

<p>hs intro to digital humanities fall 2009 mw 6:00 - 7:20 mcc 311</p>	<p>2008 designing literature</p>	<p>Jentery Sayers  jentery@gmail.com  (206) 718-5720 </p>
---	---	--

www.jenterysayers.com/designingliterature/

Cornish College of the Arts
Humanities and Sciences Department

Course Introduction

Amidst a so-called “digital revolution,” what happens to literature? How does it change shape? How is it read, interpreted, and circulated? What is its value and for whom? And how do terms common in the study of literature and language—for example, “literacy,” “author,” “writing,” “book,” “page,” and “text”—affect and become affected by the presence of the computer screen, social networking, emerging media, and markup languages like HTML? Questions such as these will be guides through this course, which blends **print with digital texts, criticism with composition, collaboration with individual work, and practice with theory.**

But before the syllabus proceeds, I must admit something. This course relies heavily on two assumptions: the future of literature will not only demand that literary critics become increasingly aware of how literature is designed; it might also require that they either collaborate with designers or do some designing themselves. In short, the composition of digital texts is becoming an increasingly prevalent form of literary scholarship. This claim does not imply that print is no longer important or that it is obsolete. It also does not imply that design has never (until now) been associated with literature or that, before 2009, it was not something that writers considered when composing fiction or poetry. Rather, it is to suggest that **the design of literature and literary criticism is now all the more an argument, a metaphor on the move**—a tangible means of affecting audiences, creating a narrative, shaping space and time, and mapping the territory of a persuading thing.

So this course will ask you to study the design of literature (primarily in the 20th and 21st centuries) and give a shot at designing something yourself. That is, the ultimate goal of the course is for us (as a class) to collaboratively compose a digital book, consisting of chapters created by each of you (individually or in small groups), with me functioning as an editor and facilitator. Books, of course, are generally bound in or by something. In this case, that binding is the following question, a constraint of sorts which each chapter must engage: **Today, why should people care about how literature is designed?** How you go about responding is up to you, and along the way your chapter will emerge in iterations, whereby you will continuously receive feedback from me and your peers and have numerous opportunities to “test” and experiment with your chapter.

No worries, though. If you are not technically inclined or friendly with computers, then **the course will not require you to be, or become, a technophile.** Your digital chapter can certainly be “low-tech.” In fact, it need not be “born-digital.” It can be a print thing that is digitized (e.g., photographed or scanned). On the other hand, for some of you, this course might also be a chance to learn new competences in digital technologies and new media or put into action what you already know. Along these lines, your chapter can also be a website, a blog, a digital video . . . whatever you think will be most appropriate to build upon your own investments in order to follow a certain line of inquiry throughout the semester. And whatever the medium you choose, sideways thinkers will be most appreciated.

The Digital Humanities: Briefly Described

The digital humanities is not a discipline. It is best understood as **a field of study**, where technology functions as a conduit across disciplines, areas of expertise, knowledge bases, and learning spaces. I often describe it as the **synthesis of technical competences in computing and new media with critical practices in the humanities**. Yes indeed, humanists do use computers. In fact, scholars in the digital humanities often:

- Digitize print texts for preservation and searchability.
- Study literature and culture through data visualization and digital models (e.g., graphs, diagrams, and charts).
- Compose new media (e.g., digital video, webtexts, blogs, Flash animation, and interactive maps) as a form of scholarship.
- Research the history of computers and computing practices in humanities contexts.
- Use computers and networks for storing, transmitting, and harvesting large quantities of text.
- Work in collaborative teams of, say, literary critics, historians, information scientists, librarians, and designers.
- Assess the cultural implications of new media and technologies.

True, not every digital humanities scholar practices all of the above, and there are many more things to be added to the list. Nevertheless, what each has in common is the fact that technology is understood neither as merely a concept nor a tool to rehearse particular skills and logics. Technology is more than *that*, more than an abstract object and more than the thing through which input generates output. It is culturally embedded, and it is a catalyst for **experimentation, the production of new knowledge, and the hands-on application of humanistic inquiry**. It shapes us, and we shape it.

