

Getting Started  
with Digital Pedagogy:  
Myths, Realities, Futures

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- Access materials: <https://bit.ly/3Ida1VX>
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# What do the digital humanities offer teachers?

- Some totally new things
  - Skills for crafting digital readings, syllabi, activities, and assignments
  - Support systems for meeting course objectives
  - Strategies for preventing or overcoming technical problems and maximizing privacy, security, and accessibility in online environments
- Some new methods for doing things we've *always* thought important
  - New opportunities for defamiliarizing familiar content and encouraging lateral thinking
  - New applications of traditional humanities skills & methods (close reading, semiotics, ideological analysis, etc)
  - New ways to involve students in humanities research and public engagement

Myth #1:

Students are digital natives.

# Myth 1:

## Students are digital natives

- Students are not necessarily proficient users of technology
- They are almost always not *critical* users of technology
- They have excellent tacit knowledge and muscle memory that allows them to execute particular tasks
- High-school computer classes focus on efficiency, rote tasks, and memorization, not abstract concepts or critical approaches
- Upshots
  - Humanities approaches are *crucial* for teaching students how to take a more critical approach to technology
  - You cannot take skills for granted; anything that is graded must be taught

Myth #2:

I'm not good with  
computers

# Myth 2: I'm not good with computers

- You use digital technologies every day, even if with varying degrees of success
- No one expects you to master every technique or platform that could ever be possibly used in a classroom
- Possessing certain skill sets is not the same thing as being able *to reflect critically on the place of computation* in 21st century culture or on its effects on your teaching/research field
  - In many ways, it's the interplay between your disciplinary knowledge and the *challenges* of incorporating tech that makes DH interesting
- Upshots
  - Cultivate an atmosphere of cooperative, ad hoc learning
  - Focus on *just one thing* at a time and practice it thoroughly
  - Leverage your personal investments and interests

Myth #3:

I have to DIY / DIM



# Myth 3: I have to DIY / DIM

- You don't have to create some "new" activity or assignment for it to be useful.
- Even the most rudimentary or basic digital pedagogy can be transformative when linked authentically to course content and objectives
- At this point in time, there are enough high-quality models and templates that *you are not required* to make a lesson plan up from scratch
- Upshot: You are not on your own. Take advantage of others' materials.
  - <https://shawnaross.github.io/teachdh/>
  - [MLA Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities](#)
  - [Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy](#)
  - Advanced: [Programming Historian](#)

Okay, so students aren't experts,  
you have *some* expertise, and you  
don't need to worry about  
originality.

What *do* you have to worry about?

Reality #1:

Your messaging must be  
clear, consistent, and  
repetitive

# Reality 1: Your messaging must be clear, consistent, and repetitive

- Be Meta
  - Explain your choices & goals to them honestly
  - Encourage students to be responsible for their learning and reflect explicitly on what they are reading/writing/thinking
- Faced with digital activities and assignments, students are generally most anxious about evaluation: about the extent to which their digital skills (or lack thereof) will affect their grades
  - Be sympathetic about their preoccupation with grades by providing clear criteria
- Reward creative thinking, problem solving, and decision making

# Reality 1: Your messaging must be clear, consistent, and repetitive

- Set expectations for your availability for “tech” support.
  - How long will it normally take you to answer an email? Are there specific times you set aside for email? When are you not available (such as weekends or evenings)?
  - Let them know about other resources they can turn to: one another; Google Searches; user support forums; the Writing Center; extant models
- Do a mid-semester check in to solicit feedback and do a “course correct.”
  - Substitute mandatory office hours for a week of regular course content.
  - No time? Use SurveyMonkey, Google Forms, Straw Poll, or Typeform to poll students.

Reality #2:

Your students can only take  
so much

# Reality 2: Your students can only take so much

- **Students are overwhelmed** by the different websites, files, assignments, etc, for 4-7 classes. Use the same platform, tool, or file format for every lecture, discussion, etc
- **Reduce the number of clicks for access.** Make your landing page just a schedule, but have the schedule link to all drop boxes and readings. Remove from student view any default tools your LMS shows to students. Use browser extensions and plugins to allow various apps and software tools you like to use to connect seamlessly to your course website or LMS shell.
- **Scaffold:** Use scaffolding (building on one new skill to learn another) that students get to re-use the skills they learned in a previous assignment. Introduce technical skills in low-stakes activities before moving on to high-stakes graded assignments
- **Devote ample course time to teaching students any digital tool** you require them to use. If you give them choices, you can expect to provide less technical aid.
- **Something must be lost/sacrificed:** Content (a reading, a unit, a concept, a different activity or assignment) and/or Moments (lectures and discussions) must give way to tutorials, workshops, and troubleshooting.

