English 32N: Reading Digitally

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Description:
The advent of digital technology has drastically changed the way that we read. Even while more people than ever are reading more text on a daily basis, technology is still viewed as an opponent of literature and culture, a pattern that repeats itself whenever a new technology of communication is widely adopted. But how exactly has the digital changed the way that we experience text? And how can we leverage this new technology to tell us different things about language, culture and reading and understanding, both now and in the past?

In this class we will look at the ways that the methodologies of computer science, statistics and linguistics are coming together with the study of literature, philosophy, classics and history to create a new field of study, the “Digital Humanities.” Together we will explore how the technology of the 21st century is changing the way in which we read and think about works of Literature. Computers have given us unprecedented access to innumerable works of writing (including online archives, libraries and e-books). But they also offer new possibilities for interacting with these texts, as we share annotations and copies, discuss them in forums and on social media and deploy new computational methodologies for mining information out of large corpora to reveal patterns in the language of literary works at unprecedented scales. These technologies, therefore, are changing the ways in which we write, read, share, catalogue and, ultimately, analyze these texts, both inside and outside of academia, in the publishing, writing and even legal domains. As a class, we will look at the ways in which technology is remediating and altering historical works of literature, from Beowulf to Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice, and how computational approaches can help us uncover new patterns in Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes short stories. In our discussions we will come to understand how technology is reshaping our understanding of texts and what it means to read and study literature and culture in the University of the 21st century.

Texts (available at the Stanford University Bookstore):

N Kathleen Hayles, Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary
Franco Moretti, Distant Reading
Beowulf: A New Verse Translation, Seamus Heaney, Translator

Work and Assignments:
1. Participation (online and in class) 30%
2. Presentation 20%
2. Short projects 25%
5. Final Project 35%

Participation:
Participation is perhaps the most critical part of any seminar: our exploration of the texts and theory of digital reading and electronic literature will depend, to a large extent on the discussions that we have in class. You are expected, therefore, to come to class with the reading prepared and with questions/comments that you are ready to discuss. Part of your participation grade will be a rotating assignment in which a different student each week will be tasked with starting the class discussion based upon her or his reading of the text (you will have the chance to sign up for these in the second week of class). As we are also concerned about forms on online reading and writing, there will be also opportunities to participate in our ongoing discussion in online forums and social media throughout the quarter.

**Presentation:**
You will be additionally responsible for a presentation this quarter on one aspect of our class discussions. The presentation will be fully explained in class and sign up will take place in the third week.

**Short Projects:**
Throughout the term, various class times will be devoted to a series of short projects designed to engage you with the ideas of the class, with the technology we will be using, or with the Enlightenment in general. These projects will take various forms (some will be individual and some will be group-based), but none should take you more than the class period to complete. More information will be given about these as the term progresses.

**Final Project:**
You will be responsible for a final project in which you will synthesize the material that we have covered in class and demonstrate your new understanding of what it means to read digitally. This will be explained further in class towards the middle of the quarter.

**Attendance:**
Any excuse given in advance of a class will suffice, as long as these come before the class. Just, remember, you need to be present in order to participate in our discussions.

**Students with Documented Disabilities**

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: [http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oaе](http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oaе)).

**Honor Code**
The Honor Code is the University's statement on academic integrity written by students in 1921. It articulates University expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work:
The Honor Code is an undertaking of the students, individually and collectively:

1. that they will not give or receive aid in examinations; that they will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading;

2. that they will do their share and take an active part in seeing to it that others as well as themselves uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code.

3. The faculty on its part manifests its confidence in the honor of its students by refraining from proctoring examinations and from taking unusual and unreasonable precautions to prevent the forms of dishonesty mentioned above. The faculty will also avoid, as far as practicable, academic procedures that create temptations to violate the Honor Code.

4. While the faculty alone has the right and obligation to set academic requirements, the students and faculty will work together to establish optimal conditions for honorable academic work.

Class Schedule:

Class 1: Introduction

Class 2: Electronic literature I: Ephemeral Poetry
   William Gibson, “Agrippa”

Class 3: Electronic literature II: Theory and Method
   N Kathleen Hayles, Electronic Literature

Class 4: Electronic literature II continued

Class 5: Mediating the Canon
   Beowulf – print

Class 6: Mediating the Canon continued
   Beowulf – mixed media

Class 7: Mediating the Canon continued
   Beowulf – the aural experience

Class 8: From Page to Screen continued
   Jane Austen: Pride and Prejudice

Class 9: From Page to Screen continued

Class 10: Electronic Literature III: New Voices
   Oni Buchanan
   [http://collection.eliterature.org/2/works/buchanan_mandrake_vehicles.html]
Class 11: The Posthuman Reader
   Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto”

Class 12: The Posthuman Reader continued

Class 13: Digitally Assisted Reading: Lacuna Stories
   Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Selected Sherlock Holmes Stories

Class 13: Digitally Assisted Reading continued

Class 14: Social Media as Literary Landscape
   David Mitchell, The Right Stuff

Class 15: Social Media continued

Class 16: Digital Humanities I: The Quantitative Turn
   Franco Moretti: “Style Inc.”

Class 17: Digital Humanities I continued
   Franco Moretti: “The Slaughterhouse of Literature”

Class 18: Digital Humanities II: Deforming Literature
   Steven Ramsay: Algorithmic Criticism

Class 19: Digital Humanities II continued
   The Literary Lab Pamphlets

Class 20: Conclusion: the future of the book