Course Materials

Materials required for the course include:

- *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*, N. Katherine Hayles (U of Notre Dame Press, print text), which includes *Electronic Literature Collection, Volume 1*, Eds. N. Katherine Hayles, Nick Montfort, Scott Rettberg, and Stephanie Strickland (CD-ROM). (Both available at the University Bookstore.)
- “Designing Literature” WordPress blog (<http://www.jenterysayers.com/designingliterature>) designed by me, with contributions by all of us.
- Class reader (print and digital) of texts compiled by me. (Available at Ave Copy.)
- Active email account @ cornish.edu. Please check it regularly.
- Regular access to a computer.

What to Expect from the Course

First and foremost, do not expect this class to be lecture-based. I prefer a studio or “lab” model of digital humanities education. This model includes:

- **Collaborative workshops in small groups**, where—in class—you will circulate and constructively assess each other’s work on a regular basis.
- Developing a **single project throughout the semester** and repeatedly revising it with help from me and your peers.
- Frequent **in-class conversations** about materials read, listened to, or watched outside of class.
- Short **blog entries on literature and new media**, as well as commentary on entries by your peers and me.

- The chance for you—through a digital humanities framework—to **develop your own areas of expertise**, including, but not limited to, performance production, photography, video, music, design, studio art, dance, creative writing, and theater studies.
- **Modules** for learning new software or platforms, depending on the character of your project.

What to Expect from Me and My Pedagogy

I will generally expect:

- You to **be flexible, very open to change**, and receptive to constructive criticism.
- Cogent, honest, and **self-aware explanations** of how chapters in our digital book are being produced, why specific changes and decisions are being made, and what particular audiences are being targeted.
- Instead of perfection, **an understanding of your chapter’s “afterlife”**—that is, how it will be navigated and interpreted, how it will circulate beyond the classroom, and how it might be revised (by you or someone else) down the line.
- You to pursue **a project that will interest you**.
- A learning climate that does not ignore **the relevance of people’s everyday lives**, cultures, interests, and histories to their education.
- A **“less is more” approach to project development**—or, a preference for cutting back on material and keeping things simple when necessary.
- To **learn from each of you**.

Learning Outcomes

By the semester’s end, you should:

- Become **familiar with terms common in the study of electronic literature and new media** and use those terms persuasively in: (1) the iterative development of your own digital humanities project, (2) critical responses to the work of your peers, and (3) blog entries.
- As a class, **collaboratively compose a digital book**, which is framed around the theme of “designing literature,” polished for circulation online, consists of at least five chapters, and includes a title, list of contributors, and table of contents.
- Individually or in a group of no more than three students, **produce your own chapter for that digital book**. Your chapter should be supported by humanities research and critically engage a concept or issue related to the intersections of design, new media, and literature. It should assume whatever medium (e.g., video, academic essay, geographical map, or a photo series) is most appropriate for its argument. As a reminder: the chapter must engage the following question: “Today, why should people care about how literature is designed?”
- Write a **concise abstract** (of no more than 250 words) for your chapter, as well as a **short introduction** (of no more than 750 words) to one of your peer’s chapters.
- Compile your own **digital humanities portfolio**, which aggregates all of your work over the course of the semester, revises it, assesses it, and gives audiences a holistic sense of what you learned from the course.

The Portfolio

Throughout the semester, you will compile a digital humanities project portfolio, which will consist of not only **blog entries** (at <http://www.jenterysayers.com/designingliterature>) and **multiple drafts of your book chapter**, but also your response to six prompts:

- **Thought Piece**: an idea sketch of what you would like to compose this quarter, why, and how you might go about composing it.
- **Needs Assessment**: five outcomes you wish your project to achieve, as well as the materials you’ll need, in order to successfully complete your chapter by the semester’s end.

