MASTER OF ARTS IN DIGITAL STUDIES
OF LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND HISTORY

Department Website: http://digitalstudies.uchicago.edu

PEOPLE

Faculty Director: David Schloen

Associate Director: Brooke Luetgert

Digital Studies Faculty Board (https://digitalstudies.uchicago.edu/people/)

OVERVIEW

The University of Chicago’s program in Digital Studies of Language, Culture, and History provides a one-year Master of Arts (https://digitalstudies.uchicago.edu/overview-timeline/) curriculum intended for full-time students who have a bachelor’s degree in the humanities or in a related discipline such as history, anthropology, or linguistics. In addition, a joint BA/MA (https://digitalstudies.uchicago.edu/bama/) and undergraduate Minor (https://digitalstudies.uchicago.edu/minor/) in Digital Studies are offered to students in the College of the University of Chicago, and a Graduate Certificate (https://digitalstudies.uchicago.edu/graduate-certificate/) in Digital Studies is available to graduate students in other programs of the University. The MA in Digital Studies (https://digitalstudies.uchicago.edu/overview-timeline/) qualifies as a STEM Designated Degree Program (https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2016/stem-list.pdf) under the regulations of the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.

The Digital Studies program at the University of Chicago responds to the growing demand for academic rigor in the loosely defined field of digital humanities (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_humanities/) and the need to certify technical competence in this area. The program equips students of the humanities to pursue careers that utilize their skills in research, writing, and critical thinking in tandem with the use of software for the study of human languages and cultures, past and present.

The Digital Studies faculty and staff (https://digitalstudies.uchicago.edu/people/) represent a wide range of academic fields, including linguistics, literary studies, media studies, history, philosophy, anthropology, archaeology, art history, visual arts, musicology, and religious studies. They share a common interest in understanding the impact of digital technology and in using digital tools to represent, analyze, and preserve the products of human language and culture. Collectively, their work shows how digital studies encompass the full range of human activities, from everyday speech and writing to historical documents and literary texts, and include music and art as well as mundane objects, places, and institutions.

The core courses (https://digitalstudies.uchicago.edu/course-descriptions/) and electives (https://digitalstudies.uchicago.edu/electives/) in Digital Studies (DIGS) are designed to foster, not just technical skills in coding and data analysis, but an understanding of the history of computing and its cultural impact from the perspective of the humanities. Students in these courses are introduced to computer programming and the use of software libraries via three widely used programming languages: Python, R, and JavaScript. Learning to code in these languages is the gateway for students to understand and use cutting-edge digital tools and data standards to manage, analyze, and publish information, with emphasis on the kinds of data commonly encountered in the humanities, including texts, images, maps, and other media.

The general MA in Digital Studies entails six core courses (https://digitalstudies.uchicago.edu/course-descriptions/) and three electives (https://digitalstudies.uchicago.edu/electives/). While a thesis is not required for degree completion, the program also offers three specialized concentrations in which two of the electives are replaced with courses in a particular subject area and students complete a thesis project in that area. The three concentrations are the MA in Digital Archaeology, the MA in Digital Media, and the MA in Digital Texts. Completing the degree with specialization and thesis will be noted on the degree certificate.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The general MA in Digital Studies requires six core courses (https://digitalstudies.uchicago.edu/course-descriptions/), three elective courses (https://digitalstudies.uchicago.edu/electives/). Students who do a specialized concentration in Digital Archaeology, Digital Media, or Digital Texts must take two additional required courses in their area of concentration and do a thesis in that area, and so will have only one elective course. The general MA requires the following:

- Three core courses in the Autumn Quarter consisting of (1) an introduction to computer programming using the Python programming language; (2) basic statistics and data analysis using Python and Jupyter Notebooks; and (3) an introduction to digital humanities that surveys the the history and theory of digital computing, the various uses of computers in the humanities, and current debates concerning digital humanities. Students who have previously taken a programming course and/or a statistics course may be exempted from one or both of those requirements and take additional electives instead, subject to the
approval of the Director of Digital Studies. To receive an exemption from the Autumn Quarter “Introduction to Computer Programming,” students must take a competency test to demonstrate their knowledge of programming and of Python.

