Request for Curriculum Council Action *(page 1 of 2)*

To: Associate Dean of Curricular and Faculty Development, Mellon Center

Date Submitted: _____4/8/2024_____

(Please submit 1 double-sided copy of your proposal.)

From: (Name) Abby Mann   (Department) Humanities

Email Address: amann@iwu.edu

1. **Written Rationales:** Attach a written rationale, following the guidelines in the *Curriculum Council Handbook*, which is posted on https://www.iwu.edu/mellon-center/CC.html. Please note that the CC will not evaluate incomplete proposals. To expedite consideration of your submission, you must read and follow the guidelines carefully.

2. Proposed Action (Please check all that apply):

		Title	Number	Units
■	New Course	HUM 271: Digital Humanities	/	/ 1
☐	Gen Ed for Existing Course		/	/
☐	Deletion of Major/Minor/Concentration			
☐	Change title from		/	/
	to		/	/
☐	Change number from		/	/
	to		/	/
☐	Change prerequisites from		/	/
	to		/	/
☐	May Term Course		/	/
☐	New Major/Minor			
☐	Revised Major/Minor/Concentration			
☐	Other (please specify)		/	/

3. a. If you are requesting General Education unit credit, please check the category:

☐ Analysis of Values	☐ Gateway Colloquium (see 9b. below)	☐ Life Science Lab
☐ The Arts	■ Intellectual Traditions	☐ Physical Science Issues
☐ Contemporary Social Institutions	☐ Literature	☐ Physical Science Lab
☐ Cultural and Historical Change	☐ Second Language	☐ Physical Education
☐ Formal Reasoning	☐ Life Science Issues	☐ Fitness

3. b. Please check the flag(s), if any, you are seeking

     ☐ Writing Intensive   ☐ Global Diversity   ☐ U.S. Diversity

3. c. Does this course already carry General Education credit? ☐ Yes ☐ No N/A

     If yes, which category/flag? _____

     Will the existing category/flag remain?   ☐ Yes ☐ No

3. d. In what way will you assess how this course has met the goals of the Gen Ed category and/or flag(s) for which you are applying?

   ☒ Use the Gen Ed Student Survey (Administered by the Registrar's Office)

   ☐ Use a different tool/method (please explain) _____

4. Please insert here the proposed catalog course description. Course descriptions should be limited to no more than 50 words. The description must include (a) title; (b) prerequisites; (c) General Education category; and (d) when offered, although those four items do not count against the 50-word limit.

   HUM 271: Digital Humanities (IT)

   The Humanities have constantly defined and redefined the texts, approaches and questions of what defines the human experience. The Digital Humanities integrate computational techniques: this course develops a wide variety of technical skills in selecting, manipulating, analyzing, visualizing, and sharing data, within the larger Humanities tradition. No Prerequisites. Offered in the Spring.

5. Please list any prerequisites: **None** _____

6. When will this course first be offered? *(cannot be current or past term)* **Spring 2025** _____

7. Please indicate how often course is offered. *Check only the single item that best describes this course. Because these are the only intervals used in the University Catalog, please do not edit or alter the list to fit a particular course. For example, if your course is offered every third year—an interval that does not appear in the Catalog—you might choose "Offered as needed" or "Offered occasionally" instead. Courses that cannot be offered at least every four years should not be proposed.*

   ☐ Offered each semester   ☐ Offered in alternate years   ☐ Offered in alternate years, May Term
   ☐ Offered each fall semester   ☐ Offered in alternate years, fall semester   ☒ Offered annually
   ☐ Offered each spring semester   ☐ Offered in alternate years, spring semester ☐ Offered every third semester
   ☐ Offered each May Term   ☐ Offered by arrangement
   ☐ Offered occasionally   ☐ Offered as needed

8. If your proposal is approved, would you be willing for the Mellon Center to use it as an exemplary submission in the online *Curriculum Council Handbook*?   X☐ Yes   ☐ No

9. a. Is/are any other department/program(s) affected in any way by this request (e.g., course is cross-listed, team-taught, required or elective in another major or minor, etc.)?

   ☒ No   ☐ Yes – In what way? _____

   _____
   Signature of the Head(s) of the Affected Department(s), School(s) or Program(s)

9. b. If this proposal is for a Gateway course, does it overlap with any existing courses at IWU?

