

Digital Praxis Seminar  
Graduate Center, City University of New York  
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Fall 2014

## Final Assignment

Short Oral Lightning Presentations: December 11  
Final Submission Deadline: December 19

**For your final project for this course, please choose one of the following two options:**

1. Write a proposal (15-20 pages) for a digital humanities project that can be accomplished in one semester. Your proposal should outline the planning or initial stages of a digital humanities project that grows out of our readings and discussions this semester. Your project can be on any topic within DH (broadly understood). Sample projects might include:<sup>1</sup>
  - research that brings new approaches or documents best practices in the study or the teaching of the digital humanities;
  - planning and developing prototypes of new digital tools for preserving, analyzing, and making accessible digital resources, including libraries' and museums' digital assets;
  - scholarship or studies that examine the philosophical or practical implications and impact of the use of emerging technologies in specific fields or disciplines of the humanities, or in interdisciplinary collaborations involving several fields or disciplines;
  - innovative uses of technology for public programming and education utilizing both traditional and new media; and
  - new digital modes of publication that facilitate the dissemination of humanities scholarship in advanced academic as well as informal or formal educational settings at all academic levels.

Your written proposal should include the following sections:

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<sup>1</sup> This list of bullet points and other aspects of the proposal requirements have been taken from the NEH Office of Digital Humanities Start-Up Grant Proposal Guidelines.

## 1. Table of Contents

## 2. Abstract

Provide a clear and concise one-page abstract of your project written for a non-specialist audience, clearly explaining the project's principal activities, and its expected results. The central question to answer here, and throughout the larger paper: what problem does your project help solve? Also explain why the project is innovative and what it will contribute to a particular discipline or the humanities more generally.

## 3. List of Participants

You may be creative here and list prospective participants you would *like* to include. Participants may also be listed by role (e.g., "Drupal programmer") rather than specifically named.

## 4. Narrative

The narrative should not assume specialized knowledge, and it should be free of jargon. It should clearly define technical terms so that they are comprehensible to a non-specialist audience and it should provide an intellectual justification for the project and a work plan.

Sections:

- **Enhancing the humanities through innovation**

Provide a clear and concise explanation—comprehensible to a general audience—of the project activities and the ultimate project results, noting their value to scholars, students, and general audiences in the humanities. Describe the scope of the project activities, the major issues to be addressed, and their significance to the humanities. Show how the project will meet its objectives in innovative ways.

Begin this section with a description of a problem, and then proceed to an overview of how your project will ameliorate that problem before moving into a more specific discussion of your project activities.

- **Environmental scan/DH Context**

Provide a clear and concise summary of an environmental scan of the relevant field. The goal of an environmental scan is to take a careful look at similar work being done in the applicant's area of study. For example, if the applicant is developing software to solve a particular humanities problem, please discuss similar software developed for other projects and explain how the proposed solution differs. If there are existing software products that could

be adapted and re-used for the proposed project, please identify them and discuss the pros and cons of taking that approach. If there are existing humanities projects that are similar in nature to the applicant's project, please describe them and discuss how they relate to the proposed project. The environmental scan should make it clear that the applicant is aware of similar work being done and should explain how the applicant's proposed project contributes to and advances the field.

Additionally, this section of the narrative should situate the project within the larger theoretical, historical, and social context of the digital humanities, using our readings for reference. How do the theoretical concerns of this project fit within the grander scheme of DH as we have explored it this semester? What connections can you make between your project and the readings we have done?

- **Work plan**

Describe, as best you can, the specific tasks that will be accomplished during the project and when they will be accomplished. The order and sequence of the plan is of more importance than proposing any specific dates.

Not all of this work needs to be able to be completed during the Spring semester (ie., your project timeline can extend beyond the Spring), but you should be specific about what you think will be doable during the Spring.

- **Staff**

Briefly identify the project director and collaborators who would work on the project. Since your Spring projects will include 1-2 classmates, please list prospective staff by role, imagining how others could help you complete the work.

- **Final product and dissemination**

Describe your plans to disseminate the project results through various media (printed articles or books, presentations at meetings, electronic media, or some combination of these). Discuss how the project's ultimate product is likely to be disseminated and what provisions will be made for the long-term maintenance of the product. Discuss how the activities of the project will be useful to the field.

**OR**

2. Write a seminar paper (~20 pages) on a topic related to our course that engages our course readings and addresses significant debates in the field of digital humanities (or debates about the field in the wider academic sphere). Your paper should include a Works Cited page and should evince a nuanced understanding of the topic under discussion. Among the topics you might consider:
  - a. Defining DH: What is at stake in the various definitions of DH that we have explored this semester?
  - b. Disciplinary boundaries: To what extent could or should DH conform to existing disciplinary methodologies and perspectives? How can or should it reshape them?
  - c. Graduate education: How has DH begun to reshape graduate education and what are the effects of those changes?
  - d. Coding/Hacking/Theorizing: Many of our readings have explored various debates around the issue of coding in DH. To what extent can or should all DHers learn to code?

These are, of course, only a few of the possibilities you might pursue. We encourage you to consult with us as you put together your paper topic. You might consider writing the paper as a draft for an article that might at some point be submitted to a publication venue such as *Digital Humanities Quarterly*.

### **Oral Presentations – Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>**

Each student in the class will give a two-minute lightning talk about his or her final project, using at most three slides.