- Three core courses in the Winter and Spring Quarters on data management, data publication, and data analysis for the humanities. Students must take either “Data Analysis for the Humanities II” in the Winter or “Data Analysis for the Humanities III” in the Spring; or they may choose to take both of these data analysis courses if they use one of them as an elective.
- Three elective courses in the Winter and Spring Quarters in any field of the humanities or social sciences. At least one of the three electives must deal with digital computing in some way, whether or not it entails actual coding.

AUTUMN QUARTER
- DIGS 30001 Introduction to Computer Programming
- DIGS 30002 Data Analysis I: Introduction to Statistics
- DIGS 30007 Introduction to Digital Humanities

WINTER QUARTER
- DIGS 30003 Data Management for the Humanities
- DIGS 30004 Data Analysis II: Visualization and Machine Learning
- An approved elective course (for the general MA) or NEAA 30061 Ancient Landscapes I (for the MA in Digital Archaeology), or a CMST course on digital media (for the MA in Digital Media) or DIGS 30031 Digital Texts I: Opening New Paths for Textual Scholarship (for the MA in Digital Texts)
- Selection of MA thesis topic and confirmation of a thesis adviser (optional)

SPRING QUARTER
- DIGS 30005 Data Publication for the Humanities
- An approved elective course (for the general MA) or DIGS 30021, “Digital Archaeology” (for the MA in Digital Archaeology), or a CMST course on digital media (for the MA in Digital Media)
- Ongoing work on the MA thesis, due May 15 for June graduation or June 15 for August graduation (not required)

SUMMER QUARTER
Students do not need to register for any courses in the Summer Quarter and they are not required to be in residence in the Chicago area while they complete the thesis.

ADMISSION
The Master of Arts in Digital Studies of Language, Culture, and History program welcomes a cohort of students dedicated to exploring humanistic knowledge in the digital realm.

INFORMATION ON HOW TO APPLY
The application process for admission and financial aid for all graduate programs in the Humanities is administered through the divisional Office of the Dean of Students. The Application for Admission and Financial Aid, with instructions, deadlines and department specific information is available online at: http://humanities.uchicago.edu/students/admissions (http://humanities.uchicago.edu/students/admissions/).

Questions pertaining to admissions and aid should be directed to humanitiesadmissions@uchicago.edu or (773) 702-1552.

International students must provide evidence of English proficiency by submitting scores from either the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). (Current minimum scores, etc., are provided with the application.) For more information, please see the Office of International Affairs website at https://internationalaffairs.uchicago.edu, or call them at (773) 702-7752.

Further information is available at https://digitalstudies.uchicago.edu/application (https://digitalstudies.uchicago.edu/application/)

CONTACT INFORMATION

digitalstudies@uchicago.edu
(773) 702-1552

DIGITAL STUDIES COURSES

DIGS 30000. Approaches to Digital Humanities Using Python. 100 Units.
This course introduces students to (1) current work in digital humanities with examples of the software applications being used and the computational research being done in literary, historical, linguistic, and cultural studies; and (2) the principles and practices of computer programming using the Python programming language. (Taught remotely via Zoom in the Summer Session; undergraduate only.)
Instructor(s): Clovis Gladstone Terms Offered: Summer
Equivalent Course(s): DIGS 10000

DIGS 30001. Introduction to Computer Programming. 100 Units.
This course provides an introduction to computer programming and computational concepts using the Python programming language. It is a prerequisite for many of the other Digital Studies core courses (students who are already experts in Python may request an exemption from taking this course, subject to the approval of the Director of Digital Studies). The textbook for this course is Think Python (second edition) by Allen B. Downey, which is available online, free of charge.
Instructor(s): Clovis Gladstone Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): DIGS 20001

DIGS 30002. Data Analysis I: Introduction to Statistics. 100 Units.
This course provides an introduction to statistics and computational data analysis. Topics covered include probability, distributions, and statistical inference, as well as linear regression and logistic regression. Students will learn how to use Python libraries for statistics and plotting within Jupyter Notebooks. The textbook for this course is OpenIntro Statistics, which is available online, free of charge. Students who have taken the University of Chicago course STAT 22000 or an equivalent statistics course may request an exemption from taking this course, subject to the approval of the Director of Digital Studies.
Instructor(s): Brooke Luetgert Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): DIGS 20002