   ☒ No   ☐ Yes – In what way? _____

   _____
   Signature of Existing Course Instructor

10. The Curriculum Council assumes that the faculty members of your department/program have seen and approved of this request. Please sign below if this assumption is correct:

    _____ (Abby Mann)_____
    Signature of Faculty Member Primarily Responsible for This Proposal

    _____ (Joanne Diaz)_____
    Signature of the Head of the Department, School or Program

Request for Curriculum Council Action (New Course):

Humanities 271: Digital Humanities (IT)

Course Description (50 words, for the catalog)

HUM 271: Digital Humanities (IT)

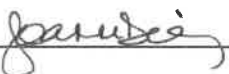Digital Humanities (DH) uses digital tools, including quantitative and visual analysis, to address enduring questions about what we believe, what we value, and the stories that we tell. This course provides an introduction to these digital tools and how to use them to understand the transmission and analysis of knowledge over time. *Offered in the spring.*

Written Rationale

Course Context, Content, Level and Outcomes:

Briefly put, Digital Humanities (DH) uses digital tools, including quantitative and visual analysis to re-address long standing questions in the humanities, often with the benefit of a "big data" approach. For instance, a DH project in literature might use textual analysis to identify the language used to describe families across 500 novels as a means to understand how a certain time period understood kinship: in contrast, a traditional literature approach might close-read 10 or so novels to answer the same question. DH is also often focused on who this analysis reaches and the tools that make scholarship available to broader audiences: it seeks to move beyond traditional modes of scholarly publishing, particularly in terms of making sure that groups described and analyzed by a study have access to that analysis.

Digital Humanities provides students with theoretical frameworks that help them to ask epistemological questions–that is, how we know what we know. In addition, though, DH offers students concrete tools to read and analyze a broad variety of texts. With these skills, they can engage in project-based learning that allows them to develop broadly transferable digital skills. This course will balance praxis–students will gain familiarity with some of the major approaches of DH and tools currently in use in the field–with theory–students will study the ongoing debates in DH as a means to consider the larger traditions of humanities research and the idea of a cultural canon. The emphasis on learning the norms of a discipline while also beginning to develop independent analysis and projects within that discipline makes this course a good fit for a 200 level course.

The field's ongoing negotiation of definition and approach makes the DH class a strong addition to the Humanities curriculum. Since its inception as a field, DH practitioners have both sought to define what DH is, what its relation to traditional humanities should be, what sort of questions it should ask, and how it might "save" the humanities. As James O'Donnel wrote in 2009: "We as humanists must challenge ourselves to ask whether and how we will imagine that new space within which we can work now, and how we can begin to occupy it well. Everyone recognizes that waiting for technologists to provide tools and, worse, tell us what to do with them is no

solution, for the questions of scholarship must come from scholars. But the power of imagination does require concrete supplementation from those who know what the tools can do." DH allows students to examine how knowledge has been transmitted across time periods and media in exciting new ways.

With each assignment– spanning textual, network, spatial, and visual analysis as well as the creation of digital artifacts to share and engage with analysis– we will consider the approaches by various DH practitioners, the goals and concerns about their discipline that shapes these approaches, and the longer history of defining and negotiating the humanities in terms of canon, approaches, and uses. In the course students will "gain a deeper understanding of the traditions and innovations that shape human thought and achievement in all fields," as is the goal of the Humanities minor and, as per the Intellectual Traditions flag, "explore major ideas that have significantly shaped culture and the course of events": in this case what counts as part of the human tradition, how to study it, and for what uses.

Because much of the content of this course has been taught through the DH Summer Fellowship I have offered over the past two years (discussed further below), we have concrete examples of the ways in which DH projects allow students to develop critical thinking and communication skills that integrate a variety of humanities objects of study. One group, for instance, focused on depictions of new world food in early modern art. Students developed galleries that compared depictions of cacao by European and Aztec artists for a wide variety of users. In addition, they used their work enumerating these characteristics to argue that works they discovered within art databases depicted cacao even when it was not explicitly listed. Another group took a social science question– why do certain countries with similar economic markers have varying test scores in math achievement? – and analyzed a large quantity of educational policy texts to identify varying attitudes towards math education in those countries. They then created videos to share this analysis.

Course Demand:

This course has emerged organically from an organic demand. This summer will mark the third time that I have offered a Summer Digital Humanities Fellowship that allows students to learn some basics of DH and develop a representative project. Each year, the demand for this opportunity has exceeded the supply: this year we had 25 applicants for 11 positions. Interested students span a wide variety of majors. We have a substantial number of students in the humanities who wish to take the course to develop either their research or marketable skills, but we also have a wide variety of students from the sciences and professional schools who speak of their desire to integrate their technical skills with humanities questions and approaches.

