Digital Literary Studies

Course Info

ENG 397U: Digital Literary Studies
M/W 2-3:50PM
Fall 2019
English Department
Portland State University

Instructor Contact Info

Professor Kathi Inman Berens
Office: FMH 402C
Office hours: Mondays & Wednesdays 4-5PM and by appointment
Email: kberens@pdx.edu
Phone: 503-725-3553 [email preferred]

Course Description

How do computers change what counts as "literature" and how we read it? This class blends literary analysis and hands-on digital creative making to explore new contexts and practices of reading, writing and accessing 21st-century, digital-born literature.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to
- Remix literary works using digital tools.
- Explain in writing the critical intervention the remix makes in how one typically understands the source work, or why such an intervention is relevant today.
- Apply media theory in hands-on digital literary projects.
- Compare digital-born literature to print-based, and understand the different afforandaces.
- Interrogate the ethical and social dimensions of databases, software and "free" social media platforms.
- Use critical race theory, gender and queer theory to examine the non-neutrality of digital tools and artifacts.
- Perform "medium-specific analysis" integrating technical and aesthetic approaches to literary meaning.
- Build digital artifacts and iterate them as necessary to get them working.
- Historicize literary studies by examining print as a specific technical approach that shaped "close reading" and "the canon."
- Write critical essays using multimodal authoring techniques.

Required Reading

All books are on course reserve at PSU Millar Library, including *Digital Modernism*, which is accessible anytime online.

Books

Atticus, *The Truth About Magic*

John Beer, *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (Canarium Books, 2010) and [Poetry Foundation](#). The printed book is available via 2-hour reserve at the PSU library.

T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*. Routledge. 2012. Link available in D2L.

Rupi Kaur, *milk and honey*

Jessica Pressman, *Digital Modernism: Making It New in New Media*. Oxford University Press. 2014. Available online via PSU library.

Articles

N. Katherine Hayles, "Print Is Flat, Code Is Deep."

Lisa Samuels and Jerome McGann, "Deformance and Interpretation"

Aarti Vadde, "Amateur Creativity: Contemporary Literature and the Digital Publishing Scene."

Kathi Inman Berens, "Is Instagram Poetry E-Literature?"

_____. "What Is Creative Making As Creative Writing?"

Tess McNulty, "Close Shaves With Content"

Zach Whalen "The Many Authors of The Several Houses of Brian, Spencer, Liam, Victoria, Brayden, Vincent, and Alex: Authorship, Agency, and Appropriation"

Digital Literary Art

Taroko Gorge Remixes (Montfort, Rettberg, Sample, Tempest, Berens, Flores, Sample, Carpenter, some student works)

Sea and Spar Between (Montfort and Strickland)

Dak0ta (Young Hae Chang Heavy Industries)

Project For the Tachistoscope (William Poundstone)

SNOW (Shelley Jackson)

Facebook Demetricator, *Touching Software* (Ben Grosser)

Various works of fanfic (chosen by students during a lab).

anna anthropy, *Hunt for a Gay Planet*

Course Assignments

Waste Land Remix	25%
Digital-born Poetry Analysis	20%
Student-led Discussion of article	20%
Digital Literary Adaptation	25%
Class Participation	10%

Waste Land Remix (25%)
  A. **Annotate your assigned 25 lines** of *TWL*; put your annotations into Google slides.
  B. **Remix** a portion of T.S. Eliot's modernist classic *The Waste Land* in a way that critically intervenes in the poem or that repurposes it to speak to us today. All students will consult with Dr. Berens and other students during the process.
  C. **Write a 1500-word reflection and theory about your remix** making reference to Hayles' essay and class discussions to explain your remix's ambit and rationale.
  D. **Present your remix to the class.**
Due date
Oct 10: *TWL* remix & paper due to D2L Dropbox 12 PM

Instagram Poetry (20%)
Is Instagram poetry literature? What is your definition of "the literary," and does Instagram poetry qualify? Use class readings to help you define parameters.
Word count: 2000
Due date:
Nov. 12: close reading digital-born literature paper is due to D2L Dropbox 12 PM

Student-Led Discussions (20%)
Each student will be responsible for leading (or co-leading) part of class discussion about assigned critical readings. Leadership consists of:
  • Summarizing your portion of the reading;
  • Identifying three key passages we should review.
  • Explaining why those passages are important, or why they're hard to understand in the context of the rest of the article.
  • Opening the floor to questions.

Due Date: these will be assigned in class.
Your document guiding how you will lead class will be due before class the day you lead discussion.
Please print it out and hand it to me, or send me the digital file.