DIGS 30003. Data Management for the Humanities. 100 Units.
This course introduces software techniques and tools for building Web browser apps written in HTML5, CSS, and JavaScript with emphasis on user interfaces for presenting information to researchers and students in the humanities. Students will take an active role in evaluating approaches and outcomes of existing digital publications. Topics covered include: (1) the use of application programming interfaces (APIs) to integrate into Web apps the various analysis, visualization, and database services provided by external systems; (2) the transformation of data into formats appropriate for publication on the Web; and (3) the nature of data in the humanities as pertains to digital publication.
Instructor(s): Miller Prosser Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): DIGS 20001/30000/30001, “Introduction to Computer Programming” (or an equivalent course in computer programming)
Equivalent Course(s): DIGS 20003

DIGS 30004. Data Analysis II: Visualization and Machine Learning. 100 Units.
This course will focus on best practices for visualizing large and complex data sets in Python. We will consider the foundations of machine learning for regression, classification, and clustering. Topics covered will include data visualization, social network analysis, principal component analysis (PCA), and K-nearest neighbors (KNN). The objective is to make students familiar with these methods and aware of their potential in linguistic, cultural, and historical research. Students will also expand their knowledge of applying Python in the area of data analytics and display.
Instructor(s): Jeff Tharsen Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): DIGS 20001/30000/30001, “Introduction to Computer Programming” (or an equivalent course in computer programming) and DIGS 20002/30002, “Data Analysis for the Humanities I” (or an equivalent statistics course)
Equivalent Course(s): DIGS 20004

DIGS 30005. Data Publication for the Humanities. 100 Units.
This course introduces software techniques and tools for building Web browser apps written in HTML5, CSS, and JavaScript with emphasis on user interfaces for presenting information to researchers and students in the humanities. Students will take an active role in evaluating approaches and outcomes of existing digital publications. Topics covered include: (1) the use of application programming interfaces (APIs) to integrate into Web apps the various analysis, visualization, and database services provided by external systems; (2) the transformation of data into formats appropriate for publication on the Web; and (3) the nature of data in the humanities as pertains to digital publication.
Instructor(s): Prosser, Miller Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): DIGS 20001/30000/30001, “Introduction to Computer Programming” (or an equivalent course in computer programming)
Equivalent Course(s): DIGS 20005

DIGS 30006. Data Analysis for the Humanities III: Deep Learning. 100 Units.
Deep Learning is an important element of data science, particularly for predictive modeling. The ability to process large numbers of features makes deep learning very powerful when dealing with unstructured data. Particularly in the realm of Digital Humanities, data sources frequently include images or speech rather than numerical data. We begin with careful consideration for what deep learning can achieve and where current limitations exist by looking at a variety of real-world applications including speech recognition, image recognition and basic chatbots. Understanding the trade-offs between model structure and the algorithmic constraints will provide you with a solid foundation in understanding and adapting these algorithms in Python to accommodate your own data and research interests.
Instructor(s): Brooke Luetgert Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): DIGS 20001/30001, “Introduction to Computer Programming” (or an equivalent course in computer programming), and DIGS 20002/30002, “Data Analysis for the Humanities I” (or an equivalent course in statistics).
Equivalent Course(s): DIGS 20006

DIGS 30007. Introduction to Digital Humanities. 100 Units.
This course surveys the history and theory of digital computing, the use of computers in the humanities, and recent debates in digital humanities. Topics discussed include the impact of digital media in modern culture, the philosophical questions raised by artificial intelligence (AI), and the ethical dilemmas created by the pervasive use of software. This course has no prerequisite; i.e., prior knowledge of computer programming is not required.

Instructor(s): David Schloen
Terms Offered: Winter

Equivalent Course(s): DIGS 20007

DIGS 30008. Thesis Preparation. 000 Units.
Digital Studies MA and BA/MA students will enroll in this non-credit course in the Spring Quarter, when they begin work on their MA thesis projects in consultation with a faculty adviser and with staff members who will provide technical advice, as needed. The thesis must have a software component as well as a written component in which the student explains the computational aspects of the project and reflects critically on the methods being used, with attention to current debates in digital humanities.

Terms Offered: Spring

DIGS 30013. Graduate Computational Linguistics. 100 Units.
This course is a graduate-level introduction to topics at the intersection of computation and language. We will study computational linguistics from both scientific and engineering angles: the use of computational modeling to address scientific questions in linguistics and cognitive science, as well as the design of computational systems to solve engineering problems in natural language processing (NLP). The course will combine analysis and discussion of these approaches with training in the programming and mathematical foundations necessary to put these methods into practice. The course is designed to accommodate students both with and without prior programming experience. Our goal is for all students to leave the course able to engage with and critically evaluate research in cognitive/linguistic modeling and NLP, and to be able to implement intermediate-level computational models for novel computational linguistics research.