This melding of skills and dispositions is precisely why a semester-long course will best serve students. I have built my summer course around considering the possibilities, methodologies and ethics of DH as much as possible: what separates a DH project from a qualitative analysis in the social sciences or a website that publishes research findings is its intentionality. That is, the methodologies and goals of humanities research shapes every level of decision in a DH project, so it is less than useful to teach technical skills without considering the underlying philosophy and utility. But of course, trying to create this sense of purpose and history in a five-week span

while *also* undertaking a substantial project is a very heavy lift. DH fellows have consistently shared that they enjoy the theoretical readings that they encounter during the summer, but wish they had more time to cover this information and develop a project.

This course, then, answers that request. Indeed, it allows a much larger group of students to engage with DH as a field; additionally, it will allow students to think about that field as a part of a larger continuum of the humanities writ large. As such, it will also help to further build the Humanities minor as a program. Recently, course offerings have been sporadic and frequently relied on adjuncts. The Humanities program is now working to offer regular courses from permanent faculty members as a way to build sustainability. This course will not be replacing any other course, but rather, building offerings for the Humanities minor. The interdisciplinary interest in DH opportunities also speaks to the ways in which the Humanities minor could serve a wide variety of students on campus, helping all engage with the liberal arts tradition on which IWU is founded.

Contribution to Equity and Social Justice:

In 2023, Angel Nieves noted that "Black DH… as a social movement and as a political project once again challenges the still white-dominated field of digital humanities without hesitation or apology – and is unapologetic about its commitment to racial justice." Thoughtful DH practice requires interrogation of the power structures that preserve or erase archives and experiences. Thus as they learn and perform data preparation, textual analysis, spatial analysis, data visualization, and digital publishing, students in this course will be interrogating the models they create, as well as ones they study, in terms of how culture is defined, and how that definition is structured, mediated, and contested, especially in terms of traditionally under-represented groups. Diversity of topic and an emphasis on the ethics and responsibility of approach is a central tenet of my course design. I take seriously Kim Gallon's exploration of the radical potential of a Black DH "to interrogate and disclose how the humanities are developed out of systems of power." The humanities should be the study of all experiences. It has often failed to be that in practice, but this course seeks to center the positive ways in which DH can contribute to that goal.

Beyond content matter, this course will also offer practical equity opportunities in comparison to our current summer fellowship model. The student demand for the DH fellowship, we believe, represents only a portion of those who might desire to take this course: because it takes place during the summer and can only offer a modest stipend, many students currently may not be able to even apply for this opportunity due to financial and logistical issues. More broadly, the experiential and research opportunities afforded by this course are exactly those that, research shows, have been less available to historically excluded students, including students of Color, first-generation students, and low-income students, and disabled students are less likely to have the opportunity to engage in undergraduate research. However, engaging in such research using a collectivist approach, such as DH employs, leads to the "development of team-based research skills, strengthens students' sense of belonging, and increases student interest in pursuing additional education or careers that involve disciplinary research."[1] By building DH, and the

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[1] Caitlin Larracey et al., "'A Place to Be Heard and to Hear': The Humanities Collaboratory as a Model for Cross-College Cooperation and Relationship-Building in Undergraduate Research," *Innovative Higher Education* 48, no. 2 (April 1, 2023): 219–238, accessed October 2, 2023, https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10755-022-09612-x

practical and soft skills it develops into our curriculum, we remove a potential barrier for students who may be interested in taking humanities classes, but are avoiding them for reasons of practicality, as research has shown students from lower income families do.[2]

Tentative Assignment List

To develop their understanding of DH as a discipline and its relation to the Humanities, students will have regular readings. Each student will be required to post a certain amount of summaries, significant claims, and follow up questions and answers to the student website throughout the semester. Doing so will allow students to develop their understanding and practice applying and analyzing the concepts they encounter in a low stakes, continuous way. Students will also be responsible for identifying and/or reviewing a certain number of DH projects through the semester, which will be added to the student website.