Final Project: Digital Literary Adaptation (25%)
   A. **Use digital tools to adapt a literary work**, or portion of a literary work. Students must consult with Prof. Berens and other students in class to develop the idea. Why adapt this work right now? How does your adaptation highlight a crucial, previously overlooked aspect of this work?
   B. **Write a 1500-2000 word reflection** on how making the adaptation taught you something new about the source material, and why the software or platform you used to adapt the work is a crucial part of the story-making process.
   C. **Bibliography** can refer mostly to works we read in class (i.e., no additional research is required). I expect your reflection to cite and think through several course readings. Demonstrate that your adaptation manifests awareness of core course concepts.
   D. **Present your adaptation to the class** during week 10 (Dec. 2 and 4)**.**

Due dates
Dec. 2: all presentations are due, even if you aren't called to present until the 4th.
Dec. 9: digital literary adaptation and paper are due to D2L Dropbox 9AM.

Class Participation (10%)
See "Attendance and Preparedness," below.

Disability

It is Portland State University's goal that learning experiences be as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, please register with the Disability Resource Center (503-725-4150 or drc@pdx.edu) in order to establish reasonable accommodations. Once you have registered with the Disability Resource Center, please schedule a time to talk to me so that we can discuss your needs for the term.

Please be aware that the accessible tables and chairs in this room should remain available for students who need to use this furniture.

Title IX Reporting

Portland State is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment (sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender or sex-based harassment and stalking). If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or sexual harassment, know that help and support are available. PSU has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and on-housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. Information about PSU's support services on campus, including confidential services and reporting options, can be found on PSU's Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response website at: http://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/get-help or you may call a confidential IPV Advocate at 503-725-5672. You may report any incident of discrimination or discriminatory harassment, including

sexual harassment, to either the Office of Equity and Compliance or the Office of the Dean of Student Life.

Please be aware that all PSU faculty members and instructors are required to report information of an incident that may constitute prohibited discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence. This means that if you tell me about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence that may have violated university policy or student code of conduct, I have to share the information with my supervisor, the University's Title IX Coordinator or the Office of the Dean of Student Life. For more information about Title IX please complete the required student module Creating a Safe Campus in your D2L.

Grading Scale

93-100 = A	83-86 = B	73-76 = C	63-66 = D
90-92 = A-	80-82 = B-	70-72 = C-	60-62 = D-
87-89 = B+	77-79 = C+	67-69 = D+	0-59 = F

Attendance & Preparedness

Each unexcused absence beyond two will result in your final grade for the course being lowered by one increment (e.g. from a "B+" to a "B," or from a "B-" to a "C+"). Advance notice is not sufficient for an absence to be excused, though it is appreciated. For an absence to be excused, you must submit documentation of, for example, an illness or family emergency.

I expect you to attend class having read and prepared notes for class discussion. If I find that you are coming to class unprepared, I will consult with you about how to improve your performance. Sustained lack of preparation will impact the attendance portion of your grade.

Late Policy

Assignments will be penalized 10% for each additional day after the due date. No credit will be given for assignments that are 10 days late or more. Extensions can be obtained 48 hours prior to the due date, and in consultation with the professor.

Incompletes

These four criteria must be met to assign an "I," incomplete grade:

1. Quality of work in the course up to that point is C level or above.
2. Essential work remains to be done. "Essential" means that a grade for the course could not be assigned without dropping one or more grade points below the level achievable upon completion of the work.

3. Reasons for assigning an "I" must be acceptable to the instructor. The student does not have the right to demand an "I". The circumstances must be unforeseen or be beyond the control of the student. An instructor is entitled to require appropriate medical or other documentation. An Incomplete grade is not given to enable a student to do additional work to raise a deficient grade.
4. A written agreement, signed by both the student and the instructor, should include a statement of the remaining work to be done to remove the "I" grade, and the date, not to exceed one year from the end of the term of enrollment for the course, by which work must be completed in order to earn credit toward the degree. The instructor may specify the highest grade which may be awarded upon completion; the grade awarded should not exceed the level of achievement attained during the regular course period.

Academic Integrity

Students enrolled in this course are responsible for reading and understanding Portland State University's policies on plagiarism. A student who plagiarizes in this course will receive, at minimum, a failing grade of "0" (i.e. zero) for the assignment and may be subject to additional academic misconduct sanctions.

READING SCHEDULE – see below.