Instructor(s): J. Goldsmith
Terms Offered: Spring

Prerequisite(s): CMSC 12200, 15200 or 16200, or by consent

Equivalent Course(s): CMSC 35050, LING 38600

DIGS 30017. Latinx Lives: Finding and Filling the Gaps. 100 Units.
The first half of the course will focus on postcolonial and decolonial theoretical approaches to the digital humanities, such as Roopika Risam, Antonio A. Casilli, and Lorena Gauthereau. Students will have two main digital projects: creating a Wikipedia page of a digital archive and a short podcast on said Latinx project.

Considering this framework, students will analyze how current digital projects have worked with archival sources to fill historical gaps. This course will utilize accessible materials written by Latinx communities that non-profit organizations, such as Arte Público Press, and a range of universities have recovered in digital projects. The course will explore the intersection between oral histories, storytelling, audio-documentaries, and digital studies. Students will learn to use existing digital archives responsibly, craft an audio-documentary with their current digital tools, and analyze the existing boundaries between history and fiction in digital projects.

Instructor(s): Jessica Marroquin
Terms Offered: Winter

Note(s): Taught mostly in Spanish, with readings in English. Students will need a computer and recording device (a mobile phone should work). Undergrads must be in their third or fourth year.

Equivalent Course(s): SPAN 32021, SPAN 22021, LACS 32021, DIGS 20017, LACS 22021

DIGS 30018. Digital Approaches to Text Analysis opening new paths for textual scholarship. 100 Units.
The purpose of this course is to introduce students of literature, and more generally the humanities, to digital humanities methodologies for the study of text. Among the various digital approaches which will be introduced in class are concordances (retrieving occurrences of words), semantic similarity detection (finding similar passages across texts), sentiment analysis, stylometry (analysis of literary style), and topic modeling (automatic classification of texts). The course will highlight how these approaches to text can provide new avenues of research, such as tracing intellectual influence over the longue durée, or uncovering the distinguishing stylistic features of an author, work, or literary movement. Students need no prior knowledge of such methods, and the course will aim at providing the basics of computer programming in Python to give students the necessary tooling to conduct a digital humanities project. The source material for the course will be drawn from literary sources, and students will be free (and encouraged) to use texts which are relevant to their own research interests.

Instructor(s): Clovis Gladstone
Terms Offered: Winter

Note(s): Students will need to bring a laptop to class.

Equivalent Course(s): DIGS 20018, RLLT 34500, RLLT 24500

DIGS 30019. Classification as World-Making. 100 Units.
To classify,” write Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Star, “is human.” There can be no doubt that classification sits at the heart of almost any form of knowledge production—arguably even thought itself. But what diversity hides under such atrocity? This course will explore a set of exemplary fields in order to track genealogies and
discontinuities in classificatory. We will begin with two philosophers, Aristotle and Kant, who stand as respective avatars of ancient and modern categorial thought. We will then proceed to sites where classification has flourished: the biological sciences which sought to capture the diversity of the living world; the social sciences—notably anthropology—which challenged the universality of Western cultural categories; and statistics or data science, which seek to understand numerical aggregates as categories. We will conclude by reflecting on the present explosion of digital techniques of classification, from social media algorithms to artificial intelligence, which structure more and more of our lives, often without human oversight. In this sense, classification is perhaps nonhuman as well. Moving between history, epistemology, and practice, this course will furnish students with a rich set of classificatory ideas that they can bring to their own research and disciplinary communities. Above all, it will ask students to account for both the construction and effects of categories, which are too often taken to be a neutral substrate of knowledge or converse.