Reality #3:

*You* can only take so  
much



# Reality 3: *You* can only take so much

- **No one** expects you to experiment in every single possible DH pedagogy mode! Engaging deeply in one method is far richer, not just more time-efficient.
- Focus on the tools that do double duty: **something with a life-cycle of usefulness for you**
  - Which technology best fits **your course objectives**?
  - Which would benefit your students most in **their future courses** and in **their professional careers**?
  - Which would contribute most directly to **your department or institutional mission**?
  - Which could be used seamlessly in **the other classes you teach**?
  - Which could be helpful for **your colleagues** (if you decide to create tutorials, facilitate workshops, or share your syllabi and other course materials)?
  - Which could be used to streamline **your research or service commitments**?
  - Which could contribute to **your personal life** (family, hobbies, community)?

Reality #4:

There will be failure

# Reality 3: There will be failure

## *Students' failures*

- Determine what you'll tolerate, or not, in terms of technical failure, and explain it clearly and early
  - Decide in advance what weight will be placed on the successful and timely delivery of a technical object versus what's placed on the more abstract or disciplinary concepts at hand
    - It *could* actually be that you mark down for technical flaws, but you just must teach those skills explicitly and scaffold them.
- Collaborative “course contracts,” “course constitutions,” and rubrics
  - This will enhance student confidence in the face of feared failure
- Collect alternative “data” points for grading purposes
  - How long were they on the platform? Did they help other students? What was the effort involved? Did they seek help? Do they have data or insights aside from a valid “deliverable?”
  - Reflection papers or self-assessments for assignment or end-of-year portfolio: What was learned beyond or independently of a “working” prototype? First-person narratives count!

# Reality 3: There will be failure

## *Your* failures

- Tolerate students' failures so they understand yours
- Practice, practice, practice
- Save in multiple places (local computer, jump drive, cloud storage) in multiple file formats
- Have alternative activities and assignments ready in your mind to deploy when necessary
  - Reorder activities, revive an older activity from this class or a different one, do a mid-semester course evaluation, add a layer of peer review, decamp to the library, ask about student reading practices, preview something coming later or recap something from before, AMA (let students Q&A you about your profession/research), discuss your department's "character" and upcoming course offerings, look for your course content in the news
- **Have a North Star:** a principle that separates the wheat from the chaff when you need to make a decision. For me, what matters is that students **meet course objectives**, and if it doesn't work, I've failed to define my course objectives. Just know *your* North Star.

# Example Activities and Assignments

# Typical activities

## (tutorials and instructions here)

- Ask for experimentation, not mastery: provoke discussion, extrapolation, and collaboration.
- **10-minute activities:** Word clouds (Wordle); word frequency over time (Google N-grams); digital forms, polls, and quizzes (Survey Monkey)
- **30-minute activities:** Collective image annotation (Flickr); in-depth MFW analysis (Voyant); variant analysis (Compare Documents in MS Word); digital archive assessment (n/a)
- **Whole-class activities:** Digital events (Wiki-edit-a-thons); character role play or debate (Facebook); field trips (library, archive, or laboratory)
- **Weeklong activities:** Collaborative video annotation (VideoAnt); maps and timelines (Storymap); digital text capture (that is, OCR: native smartphone technology, Google Lens, or ScannerPro); textual encoding (Dillenger or Oxygen)
- **Advanced activities:** Digital media art (Zach Whalen's glitch art); physical computing and critical making (SparkFun's paper circuits or Raspberry Pis); crowdsourced research (Zooniverse; Jeremy Bentham project); metadata creation/modeling (Dublin Core on or off Omeka)

# Typical assignments

## (assignment sheets and rubrics here)

- Evaluating digital editions and archives
- Course-specific social media groups/streams
- MFW analysis (extended essay)
- Wikis (internal to the class or contributing to external wikis)
- Blogging
- Digital maps
- Born-digital genre writing (memes, listicles, quizzes, boards)
- Textual annotation ([hypothes.is](http://hypothes.is); Perusall [integrated into Canvas])
- Digital edition creation (Markdown -> Jekyll -> GitHub or Wordpress, Weebly)
- Digital archive creation (Omeka)
- Digital storytelling (Twine)
- Automatic text generation (Tracery; Twitter bots)
- Web scraping (SQL for DBPedia)

How do we do this?



# Infrastructure

- Virtual work (not in your classroom: students work from anywhere synchronously or asynchronously)
- Instructor's terminal and projector
- Students' phones
- Students' laptops
- Computer labs
- Library labs
- Departmental equipment
- Labs and equipment from other departments
- Internal grants (e.g., curricular development funds)
- External grants