We will have numerous workshops to introduce the skills and objectives of each approach we learn together as a class– data preparation, textual analysis, spatial analysis, data visualization and digital publishing. For each skill, students will be presented with a dataset and a task, and receive instruction on using the relevant tools. They will complete a reflection after each project, connecting the results and illuminations the project afforded to the readings they have been doing about the big questions of DH and the humanities in general.

As a culminating project, students will either complete a DH project of their choosing, or prepare a proposal for doing a larger scope DH project, with appropriate proofs of concept. This will allow them to use the skills they have developed to formulate their own investigation and to position it within the larger discussions and debates they have been exploring–pairing their ability to do with a coherent argument for the value of such an approach within the discipline.

Resources:

I (Abigail Mann), will teach the course each Spring. As noted above, I have taught an equivalent of this course over the last two summers. Because all of the work has to be done in 5 weeks, and the students are taking on complete research projects as part of the fellowship, this requires 8+ hour days over those five weeks, or approximately 200 hours of work (exclusive of preparation and follow up). This also means that my summers are completely taken up with DH teaching, leaving me no time to work on longer term projects that benefit the library or my scholarship. In addition, I also do substantial DH instruction across various classes throughout the academic year, and I have noted that when one or more of the students have DH instruction, that work becomes considerably easier, both because they can sometimes assist peers but, more importantly, because it creates an atmosphere of buy-in: students believe they can do the work because they see others proficient in it.

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[2] Joe Pinsker, "Rich Kids Major in English," *The Atlantic*, July 6, 2015, accessed September 29, 2023, https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/07/college-major-rich-families-liberal-arts/397439/.

Thus, while teaching this course during the academic year will add to my spring load, it will decrease my load overall by freeing up substantial time in the summer. Assuming 10 hours of effort a week (including contact time, prep and grading), the load over the semester would still be 160 hours, saving a full work's week of effort from my current load. Additionally, the class will result in more DH proficient students across campus, thus easing my job of DH instruction in classes outside Hum 271.

I will note that, in discussion with Stephanie Davis-Kahl, University Librarian, I will request to teach the class as an overload: we have found that librarians cannot easily "drop" a third of their duties, so this is a more equitable arrangement than a course release equivalent: it aligns with the past practice of Professor Davis-Kahl receiving a stipend rather than a course release during her time as CUPP chair and my teaching a Gateway as an overload in Fall of 2022. This means that no library needs will be affected: all preparation and grading will be done on my own time, and we have deliberately placed the course at a time period when there are relatively few requests for library instruction, and I will make up the time I spend in the classroom to the library.

Library resources are adequate for this course: following DH best practices, I rely primarily on open source software and programs, and have compiled a large index of cultural objects available for analysis, either through database subscriptions or through open access initiatives for cultural archives.

General Education Proposal for Intellectual Traditions

Goal 1:

Develop students' abilities to evaluate critically ideas and beliefs articulated in the conversations of minds across the centuries in our own and other cultures;

- The class will engage with various readings that seek to define DH as a field, such as Alan Liu's "Digital Humanities and Academic Change" and Bethany Nowviskie's "Digital Humanities in the Anthropocene." They will be asked to summarize and engage with these arguments as a means to think about discipline formation generally and within the humanities specifically and also, in their post-project reflections to assess how these viewpoints shape their own practice.
- Focus on Black, Indigenous, and Non First World DH (such as the *Digital Harlem* and *Metropolitan United Methodist Church* projects given as models above), and articles such as Kim Gallon's "Making a Case for the Black Digital Humanities" will allow students to not only encounter conversations across cultures, but analyze the issues that shape such encounters and the perils and possibilities of engaging with them digitally.
- One of the assignments will be Network Analysis. Network analysis is a tool that allows the mapping of relationships between different data points (which may be people, places, dates, venues of publication, particular phrases, and more, as defined by the researcher). For example, *Viral Texts*, one of the model projects listed above, traces how one story, joke, or idea spread from one newspaper to the next to trace how information circulated before instantaneous connections. The networking assignment will specifically ask

students to track the movement of ideas through a community within humanities study by mapping who is in conversation with whom, at what times, and around what topics.

Goal 2:

Increase students' knowledge of the texts and traditions, either western or non-western, which are demonstrably important, i.e., that have shaped culture and made a difference in the course of events.