- **Work Flow:** a timeline, your research question for the semester, and a list of your project materials.
- **Abstract:** a concise and polished 250-word articulation of your project, how it was composed, and why people should care about it.
- **Chapter Introduction:** a thoughtful contextualization (of no more than 750 words) of one of your peer's chapters in our digital book.
- **Final Assessment:** your chance to assess your chapter using terms from the class, feedback from me and your peers, and revisions throughout the semester.

You will have the opportunity to revise each aspect of the portfolio—except for the Final Assessment—only once, and within one week of receiving comments from me and your peers. Remember to keep all versions of your work, as your portfolio should demonstrate the process of how your chapter emerged.

You will submit all work via the course blog. As such, your portfolio will include all work that is posted on blog under your name/ID.

As for blogging, the class will be parsed into two groups (Group 1 and Group 2). Generally speaking, one group will post blog entries in response to what materials were assigned for a given class meeting, and the other group will comment on those blog entries. That said, blog entries should be posted roughly 24 hours before the next class meeting. Otherwise, sufficient commentary will not be possible.

Each draft of your chapter (four in all) will respond to specific instructions from me. I will certainly not expect the first three drafts to be “complete.” Instead, your chapter will be composed in “snippets” or pieces.

Participation

Since conversations are essential to the quality of this class, I expect that we shall work together to create an **atmosphere of respect**. College level discourse does not shy away from sensitive issues, including questions of race, gender, class, sexuality, politics, art, and religion, and neither will we. There are going to be differences in opinions, beliefs, and interpretations when we question texts, technologies, and cultural issues. You need not agree with the arguments in what we read or with what others—including me—have to say. In fact, it is important to think critically and question approaches. Still, you must do so intelligently and with collegiality. Respect for difference is instrumental to creating a classroom in which a variety of ideas can be exchanged and points of view can be explored.

What is crucial is that you are **enjoying and are comfortable participating in the course**. If for whatever reason you are not, then please talk with me. I understand that some people are more comfortable speaking in the classroom than others. As such, feel free to use the class blog, or individual meetings with me, as alternative spaces for conversation.

Evaluation

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

- **Portfolio (70% of the grade):** The portfolio will be graded holistically, which is to say I will not give independent portions of it individual grades. Rather, you will receive one grade for the entire portfolio. This grade will be based on the outcomes you articulate in your Needs Assessment and how your work develops over time, including revision.

Please note: A portfolio that does not include at least two drafts of your chapter (including the final draft), as well as a Thought Piece, Needs Assessment, Work Flow, Abstract, Chapter Introduction, and Final Assessment, will be considered incomplete, and your portfolio will receive a zero.

- **Participation (30% of your grade):** Here, I will include the quality of your in-class participation (including collaborative workshops, modules, and conversations), whether your work (including blog entries and responses to prompts) is submitted on time, whether you arrive to class on time, and how effectively and thoroughly you respond to the requirements of each assignment. While not necessary, additional blogging and individual meetings with me will also increase your participation grade.

Late Work

The best policy is to never turn anything in late. But things happen. I know this. The things to remember are:

- If you are falling behind, then just talk with me. We can make arrangements.
- Late work decreases your participation grade. The later the work, the greater the decrease.
- If you miss class when something's due, then just submit it (e.g., via the blog) ASAP.
- The course relies heavily on collaboration and includes a number of workshops. When you are not prepared, then you negatively affect your peers' learning experiences.
- Assignments that are not turned in (e.g., via the blog) by the beginning of class on the due date are considered late and decrease your participation grade. However, you still need to complete and submit late work.

Course Schedule

Below is a draft schedule for the semester. Obviously, it is subject to change. As an instructor, I value responding to student needs. If more or less material is necessary, then I will revise accordingly. I will also reference (on the blog or in class) other material that is not listed here. You are of course encouraged to give that material a gander, too, but it will not be expected or required. The course does not include a formal exam or quiz.

