digital humanities: an introduction

Before the Internet, the human traces of the past were carefully protected in physical archives or inside museum buildings, limiting who could see them and when and for what purposes. Now the web is bringing the world’s history 24/7 to everyone with computer access: 3 billion people by 2014, 40% of the global population & growing.

Before 21st-century computational power, it was unthinkable that any one person or team could analyze thousands of books. Today’s hardware and software make this possible, allowing us to explore novels, poems, scientific treatises, letters & diaries as large-scale datasets and to visualize and map the results in ways that inspire even more hypotheses.

In the digital era, the who, what, how, where, when & why of exploring the humanities – history, literature, philosophy, the arts, and more – is being reimagined through the curiosity, energy, and combined efforts of students and professors and members of the public who are finding new ways to explore human experience.

This still-evolving field is called ‘Digital Humanities,’ and it is full of all kinds of people thinking out loud together on the open web, creating new learning communities all around us. Our weekly seminars will be a smaller version of this wide-flung domain, a digital humanities lab in which we study, lurk, build, analyze, question, test and hack our way to new insights about human experience.

Most of our materials are online and free – texts, essays, websites, videos, social media, datasets, and tools. In seminar we’ll have discussions, presentations, workshops, short lectures, and planning and feedback sessions. The course requirements for assessment include the seminar tasks, periodic short writing assignments, and a final project.

For more information on the course, contact: professor katherine pandora [ kpandora@ou.edu ]