of your classmates! A variety of perspectives is crucial for a nuanced and well-rounded approach to history and primary sources. For our purposes, that means a few things you need to do each week:

1. **Be present and attentive.** Obviously in order to participate, you must be in class. Absences may be excused for documented medical, family, or personal emergencies, as well as for official University events (with a note from a faculty or staff member). If you know that you will be absent (as for a university event) please let me know as far in advance as possible. You may have two unexcused absences without penalty. Further unexcused absences will result in 2% being deducted from your grade per unexcused absence.

2. **Do the reading.** Read all of the texts *before* the day on which they're listed in the course calendar. As you read them, note anything you find interesting, confusing, significant, or simply weird. Write it down – not because I'll look at your notes, but because it will help you think of things to say in class. If, midway through the semester, it becomes apparent that the class is *not* doing the readings, then I may institute reading quizzes or other assessments.
3. **Participate in discussions.** Humanities disciplines are at their best when there are lots of voices offering different perspectives. Although there will be some lecturing, a crucial dimension of this course is discussion – about the sources, about the methods, about questions that might arise. If you see something odd or interesting or contradictory, bring it up!
4. **Be respectful of others' thoughts and opinions.** This obviously goes hand in hand with the previous point. Sometimes you might hear something from a classmate (or from me!) that you disagree with. Disagreement is absolutely fine, but please do so respectfully and considerately, and ground your arguments in evidence. Please also exercise basic conversational etiquette – e.g. don't monopolize the conversation, don't speak over other people, etc.
5. **Ask questions!** We're covering a lot of ground in this course, and that means that sometimes we might skip over something important, or there might be something you want to know more about that gets left out. *Please* feel free to ask questions in those instances. I don't promise to always know the answers, but I can help you figure out where to look for them.

Technology requirements and capabilities

I know technology can be intimidating, especially with so many tools listed on the syllabus below. Please don't be nervous! You do not need to bring any specific technical skills to this class. All I ask is curiosity and a willingness to try things!

Technical Support

Contact ITS at [618-650-5500](tel:618-650-5500) or at help@siue.edu with any technical concerns. You can also check the functionality of University systems, including Blackboard, at the [ITS System Status page](#), or search the [ITS KnowledgeBase](#) for various how-to and troubleshooting guides. You can also come to the IRIS Center, iriscenter@siue.edu or Peck Hall 2226.

University Policies and Information

University policies and guidance that address teaching, learning, and student support services are available at: <https://kb.siue.edu/132378> Students are encouraged to visit this resource site for current information on:

- Regular and Substantive Interaction
- Recordings of Class Content
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Pregnancy and Newly Parenting Policy
- Services for Students Needing Accommodations (ACCESS)
- Academic and Other Student Services (Library, Academic Success, Tutoring, etc.)
- Cougar Care
- Student Success Coaches

Subject to change notice

All material, assignments, and deadlines are subject to change with prior notice. It is your responsibility to stay in touch with your instructor, review the course site regularly, or communicate with other students, to adjust as needed if assignments or due dates change.

Course Schedule:

All readings and digital projects for a given week must be completed by the start of the class session under which they are listed. All assignments will be due on the date provided.

Key Deadlines:

- 1/21/26: A blog post describing some possible research questions or areas of interest you're interested in exploring. (150 words)
- 2/11/26: AI fiction review (300 words)
- 3/4/26: A problem statement on your chosen research question (300-450 words)
- 3/18/26: Data set review (300-400 words)
- 4/13/26: Draft of your final project (900 words, incorporating one technology we've explored during the semester and citing at least three sources)
- 4/22-27/26: Project presentations
- 5/4/26: Final draft due

Unit 1: Getting Situated with Digital Humanities

Week 1

Monday (1/12)

Topic: What is digital humanities? Defining our terms and setting our scope [Lab 1: Leaflet Storymap]

Wednesday (1/14)

Topic: WordPress and writing for the web [Lab 2: WordPress]

Read and Discuss

- Lisa Spiro, "Defining the Values of Digital Humanities" in Matthew K. Gold, ed., *Debates in the Digital Humanities* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttv8hq.6> (pages 23-30, the Proposed Values section)
- What is Digital Humanities? <https://whatisdigitalhumanities.com/> (Refresh the page a few times and read at least 5 definitions)

Assignments:

- [Student technology survey](#) [Reflect]

Week 2

Monday (1/19)

No class – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Wednesday (1/21)