Week 1

What is due

Wednesday, September 9th:
Class: Intros & Digital Humanities Survey

Nothing

Week 2

Monday, September 14th:
Class: Blogging [Module]

Read: Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0 (online)
Sterling's "Eighteen Challenges . . ." (online)
Selection from Drucker and McVarish's
Graphic Design History (reader)

Wednesday, September 16th:
Class: Argumentation [Workshop]

Read: Selections on Dada (reader)

Week 3

Monday, September 21st:
Class: The Myth of Interactivity [Workshop]

Read: Mallarmé's "A Throw . . ." (reader)
Selections from YHCHI's website (online)
Blog: Group 1 posts, Group 2 comments

Wednesday, September 23rd:
Class: Duration [Module]

Read: *The Unknown* (online)
Blog: Group 2 posts, Group 1 comments

Week 4

Monday, September 28th
Class: Mediation [Module]

Read: Selections from Hayles's *Electronic Literature*
and Bolter & Grusin's *Remediation* (reader)

Blog: Group 1 posts, Group 2 comments

Wednesday, September 30th
Class: Circulate Idea Sketches [Workshop]

Blog: Thought Piece

Week 5

Monday, October 5th
Class: The Digital Is Material [Workshop]

Read: Two selections by Drucker (reader) and
Phillips's *A Humument*

Blog: Group 2 posts, Group 1 comments

Wednesday, October 7th
Class: Circulate Needs Assessment [Workshop]

Blog: Needs Assessment

Week 6

Monday, October 12th
Class: Testing Software [Module]

Nothing

Wednesday, October 14th
Class: Ganking Ideas [Workshop]

Blog: "Found" Piece of E-Literature or New Media

Week 7

Monday, October 19th
Class: Relations [Workshop]

Read: Selections from Bourriaud's *Relational
Aesthetics* (reader) and Pullinger's *Flight Paths*

Blog: Group 1 posts, Group 2 comments

Wednesday, October 21st
Class: Testing Software Again [Module]

Blog: Work Flow

Week 8

Monday, October 26th
Class: Revising [Workshop]

Nothing

Wednesday, October 28th
Class: A New Literacy? [Workshop]

Read: Moulthrop's "What the Geeks Know" (online)
and Short's *Galatea* (online)

Blog: Group 2 posts, Group 1 comments

Week 9

Monday, November 2nd
Class: Titles and Identities [Workshop]

Blog: Draft 1 of Chapter

Wednesday, November 4th
Class: Haptics and Screens [Workshop]

Read: Doctorow's "You Do Like Reading . . ." &
Kirschenbaum's "Materiality and Matter" (online)

Blog: Group 1 posts, Group 2 comments

Week 10

Monday, November 9th
Class:

Read: Selection from McCaffery's *Evoba* (reader)
Blog: Group 2 posts, Group 1 comments

Wednesday, November 11th

NO CLASS

Week 11

Monday, November 16th
Class: Critiques of Chapters [Workshop]

Blog: Draft 2 of Chapter

Wednesday, November 18th
Class: Really Simple News [Workshop]

Blog: "Found" News Related to the Course

Week 12

Monday, November 23rd
Class: Critiques of Chapters [Workshop]

Blog: Draft 3 of Chapter

Wednesday, November 25th

NO CLASS

Week 13

Monday, November 30th
Class: Metadata [Workshop]

Nothing

Wednesday, December 2nd
Class: ToC and the Cover [Workshop]

Blog: Abstract

Week 14

Monday, December 7th
Class: Course Evaluation & Assessment

Blog: Draft 4 (Final) of Chapter

Wednesday, December 9th
Class: Critiques of Intros [Workshop]

Blog: Chapter Introductions

Week 15

Monday, December 14th
Class: Circulation of Chapters & Intros

Nothing

Wednesday, December 16th
Class: Circulation of Chapters & Intros

Blog: Final Assessment

**Department Practice and Policy:
[Academic Etiquette]**

- Arrive on time
- Cell phones off
- No headphone use during class time
- No checking e-mail, text messaging or surfing the web during class