Reading Schedule
Schedule is subject to modification

Week	Dates	Reading	Due	Class Topic
1	Sept. 30		You'll be assigned one portion of *The Waste Land* to annotate.	Overview
	Oct. 2	*The Waste Land* (Eliot version);	Look up all allusions you don't know in your assigned portion of the poem; put them into Google Slides	Close reading *The Waste Land*; making a composite
2	Oct. 7	Hayles, "Print is Flat, Code is Deep"; Samuels and McGann, "Deformance and Interpretation" (skim this one)		Medium specific analysis: using the web to parse *TWL* Dr. KIB demos what a student-led discussion of a critical text would look like (using Hayles).

	Oct. 9	John Beer, *The Waste Land*. Read the printed book (on 2-hour reserve at PSU Library); read it online in [Poetry Foundation](); listen to him read it aloud on P. Foundation.		Medium-specific analysis of Beer's *TWL* variants
3	Oct. 14	Full draft of your 1st paper is due before class, loaded to D2L.		Mandatory writing workshop
	Oct. 16	DRAFT of your remix and outline of your paper	DRAFT due in class	Present your remix & theory about it to class. Introduction: Instapoetry
4	Oct. 21	Aarti Vadde, "Amateur Creativity"	Student discussion leaders	Student-led discussion of "Amateur Creativity" Student-led discussion of Vadde.
	Oct. 23	Pressman, *Digital Modernism*, Introduction; [@snowShelley Jackson]()	Student discussion leaders	Digital modernism; Instagram as a poetry publisher
5	Oct. 28	Berens "Is Instagram Poetry E-Literature?"; Tess McNulty, "Close Shaves With Content"	Student discussion leaders	Student-led discussion McNulty and Berens
	Oct. 30	Pressman chapter 1	Student discussion leaders	Student-led discussion of Pressman
6	Nov. 4	Pressman, chapter 2	Student discussion leaders	Student-led discussion of Pressman "Project for the Tachistoscope";
	Nov. 6	Pressman, chapter 3	Student discussion leaders	Student-led discussion of Pressman; "Dak0ta"
7	Nov. 11	NO SCHOOL Veteran's Day		
	Nov. 13	e-literature: *Hunt for a Gay Planet* *Taroko Gorge* remixes *Sea and Spar Between*		Twine Generated Poetry
8	Nov. 18	Berens, "What Is Creative Making As Creative Writing?"	Paper due: Close reading digital-born literature, by 12 noon to D2L Dropbox.	*Emoji Dick*; Adjunct Run; Mez Breeze VR
	Nov. 20	Hutcheon, "Adaptation"	Student discussion leaders	Student-led discussion of Hutcheon

		Ben Grosser, adapting the platform		Facebook Demetricator
9	Nov. 25	Zach Whalen, "The Several Houses of . . . ."	Student discussion leaders	Student-led discussion of Whalen
	Nov. 27	Make Your Adaptation		In-class lab working on your adaptation
10	Dec. 2	Work on your adaptation & essay		Student Adaptation Presentations
	Dec. 4	Work on your adaptation & essay		Student Adaptation Presentations
11		Final Project due Monday December 9th 12PM to D2L Dropbox		

Deformance: Remixing *The Waste Land*
ENG 397U: Digital Literary Studies
Fall 2019
Prof. Kathi Inman Berens

Assignment Overview
- "Deform" a portion of *The Waste Land*. See "Types of Deformance" worksheet for specifications about how and why to deform *TWL*.
- Write an essay explaining the technique you used, and what that technique revealed to you about *TWL*.

Word Counts & Due Dates
Deformance "length" or duration is determined case-by-case during conversation in class as we workshop your deformance.

Essay word count: 1500 words

Due dates
- Prototype (not completed version) due Wednesday 16 October to D2L Dropbox 1:50 PM.
- Class presentation of your prototype. This will follow our usual model of presenting work-in-progress & the full class discussing it.
- Completed deformance and essay due Monday 21 October to D2L Dropbox 1:50 PM.

Essay Specifications
- For deformance specificiations, see "Types of Deformance" document.
- Your 1500-word essay will comment on what you learned from doing this deformance.
- **Include at least 3 quotations or concepts from Hayles' "Print is Flat, Code is Deep" and Samuels and McGann "Deformance and Interpretation."**
- What were you hoping to learn or experience in enacting this deformance? What actually happened? How does course critical reading & discussion help you understand why this experiment matters?

Learning Outcomes
This is what I estimate you learn from this assignment.
- Perform "medium-specific analysis" integrating technical and aesthetic approaches to literary meaning.
- Explain in writing the critical intervention the remix makes in how one typically understands the source work, or why such an intervention is relevant today.
- Apply media theory in hands-on digital literary projects.
- Compare digital-born literature to print-based, and understand the different affordances.