Topic: Getting started with digital humanities research [Lab 2: Hypothe.is]

Read and Discuss

- Tom Scheinfeldt, "Where's the Beef? Does Digital Humanities Have to Answer Questions?" <https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-88c11800-9446-469b-a3be-3fdb36bfd1e/section/3c03ecdb-2dcf-4597-8fc4-e42f8dcc21e1#p1b2>
- Miriam Posner, "How Did They Make That?" (video), <https://miriamposner.com/blog/how-did-they-make-that-the-video/>

Assignment:

- Take a look at the course schedule in the syllabus. What topics, readings, or assignments look the most intriguing? What might you want to pursue further as the semester goes on? Write a blog post on this website of about 150 words about some of your initial interests in this class. Add the tag "Interest statement" before you publish it. [Build, 25 points]

Week 3

Monday (1/26)

Topic: Audience and accessibility [Lab 3: Web accessibility tools]

Read and Discuss

- Laura de Moya Guerra, "Are the digital humanities exclusive?" *History@Work*, 26 May 2022, <https://ncph.org/history-at-work/are-the-digital-humanities-exclusive/>
- George Williams, "Disability, Universal Design, and the Digital Humanities" <https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-88c11800-9446-469b-a3be-3fdb36bfd1e/section/2a59a6fe-3e93-43ae-a42f-1b26d1b4becc>

Assignments

- We're doing a lot of place-based work this semester. Reflect a little about where you live. (This can be on campus, in the local area, or wherever you're from.) What questions does it spark? Think about the times you've thought "I wonder where *that* comes from," "I wish *this* could be different," or even "Damn it, why does that happen?" Writing for someone who's never been to that place, your blog post should lay out 1) the question, 2) the context, and 3) why your audience should care about it. Add the tag "Place" before you publish. (150-200 words) [Reflect, 20 pts]

Wednesday (1/28)

Topic: Ethics of representation

Local spotlight: Indigenous histories in the Metro East

Read and Discuss

- [Excerpts from Safiya Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*](#)
- Howard Rambsy II, "[African American Scholars and the Margins of DH](#)," *PMLA* 135, no. 1 (2020): 152-158.

Unit 2: Thinking (with) Machines

Week 4

Monday (2/2)

Topic: Early computing

Local spotlight: The St. Louis region and the history of early computing

Read and Discuss

- Peggy Aldrich Kidwell, "The Adding Machine Fraternity at St. Louis: Creating a Center of Invention, 1880-1920," *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing* 22, no. 2 (2000): 4-21, https://i-share-sie.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CARLI_SIE/1fjplmc/cdi_proquest_miscellaneous_28787914
- Lizzie O'Shea, "What Ada Lovelace can teach us about digital technology," *Inside Story*, 9 September 2019, <https://insidestory.org.au/what-ada-lovelace-can-teach-us-about-digital-technology/> (Excerpted from *Future Histories*, Verso Books, 2021)

Assignments

- Read the article and watch the video about the Cahokia AR app: <https://cahokiamounds.org/augmented-reality-project/>. **You do not need to buy the app!** Write a blog post applying what we've read and discussed about audience, accessibility, and representation to the Cahokia app. What does the app do well? For what audiences does it enhance access and accessibility? What groups does it exclude? Your blog post should be at least 200 words. Add the tag "Cahokia" before you publish. [Tinker, 20 points]

Wednesday (2/4)

The modern web [Lab 4: Code embroidery with TurtleStitch]

Local spotlight: Data center debates

Read and Discuss

- Mia Sato, “How Google Perfected the Web,” *The Verge*, 8 January 2024, <https://www.theverge.com/c/23998379/google-search-seo-algorithm-webpage-optimization>

Assignments

- Choose at least three events from the history of computing that you think constitute significant moments. You may use any source you like, so long as you cite it. Write a brief description (a couple sentences) for each event noting why you think it’s a milestone worth noting. Add your events (one per line) to [this spreadsheet](#). If your event duplicates someone else’s event, that’s ok! But your description of it should be your own. [Tinker, 20 points]

Week 5

Monday (2/9)

Topic: AI imaginaries

Read and Discuss

- Choose from this list of AI fictions – Plan ahead! These are in a variety of formats, but all are fairly long.

