

# "Literary Studies Becoming Digital"

## Augusta Rohrbach A Graduate Seminar

"Literary Studies Becoming Digital" introduces students to the problems—scholarly, ethical, aesthetic, technical, and cultural-- that arise as literary studies moves away from old technologies and artifacts and is replaced or augmented by the digital. Through a focus on transatlantic American literary history, each of the units of this course will study the archive—on and offline—of Charles Dickens, Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman, major figures of literary history and digital culture. During each unit, we will divide our focus between understanding key (pre-digital) literary texts and their digital redaction through a study of digital archives that feature their work. In addition to close readings and scholarly reception of the text in historical context we will also address issues of interface design and online communities by looking at the text-based Internet versus the multi-media Web. In the last unit, using OMECKA<sup>1</sup>, we will develop a multi-media, group authored website building on what we've learned about web design for the scholarly world and Ralph Waldo Emerson, the focal figure of this class. The class addresses issues of media manipulation, ethical behavior, and identity representation online, we will also be discussing social network use. Class requirements are two oral presentations and one short, animated film<sup>2</sup>, one in each unit on a topic of your choice, Proposal (10 pages), Design Logs, and a Final Report (15-20 pages) due post-project. *\*NO WEB EXPERIENCE NEEDED\**

### Course Schedule:

#### Week 1

Aug. 23

Introductions, Procedures, Goals

Collective Intelligence and the Expert Paradigm readings  
Interactive Audiences? the Collective Intelligence of Media Fans

- <http://web.mit.edu/cms/People/henry3/collective%20intelligence.html>
- Peter Walsh "That Withered Paradigm: The Web, The Expert, and the Information Hegemony" <http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/papers/walsh.html>

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<sup>1</sup> Omeka is a free, flexible, and open source web-publishing platform for the display of library, museum, archives, and scholarly collections and exhibitions. Its "five-minute setup" makes launching an online exhibition as easy as launching a blog. Omeka falls at a crossroads of Web Content Management, Collections Management, and Archival Digital Collections Systems" For more information see <http://omeka.org/>

<sup>2</sup> You can use Xtranormal, an open-source software used for making animated films. For my 10 minute experiment see: <http://www.xtranormal.com/watch/7474529/>. For something much more complex, see <http://www.xtranormal.com/watch/7451115/>.

- And “The Expert Paradigm Revisited: Media Change and the Consensus Narrative”  
[http://web.mit.edu/commforum/mit7/papers/Walsh%20Expert%20Paradigm%20Revisited%20\(MiT7\).pdf](http://web.mit.edu/commforum/mit7/papers/Walsh%20Expert%20Paradigm%20Revisited%20(MiT7).pdf)

## Syllabus Planning

Aug. 25

: Presentation, Discussion and Analysis of Selected Web Sites

- <http://www.whitmanarchive.org/>
- <http://www.emilydickinson.org/>
- <http://www.chesnuttarchive.org/>
- <http://www.ambrosebierce.org/main.html>

## **Rethinking Matter:**

### **Week 2**

Emerson Readings: *Nature; The Transcendentalists*

Aug. 30

- <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/>
- <http://www.victorianweb.org/>
- <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/melville/>
- <http://unixgen.muohio.edu/~poetess/>
- [tp://www.thelincolnlog.org/view](http://www.thelincolnlog.org/view) (Lincoln Log

Sept. 1

Class Discussion of Emerson texts

### **Week 3**

Emerson Reading: Essays: The First Series  
(esp. “History,” “Self-Reliance,” “Circles”)

Sept. 6

- Walter Benjamin, “Theses on History”
- Stuart Hall. “Encoding, Decoding”
- Jean Baudrillard, “The Precession of Simulacra” ; “The Implosion of the Meaning of Media”

Sept. 8

In-Class discussion/demo: Suggested Revisions for “Theses on History” wikipedia entry  
Adam; Dave; Jenn

### **Week 4**

Emerson Reading: Essays: The Second Series  
(esp. “The Poet,” “Experience,” “Gifts.”)

Sept. 13

- Jane Bennett, "The Force of Things: Steps Toward an Ecology of Matter" *Political Theory* Vol.32, No.3 (June 2004).

- Brian Massumi, "Introduction," "The Political Economy of Belonging and the Logic of Relation," and "Chaos in the 'total field' of vision" in *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Duke UP, 2002)

Sept. 15

In-Class discussion/demo Use Collex to build an exhibit using either *Nature* or *The Transcendentalist*

Charlie P.; Dave; Stacy

## **Week 5**

Emerson Reading: Plato: Or, The Philosopher; Napoleon: Or, The Man of the World

Sept. 20

- Lisa Gittelman "Media as Historical Subjects" and "New Media Bodies"
- N. Katherine Hayles. "'Simulating Narratives'; 'Toward Embodied Virtuality' ; 'The Materiality of Infomatics'",

Sept. 22

In-Class discussion/demo Build an exhibit using Omeka using "History," "Self-Reliance," or "Circles"

Juan C.; Aaron Moe

## **Rethinking Agency**

### **Week 6**

Sept. 27

- McGann, Jerome. "Editing as a Theoretical Pursuit" and "Appendix"
- Jenkins, Henry. "Worship at the Altar of Convergence"; "Photoshop for Democracy"
- Elizabeth Grosz, "Introduction: to the untimely," "Darwinian matters: Life, force, change"; "Biological difference."

Sept. 29

- Diana Coole, "Rethinking Agency: A Phenomenological Approach to Embodiment and Agentic Capacities" *Political Studies* (2005)
- <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2005.00520.x/full>

In-Class discussion/demo: Use Extranormal and create an animated film on or about Emerson  
Aaron Moe; Stacy

## **The New Materialisms**

### **Week 7**

Emerson Reading: Conduct of Life

Oct. 4

- Eleanor Kaufman, "'To Cut Too Deeply and Not Enough': Violence and the Incorporeal," *parallax* 9:1 (2003), 14-27.
- Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence."

Oct. 6

• In-Class discussion/demo: Interpreting data from Reading with the Stars  
Charlie P.; Kellie; Jenn

### **Week 8**

Emerson Reading: The Fugitive Slave Law; John Brown; The Emancipation Proclamation

Oct. 11

- Teresa Brennan, "Introduction," "Transmission in groups," and "The new paradigm" in *The Transmission of Affect* (Cornell University Press, 2004)

Oct. 13

- George P. Landow. "Hypertext and Critical Theory" in *Hypertext 3.0* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2006.
- George P. Landow. "The Politics of Hypertext: Who Controls the Text?" in *Hypertext 3.0* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2006.

In-Class discussion/demo: Assembly of historical and contextual material for website  
Juan C.; Adam; Kellie

### **Week 9**

Emerson Reading: Thoreau; Abraham Lincoln; Carlyle

Oct. 18

Oct. 20

NO CLASS...ASA

### **Week 10**

Emerson Reading: Commentary

Oct. 25

- Kathleen Fitzpatrick. "Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy"
- Readings from Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, eds. *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*.

Oct. 27

- Readings from William E. Connolly. *A World of Becoming*
- In-class Discussion/Demo: multimedia unit on Emerson (Rachel)

**Week 11**

Nov. 1

- Readings from William E. Connolly. *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed (Theory Out Of Bounds)*

Nov. 3

In class review and selection of Emerson materials

**Week 12**

**Project Development Roundtables**

Nov. 8

Nov. 10

**Week 13**

Nov. 15

Nov. 17 Complete Demo of Site

**Week 14**

Thanksgiving Break

**Week 15**

DEMO Vetting Process and Revision Priorities

Nov. 29

Dec. 1

**Week 16**

LAUNCH