Some thoughts about how to make your remix
ENG 397U "Digital Literary Studies"
Prof. Kathi Inman Berens

As you prepare a remix for class, think of your draft (due Wednesday Oct. 9) as a preliminary sketch for the one you'll submit as your first assignment. Here are some aspects we'll discuss about the reading.

In typical "close" reading, we assume that the reader's job is to detect unifying themes in a poem as "physical artifact whose stability and integrity [are] taken as inviolable" (Samuels and McGann, "Deformance and Interpretation"). This means we are usually not allowed to alter any aspect of the poem in order to interpret it. Doing so would be considered cheating, a misreading.

But what if we permit ourselves to "deform" the poem according to other logics? What if we read it backwards, as Emily Dickinson suggests we should do? Lisa Samuels and Jerome McGann argue for reading *against* interpretation that decodes and preserves the poem as "inviolate" artifact. They argue *for* a reading and interpretive technique called "deformance," which loosens our thematic preconceptions and helps us see the poem freshly.

Types of Deformance mentioned in Samuels and McGann's article:
1. Reading backward
2. Interpretation as Performance
3. From Performance to Deformance
   a. Forgery
   b. "Invasions or distortions of the documentary artifact"
   c. Type out poetry as prose
   d. Strip out punctuation
   e. See my "surface reading" PowerPoint in Week One content. Feel free to use any images from in it a visual collage – or make your own "surface reading" materials of

your assigned 25 lines by Google searching keywords or phrases, and grabbing screenshots.

    f. "Deformative diagramming" – where you systematically isolate, say, the nouns; or strip out a feature and print what's left.
- i. Only nouns and verbs
- ii. Everything but nouns and verbs
- iii. An important keyword in the poem
- iv. Re-ordering passages

As you prepare your first remix, think about using one of these techniques to aid you in "breaking down" your 25 lines. Try to apply your method systematically: remove all the verbs, for example; or all female pronouns; etc., etc.

After you've "deformed" the poem in this way, think about how you want to display your deformance. Do you want to set the poem in a very different setting, such as Instagram? Or build a webpage? Or make a hand-made collage that you photograph and post to D2L?

If you'd like to expand beyond your assigned 25 lines, OK. I assigned you 25 lines just to make the poem more manageable as we annotated it. In any case, you're responsible for explaining your rationale in making this remix/deformance of *The Waste Land.*

Rubric

Deformance: Remixing *The Waste Land*
ENG 397U: Digital Literary Studies
Fall 2019
Prof. Kathi Inman Berens

- A-level work tethers the deformance or remix to specific lines in the selected poem or work, and then *interprets* the significance of those lines. Delivers surprising or original insight. Test: when reading it I think, "What an unusual or new way to look at that!"
- A-level work integrates insights from critical reading (Hayles, Samuels and McGann) and class discussion to take us further into the remix: to deliver an insight that couldn't be made without recourse to those critical approaches.
- A-level execution has no grammatical and syntactical mistakes.

- B-level deformance or remix is inventive, even evocative, but not tightly referential to the poem. Occasionally, some insights are tethered to specific moments in the source texts BUT the author didn't interpret the significance of those connections. Author just made the association and stopped there.
- B-level work cites critical readings, but applies them generally to the deformance or remix. Test: if the critical insight could be said of several other parts of the source text.
- B-level execution might have some grammatical and syntactical mistakes.

- C-level work does minimal deformance or remix AND/OR doesn't comment on how the it relates back to the source work.
- C-level work cites critical reading to little or no effect. "Little effect" is measured by testing whether I could substitute different lines from the critical essay and the author's claim would still hold true. Critical quotations were so bland as to be functionally interchangeable.
- C-level execution has grammatical and syntactical mistakes that interrupt flow of reading.

- D-level work does all the things of C-level, and additionally wanders off topic. Rationale of why to include such wanderings is unclear.

Final Project: Digital Literary Adaptation/Remix and Essay
ENG 397U: Digital Literary Studies
Fall 2019
Prof. Kathi Inman Berens

Assignment Overview
- Make a creative project that engages one of the works we've discussed in class and write an essay about it.
- By "creative project" I mean a remix, adaptation or deformance that focuses on a key attribute of your source text.
- Example: a radically slowed down *Dak0ta*, recast in iMovie or Powerpoint, would "deform" a key attribute of that digital poem, its speed. You would write about how your intervention taught you something new about *Dak0ta* specifically, and e-literature generally.

Word Counts & Due Dates
Creative project "length" or duration is determined case-by-case during conversation in class Monday 25 November.