Wednesday (2/11)

Topic: AI technologies

Read and Discuss

- Choose two items from this list of AI non-fiction

Assignments

- Write a review of the AI fiction you chose to read or watch. Find the full assignment instructions on the course website. [Reflect, 50 points]

--

Unit 3: Humanities Sources

Week 6

Monday (2/16)

Topic: Digitization technologies

Local spotlight: Local history and community archiving

Read and Discuss

- Explore the UNESCO Virtual Museum of Stolen Cultural Objects, <https://museum.unesco.org/>
- Andrew Ba Tran, Claire Healy, and Nicole Dungca, “Search the Smithsonian’s Records on Human Remains,” *Washington Post*, 15 December 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/interactive/2023/human-remains-database-smithsonian-museum/>

Assignments

- Pick an item that’s significant to you and digitize it. (This doesn’t have to be fancy – it can be as simple as a photograph with your phone!) Create some metadata for it, including a robust description that explains its significance to you and how it might speak to broader histories. [Tinker, 20 points]

Wednesday (2/18)

Digitization and cultural heritage [Lab 6: Digitization]

Local spotlight: Using digitized sources for local history

Read and Discuss

- Lara Putnam, "The Transnational and the Text-Searchable: Digitized Sources and the Shadows They Cast," *American Historical Review* 121, no. 2 (2016): 377-402
- Miya Norfleet, "The Smithsonian wants to help St. Louis digitize its Black history," *St. Louis on the Air* (STLPR), 6 September 2024, <https://www.stlpr.org/show/st-louis-on-the-air/2024-09-06/the-smithsonian-wants-to-help-st-louis-digitize-its-black-history> (The assigned "reading" here is the podcast, not the article that accompanies it.)

Assignments

- We're reading an article that's a little more dense than usual. As you work through it, make sure to annotate it. Your annotations might include underlines and highlights, definitions of unfamiliar words, marginal notes about how the text relates to something you've read somewhere else, or sometimes even just stars and question marks. [Read and Discuss]

Week 7

Monday (2/23)

Topic: Text editing

Local history: The Dred Scott decision and the history of enslavement and abolition

Read and Discuss

- "Types of Editions," METRO Resources, *Harvard's Geoffrey Chaucer Website*, <https://chaucer.fas.harvard.edu/types-editions#hypertextedition>
NB: The final link in this piece is broken. You can access the example hypertext edition here: <http://thebookoftheducress.co.uk/>
- Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus," annotated by Esther Schor, Nextbook Press, <https://nextbookpress.com/new-colossus/>

Assignments

- During this week, meet with me to discuss ideas for your final project. [Build, 25 points]

Wednesday (2/25)

Text editing for context and connection [Lab 7: Text editing with the Recovery Hub Edition Framework]

Read and Discuss

- Frederick Douglass, "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision," May 1857, excerpts, <https://www.utc.edu/sites/default/files/2021-01/fddredscottsspeechexcerpt2018.pdf>

Assignments

- Annotate the Frederick Douglass speech. Find the full instructions on the course website. [Read and Discuss]

Unit 4: Humanities Data

Week 8

Monday (3/2)

Visualizing textual data [Lab 8: Text analysis with Voyant]

Read and Discuss

- Stephen Grandchamp, "Introduction to Voyant Tools," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQbf6V77ScA>

Wednesday (3/4)

Data science, data feminism, and data humanism [Lab 9: Visualizing literary data with Palladio]

Read and Discuss

- Darrell Huff, *How to Lie with Statistics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1954), Introduction and Chapter 5
- Howard Rambsy, "How the 'New York Times' Covers Black Writers," *Public Books*, 10 Oct 2022, <https://www.publicbooks.org/how-the-new-york-times-covers-black-writers/>.

Assignments

- Write a problem statement for your proposed final project. Find the full instructions on the course website. [Build, 30 points]

Week 9: Spring Break

Week 10

Monday (3/16)

Critical approaches to data; evaluating a data set

Local spotlight: Municipal data sets

Read and Discuss

- K. K. Rebecca Lai and Jennifer Medina, "An American Puzzle: Fitting Race in a Box," *New York Times*, 16 October 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/10/16/us/census-race-ethnicity.html>. Lovejoy provides free access to the New York Times for students via [this link](#).