- Respectful participation and discussion is expected

[Attendance]

The learning experience cannot be duplicated outside of class and depends on the participation of all classroom community members. Attendance is required for all Humanities and Sciences courses. To pass Integrated Studies, students may not exceed 9 hours of absence. In all other Humanities and Sciences courses, students are permitted three absences before having their grade affected. In all courses, these permitted absences *include* absence due to personal matters or illness, and absences due to departmental commitments, such as rehearsals, performances, or show installation. In all cases, it is the responsibility of the student to alert his or her instructor of a pending absence and to make arrangements to complete all coursework in a timely manner. To minimize absences, students should take care to register for courses that fit their schedules and that do not conflict with other courses or internships. If students miss class for any reason, they are still responsible for turning in their work on time and for any material or assignments covered during the class meeting.

Support Services: [Student Affairs]

Student Affairs is dedicated to enhancing and complementing students' educational experience through programs, services and opportunities that aid in their personal development. Student Affairs is committed to community building, co-curricular learning, and student support. If you are a student with a documented disability and you need accommodations, please make an appointment with the staff in Student Affairs, located in **room 301** at the Main Campus Center. You can call **206-726-5098** to reach them.

[Counseling]

The mission of the Counseling Offices at Cornish College of the Arts is to assist students with their academic and artistic pursuits by providing supportive counseling, referrals and outreach programs that promote students' mental health and emotional well being. To schedule an appointment, call a Counselor at **206-726-5027** or **206-726-5047**. If they are not available, please leave a message on their voicemail and they will return your call as soon as possible. The Counseling Offices are located in rooms **308 A & B** in the **Main Campus Center**.

[The Library]

The Library's mission is to support and enhance the college curriculum, to play an integral role in academic life at Cornish College of the Arts and to do so in a manner that promotes information literacy and encourages lifelong learning. In addition to books, periodicals, and media available on site, the library website has online resources that may be accessed from home with your last name and Cornish ID number. Databases include many full-text resources and digital images. If you need assistance finding information, Librarians are available at the reference desk during business hours. **The library is located on the 2nd floor of the Main Campus Center in Room 205.** Also, feel free to call (206)726-5145, or e-mail the library libraryref@cornish.edu. To learn about these services and more, please visit the Cornish Library homepage: http://www.cornish.edu/cornish_library/.

[The Writing Center]

The Writing Center is a free resource for all Cornish students, faculty and staff who are interested in developing their writing and reading. Located in **room 311** of the **Main Campus Center**, the Writing Center is a place where students come to work on their writing and receive individual guidance at any phase of the writing process, regardless of their level of development. Drop-ins are welcome during posted hours. Contact Amanda Hill at ahill@cornish.edu or **206-315-5806** for appointments and information.

General Safety

Please inform yourself of safety procedures for this room, including emergency evacuation routes and the location of the closest first aid kits and fire extinguishers. Consult the **Health & Safety Procedures** booklet posted near doors and eyewash stations. Detailed information is also provided in the College student handbook.

Survey for Day One

1. Your name:
2. Your academic program at Cornish and your year:
3. Do you own a laptop or a desktop computer? Yes No
If yes, what kind (include your OS)?
4. What kind of software/platforms do you use on a regular basis (circle what applies)?
Adobe Suite (Flash, Fireworks, After Effects) iTunes
Pro Tools Blogging (name platform):
Final Cut Java
Other (list all):
5. What Internet browser do you prefer (circle one)?
Internet Explorer Firefox
Safari Chrome
Opera Other (list just one):
6. What code/markup languages do you know?
HTML XML
CSS PHP
XHTML Other (list all):
6. How interested are you in technology and/or digital media? Why?
7. Why are you taking this class?
8. What else do you want me to know (about tech or whatever)?
9. Have you ever programmed a VCR?