- Readings in the course such as Liu's "Digital Humanities and Academic Change" and Gallon's "Making a Case for Black Digital Humanities," will focus on defining DH in terms of what texts and traditions are seen as important and worthy of study. We will also think about the question of how information is shared, both by looking at current websites and visualizations and at historical attempts to share information about the human condition, as in the case study about W.E.B. DuBois's visualizations at the 1900 World Fair. as well as defining modes of dissemination and their effect.
- There will be a specific focus on groups traditionally underrepresented or misrepresented by the humanities tradition and the work of specific DH practitioners to recover understudied works and define what is worth studying in them and why. The *Metropolitan United Methodist Church*, whose creator has zoomed in to the summer DH fellowship several times, is a historian who focuses on Black communities and emphasizes chronicling history as a way to give agency to communities: her discussion of her practices has been very effective in urging the DH fellows to consider their own ethical responsibility in using data that represents the lived experiences of others.
- A major part of the course will be examining DH projects by other scholars, which will increase knowledge of texts and traditions which have shaped various traditions. The projects I have noted above cover traditions as diverse as religious practices and race in 20th century Baltimore, nineteenth-century print culture, and policing, city planning, and work patterns in 1920s Harlem.
- As noted above, one regular assignment will ask students to identify DH projects that they see as worthy of further study and articulate what is seen as important to study and why in the project: sharing these with each other will expose students to a wide variety of humanities topics, texts, and approaches.

Goal #3:

Enable students to see that understanding an idea requires understanding its development by examining the ways in which ideas, beliefs, and world views originate, evolve, persist, recur, and die out.

- Studying the history of DH will allow students to see the real-time development of the ways in which world views, in this case defining humanities, originate and evolve. 2008 is commonly seen as the watershed year in which DH became recognized as a field, which means we can view the process of a field defining itself and evolving in almost real time. At the same time, DH was, from its inception, seen as the "savior" of the humanities, which means that we can also use readings to reflect on the ways in which older fields may be seen as capable of dying out, or evolve and persist.
- Several of the projects students complete, and a number of the projects we examine, will ask students to take a chronological approach, including using textual analysis to trace language and ideas over time and using spatial analysis to examine how events and objects are not historically isolated but rather interact with each other and change over time. For instance, the *Digital Harlem* project overlays census data, events named in newspapers and crime data to create a more nuanced understanding of how changes in laws (particularly around gambling), shaped crime statistics and thus neighborhood compositions over time. Such projects bring archives to life, allowing students and researchers to ask new questions and track new relationships.

Goal #4:

Develop students' abilities to read primary texts and make, assess, and defend arguments about ideas articulated in those texts.

- While DH famously ushered in "distant reading" (that is, aggregating large amounts of data to trace, say, the use of verb tenses in Shakespeare's entire works vs intensively analyzing one Shakespeare Sonnet) it, in fact, asks students to engage closely with specific details, particularly those that may not have seemed significant before. Whether it is attending to specific phrasing in textual analysis or using spatial analysis to note physical congruence and how it might shape relationships, DH drives students back to primary texts as well as opening up a wider range of such texts to them. Each of the projects the students undertake–cleaning data, performing textual analysis,spatial analysis, and data visualization–will require them to engage deeply with a set of texts and read details in them in terms of their significance in answering a question.
- While students will gain practice in making and assessing arguments with each project, they will fully complete this process in the final project. Students will create a data set, perform analysis on it and then digitally publish their findings, or develop a plan and proof of concept for doing a larger project. Both iterations will require them to make, assess, and defend arguments about the texts they select, including their significance as an object of study.

Tentative Reading List

Noble, Safiya. (2018). *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*.

Lupi, Giorgia and Stefanie Posavec. (2016). *Dear Data*.

Wilke, Claus O. (2019). *Fundamentals of Data Visualization.*

Popova, Maria. (2017). "W.E.B. Du Bois's Little-Known, Arresting Modernist Data Visualizations of Black Life for the World's Fair of 1900."

Gallon, Kim. (2016). "Making a Case for the Black Digital Humanities."

Liu, Alan. (2009) "Digital Humanities and Academic Change."

Nowviskie, Bethany. (2015). "Digital Humanities in the Anthropocene."

Underwood, Ted. (2015). "Seven Ways Humanists are Using Computers to Understand Text"

Düring, Marten. (2015). "From Hermeneutics to Data to Networks: Data Extraction and Network Visualization of Historical Sources."

Selected Model Projects

http://digitalharlem.org/

https://viraltexts.org/

https://vpcross.chass.ncsu.edu/

https://shakespeareandco.princeton.edu/

https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/657cd9a34aa145549b76579893cf78ef