Wednesday (3/18)

Creative approaches to data; humanizing data [Lab 10: Material data visualization]

Read and Discuss

- Nancy Smith, "Data Quilts: Exploring Environmental Data through Textile Art," *Data Science by Design*, 8 August 2023, <https://datasciencebydesign.org/blog/exploring-environmental-data-through-textile-art>
- Deimosa Webber-Bey, "Data Quilts," *Runaway Quilt Project*, <http://runawayquiltproject.org/dataquilt/>

Assignment:

- Choose a data set from the provided list and write a review, describing where the data comes from, how we can use it, challenges with the data, and any perceptible biases. Find the full instructions on Blackboard or the [course website](#). [Reflect, 50 points]

Week 11

Monday (3/23)

Maps as arguments, narratives, and data visualizations

Read and Discuss

- Mark Monmonier, *How to Lie with Maps* (University of Chicago Press, 1991): 1-18

Wednesday (3/25)

Critical engagements with space [Lab 11: Mapping and spatial analysis with Leaflet]

Local spotlight: Transit, infrastructure, and access to resources in the metro area

Read and Discuss

- Jack Dougherty and Ilya Ilyankou, “Map Your Data” in *Hands-On Data Visualization* (O’Reilly, last updated 12/2024), <https://handsondataviz.org/map.html>

Unit 5: Digital Storytelling

Week 12

Monday (3/30)

Digital storytelling at the American Confluence

Local spotlight: Langston Hughes and the symbolic power of the Mississippi

Read and Discuss

- Langston Hughes, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44428/the-negro-speaks-of-rivers>
- Mira Kittner, “Tracing ‘The Negro Speaks of Rivers,’” <https://uploads.knightlab.com/storymapjs/b0b9c700ed3aff2a93b62a5f1eb6da84/tracing-the-negro-speaks-of-rivers/index.html>
- “The lines that shape our cities,” <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/0f58d49c566b486482b3e64e9e5f7ac9>

Wednesday (4/1)

Critical engagements with place [Lab 12: Constructing a biography of place]

Read and Discuss

- Explore the *Unseen St. Louis* website and choose an entry to read, <https://unseenstlouis.substack.com/>

Week 13

Monday (4/6)

Scrollytelling [Lab 13: Scrolly Story Generator]

Read and Discuss

- Howard Ramsby II and Kenton Ramsby, “Charting 25 Million Black Novel Pageviews,” *Black Lit Network*, <https://blacklitnetwork.org/datavis/charting-25-million-black-novel-pageviews#expanded>
- Howard Ramsby II and Kenton Ramsby, “25 frequently discussed African American novels,” *Black Lit Network*, <https://blacklitnetwork.org/datavis/25-frequently-discussed-african-american-novels#expanded>
- “Every Last Drop,” <http://everylastdrop.co.uk/>

Assignments

- Complete your biography of place. Find the full instructions on the course website.

Wednesday (4/8)

Games as texts

Read and Discuss

- Play through [Erstwhile](#) and [Seedship](#)

Assignments

- Complete your scrollytelling story.

Week 14

Monday (4/13)

Civic technology

Local spotlight: Identifying and addressing community needs with technology

Read and Discuss

- Spencer Chang, "We're All (Folk) Programmers," *Reboot*, 1 July 2024, <https://joinreboot.org/p/folk-programmers>

Assignments

Submit a draft of your final project. Find the full instructions on Blackboard or the [course website](#). [Build, 50 points]

Wednesday (4/15)

Lab: Evaluating information online [Lab 14: Follow the data]

Read and Discuss

- "How the Media Covered the Civil Rights Movement: Black Newspapers," Alabama Public Radio, 11 December 2013, <https://www.apr.org/arts-life/2013-12-11/how-the-media-covered-the-civil-rights-movement-black-newspapers>
- Tiffany Karalis Noel, "Conflating culture with COVID-19: Xenophobic repercussions of a global pandemic," *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* vol. 2, no. 1 (2020), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590291120300334?via%3Dihub>

Unit 6: Wrapping Up and Looking Ahead

Week 15

Monday (4/20)

Sustainability and digital preservation

Read and Discuss

- Zach Coble and Jojo Karlin, "Reference Rot in the Digital Humanities Literature: An Analysis of Citations Containing Website Links in DHQ," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* vol. 17, no. 1 (2023), <https://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/17/1/000662/000662.html>

Wednesday (4/22)

Project presentations and peer review [Lab 15: Project peer review]

Week 16

Monday (4/27)

Project presentations and peer review

Wednesday (4/29)

Class wrap-up

Assignments

- Write a final blog post about what you understand digital humanities to be. How would you describe it in 1-2 minutes to someone who doesn't know what it is? How can you use the concepts and tools from this class in the rest of your classes or professional interests? Publish your post with the tag "Definition."

Final project due May 4. [Build, 100 points]