# Example Tools and Platforms

Collaboration software

Name of Tool	Similar Tools	Description	Pros	Cons
Padlet	Wordpress and/or other blogging platforms, Stormboard, Mix, Ideaflip	A dynamic collaboration platform that allows you to include “posts” in a variety of media and allows students to collaborate and share work and research.	Aesthetically pleasing interface, easy to use, flexible format, integration with a number of other apps. Excellent support. This board is a good starting place: <a href="https://padlet.com/gallery/tips">https://padlet.com/gallery/tips</a> Great for brainstorming.	The Pro and “Backpack” for Education versions require a paid subscription. There may be privacy concerns for the non-Backpack versions so a careful approach to privacy settings will be key.
Slack	Google Hangouts, Chanty, Hive, Fuse	A popular communication app for discussions, sharing links, and real-time chat features.	Excellent for building community and getting your students chatting more informally. Easy file sharing, easy to use. Free.	It might duplicate the “discussion board” function on your Learning Management System, so you’ll likely want to choose one or the other. Requires students to create accounts, etc.
Conceptboard	Miro, Stormboard, Limnu, MURAL, Whiteboard Fox	A digital whiteboard app with real-time visual collaboration features	Great for complex brainstorming and information-gathering, offers interactive annotation but also images and diagram capabilities. Real-time updating allows you to see changes as they happen.	There are some limits on free accounts and your students will need to sign up.
FlipGrid	YouSeeU, VoiceThread	This video discussion platform allows you to create “Topics” and students to post video responses. It’s designed as a social learning environment.	Can create a sense of community through video posts especially in asynchronous settings. Students do not need accounts but can be given a code to join.	Your students may be uncomfortable posting videos of themselves even if privacy settings are highly controlled.
Hypothes.is	eComma, eMargin, Lacuna, Google Docs	This social annotation tool allows users to annotate	Open, free, and principled software. Very flexible. Allows students to see each others’ thoughts and marginal	A tiny bit of a learning curve for students and a bit of an explanation of

# Flipped classroom software

Name of Tool	Similar Tools	Description	Pros	Cons
Explain Everything	OpenBoard, Microsoft Whiteboard, Lensoo Create (for tablets), lower tech alternative is an actual whiteboard and marker in your teaching space, which you can set up your camera to display.	A digital whiteboard app	If you love using the whiteboard while you teach, this can simulate that experience, especially if used as a second screen in synchronous video seminars	You probably need to have neat printing and/or some artistic and/or diagram drawing abilities in order for what you write to be legible. Also for optimal use requires a stylus and tablet
Loom	OBS Studio	A screen recorder that can overlay video of your face speaking over any screencast	There are documented accessibility benefits to being able to see a person's face when they're speaking. Easy to use and share, free for educators	You'll want to be a bit more conscious of facial expressions while recording and it can sometimes be tricky to make "eye contact" with the camera and navigate at the same time.
Studio (in Canvas)	Private YouTube channel with comments	An LMS-integrated media interaction platform	Allows users to comment on specific moments in a video. Integrated with Canvas if that's your LMS	Not accessible if your LMS is not Canvas
Screencast-o-Matic	ShareX, Captura, Kazam	A screencast creator	Very useful for giving your students a tour of a website	These can get tedious if too long

# Video production software

Name of Tool	Similar Tools	Description	Pros	Cons
Quicktime	Apple's Media Player	Media player that also allows for video recording	Easy to use and mostly likely already the default media player on your computer. You can then upload these to a private YouTube channel	Although recording is possible, this designed more as a player so has fairly limited features
OpenShot	iMovie, Adobe Premiere Pro, Camtasia	Video & film editing software to make little movies	Can be fun and exciting	You may want something more straightforward to capture lectures
Zoom	Skype for Business, Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams	Video conferencing software that has recording function for video and screensharing	You're mostly likely already using Zoom for communication, so you can record video here without learning a new tool	The file format of the saved recordings can be clunky, and Zoom still has some security issues.
Panopto	Opencast	Video recording and webcasting software	Has a useful "Education" support section with specific advice about	Designed for corporate and wide audiences so you may wish to check privacy



# The Challenge

- **Spring 2024:** Pick one **low-stakes in-class activity** (few points, ungraded, or graded on participation)
  - [voyant-tools.org](https://voyant-tools.org) is a start. So is a *critical appraisal* of a digital edition/archive or online study aid.
- **Fall 2024:** Introduce a **brand-new** graded course element prepared in early August as you finalize syllabi
  - A scaffolded activity-assignment pair OR extended group assignment
  - Gather feedback from students and monitor your own reactions, reservations, etc, as you encounter difficulties and see places for improvement
- **Spring 2025: Improve** that activity-assignment pair based just on Fall 2024 experiences/observations
  - Consider allowing students to choose alternative final assignments (e.g., you will let them replace a research paper with an interactive map, digital edition, podcast, etc, if it meets stated criteria)
- **Fall 2025: Go deeper** on your activity-assignment pair: integrate concepts/methods from SoTL or education scholarship; learn a more robust tool that gives you more options but requires more skill; reimagine the assignment for other classes; or go for broke on a brand-new digital pedagogy assignment
- **Spring 2026: Go forth!** Work toward a presentable or publishable paper or seeking an internal grant to purchase licenses, equipment, or student labor hours (I know, I know - be humane!) to improve it

# Next Up?

- a) Syllabus workshop
  - Bring in your syllabus and crowdsource digital activities or assignments
- b) [Twine](#) tutorial
  - Targeted workshop on interactive storytelling)
- c) [Storymaps](#) tutorial
  - Hybrid browser-based tool that combines maps and exhibitions
- d) Digital pedagogy publishing advice
  - Make your activity/assignment a publication
- e) Other - please specify