Essay word count: 2000

Due dates
- Prototype (not completed version) due Monday 2 December to D2L Dropbox 1:50 PM
- Class presentation of your prototype Dec. 2 & 4. This will follow our usual model of presenting work-in-progress & the full class discussing it.
- FINAL due Thursday December 6 to D2L Dropbox 12 PM

Essay and Creative Making Project Specifications
- The medium does not have to be digital, but you will need to document it digitally & submit that to D2L so that I can review it.
- Your essay will comment on why you made it, and what you learned from doing it.
- **Include at least 5 quotations or concepts from critical essays we read this term.**
- Be sure that the artistic concept and rationale of your creative making project are clear (even if, in practice, the artistic making doesn't go as planned).
- Eligible literary source texts for remix/adaptation/deformance:
    a. *The Waste Land* (Beer)
    b. @rupikaur_ poetry
    c. @atticuspoetry
    d. @snowshelleyjackson
    e. Works by Marshall McLuhan
    f. Gillette commercial
    g. Fan fiction—choose one work specifically & keep the scope narrow
    h. *Project for the Tachistoscope*
    i. *Dak0ta*

j. *Toroko Gorge and its remixes discussed in class*
k. *The Hunt for a Gay Planet*
l. *Sea and Spar Between*
m. *Adjunct Run*
n. Marcel Duchamps' "Fountain"; Sherry Levine's "After Marcel Duchamps"
o. Ben Grosser's work (Demetricator; People Touching Software)
p. Zach Whalen's "The Several Houses . . ." generated novel. Code and Github repository link are in appendix of essay; see Week 9 content in D2L.
q. Walter Benjamin's "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"

- Write a 2000 word essay about *why you recast the source text into that medial format*. What were you hoping to learn or experience? What actually happened? How does course critical reading & discussion help you understand why this experiment matters?

Learning Outcomes

This is what I estimate you learn doing this final project.

- Explain in writing the critical intervention the remix makes in how one typically understands the source work, or why such an intervention is relevant today.
- Apply media theory in hands-on digital literary projects.
- Compare digital-born literature to print-based, and understand the different affordances.
- Interrogate the ethical and social dimensions of databases, software and "free" social media platforms.
- Use critical race theory, gender and queer theory to examine the non-neutrality of digital tools and artifacts.
- Perform "medium-specific analysis" integrating technical and aesthetic approaches to literary meaning.
- Build digital artifacts and iterate them as necessary to get them working.
- Historicize literary studies by examining print as a specific technical approach that shaped "close reading" and "the canon."

Final Project: Digital Literary Adaptation/Remix and Essay
ENG 397U: Digital Literary Studies
Fall 2019
Prof. Kathi Inman Berens

Rubric: Final Creative Project and Essay

A-level work
- A-level essay isolates particular, representative aspects of your remix/adaptation and explains why they are exemplary. Your essay *interprets* the significance of those aspects. Essay delivers surprising or original insight. Test: when reading it I think, "What an unusual or new way to look at that!"
- Adaptation/remix is purposeful: it comments cannily on its medium-specific meaning(s).
- Author interrogates why the medium of the adaptation is essential to the concept, and explores how and why that concept applies.
- A-level work integrates at least five insights from the critical readings assigned over the term.
- Essays delivers insight that couldn't be made without recourse to the cited critical approaches.
- A-level execution has no grammatical and syntactical mistakes.

B-level work
- B-level work discusses your remix/adaptation in close detail, but doesn't use particular examples to build a particular argument; instead, it shows interesting aspects that may or may not be thematically related.
- Adaptation/remix is purposeful: it comments generally on its medium-specific meaning(s).
- Essay sequencing of evidence or examples doesn't build toward a particular insight. Sequence isn't logically necessary.
- Author interrogates why the medium of the adaptation is essential to the concept, and explores how and why that concept applies.
- B-level work integrates at least five insights from the critical readings assigned over the term.
- B-level execution might have some grammatical and syntactical mistakes.

C-level work
- C-level work comments generally on the remix/adaptation. It doesn't do more than describe how it operates. Stops short of answering questions like "why?" or "what does this mean?"
- Adaptation/remix is very general or disconnected from the essay. The artwork comments generally on its medium-specific meaning(s).

- C-level work cites critical reading to little or no effect. "Little effect" is measured by testing whether I could substitute different lines from the critical essay and the author's claim would still hold true.
- Critical quotations are so bland as to be functionally interchangeable.
- C-level execution has grammatical and syntactical mistakes that interrupt flow of reading.

D-level work

- D-level work does all the things of C-level, and additionally wanders off topic. Rationale of why to include such wanderings is unclear.