Instructor(s): Alexander Compello Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): HIS 26065, CHSS 36065, STH 36065, SOCI 30331, DIGS 20019, KNOW 36065

DlGS 30022. Sounding Viral - Metaphor, Media, Aesthetics. 100 Units.
Earworms, hooks, catchy tunes, sticky sounds. Far predating Old Town Road or Gangnam Style, music has been conceived of as an infectious cultural force—but the 21st-century regime of ubiquitous digital and social media platforms has amplified and accelerated the potential for music-gone-viral. In this seminar we will grapple with a range of questions that interrogate specific digital assemblages, as well as longer histories and broader concepts of sonic contagion. What does virality sound like? Look like? Feel like? What are the aesthetics of the viral? What does digital viral circulation have to do with "real" biological contagion, in its patterns and mechanisms of infection and social spread? How does digital virality happen? What are its media, social, structural preconditions? (How) is it musical? In seeking to answer these questions, and in surveying what it might mean to engage in a musicology of the digital age more broadly, we will read across disciplines including musicology and popular music studies, sound studies, philosophy and critical theory, media and platform studies. The quarter will begin with an investigation of keywords and more "canonical" texts, and will proceed through case studies and practical (auto)ethnographic engagements with contemporary digital sonic culture.

Instructor(s): Paula Harper Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): MUSI 44422, MAPH 44422

DlGS 30031. Digital Texts I: Opening New Paths for Textual Scholarship. 100 Units.
The purpose of this course is to introduce students in the humanities to digital methodologies for the study of text. Students will not only learn how to construct a digital text collection, but also how to process text as data. Among the various digital approaches which will be introduced in class are concordances (retrieving occurrences of words), semantic similarity detection (finding similar passages across texts), sentiment analysis, or stylometry (analysis of literary style). The course will highlight how these approaches to text can provide new avenues of research, such as tracing intellectual influence over the longue durée, or uncovering the distinguishing stylistic features of an author, work, or literary movement. Students need no prior knowledge of such methods, and the course will aim at providing both the basics of computer programming in Python and to give students the necessary tooling to conduct a digital humanities project. The source material for the course will be drawn from literary sources, and students will be free (and encouraged) to use texts which are relevant to their own research interests. Students will need to bring a laptop to class.

Instructor(s): Gladstone, Clovis Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): DIGS 20031, RLLT 34550, RLLT 24550

DlGS 30032. Digital Texts II. 100 Units.
This course is a theoretical and methodological introduction to current methods in advanced textual processing and analysis with a focus on current trends in deep learning and artificial intelligence. We will consider both the practical aspects of building deep learning models (e.g. neural networks) for language and the social, cultural, ethical and philosophical issues related to their development and deployment. In addition to evaluating these new methodologies in the light of traditional approaches, students will gain extensive experience in using Python to develop and deploy deep learning models, and by the end of the course the course will have developed their own individual projects, thereby gaining a practical understanding of advanced text analysis workflows along with specific tools and methods for evaluating models, frameworks and results.

Instructor(s): Tharsen, Jeffrey Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): DIGS 20031/30031: Digital Texts I DIGS 20001/30001: Intro to Computer Programming (or an equivalent course)
Note(s): Prerequisites may be waived by permission of the instructor for students who have sufficient background in the subject.
Equivalent Course(s): RLLT 20032, RLLT 30032, DIGS 20032

DlGS 30035. Introduction to Cultural Analytics. 100 Units.
This course introduces students to the emerging field of cultural analytics - a field that sits at the intersection of cultural studies, information science, and the computational social sciences. At root, the field is oriented around questions of how to study the cultural past and present (whether text, image, or sound) with the aid of data-driven methods, and what such methods imply for our understanding of human culture. The course will begin with a look at how past scholars wrestled with the problem of applying numbers to cultural objects, and some of their initial attempts to do so. We then move to survey the wide variety of scholarship happening today under the influence of new digital technologies and vast new information infrastructures. How have scholars across...
different humanistic fields adopted new computational tools? What methodological and theoretical problems has this raised? What new discoveries has it yielded? Finally, the course will consider new research directions opened up by recent advances in artificial intelligence and the increasing convergence of cultural production with online platforms that are global in reach (e.g., TikTok, Wattpad, Netflix, Spotify). Students will engage with these questions through primary readings, attempts to replicate past studies, and by designing their own research proposals.

Instructor(s): Long, Hoyt Terms Offered: Spring
Note(s): Some programming experience preferred, but not required

DIGS 38620. Computational Linguistics. 100 Units.
This course is a mixed level introduction to topics at the intersection of computation and language. We will study computational linguistics from both scientific and engineering angles: the use of computational modeling to address scientific questions in linguistics and cognitive science, as well as the design of computational systems to solve engineering problems in natural language processing (NLP). The course will combine analysis and discussion of these approaches with training in the programming and mathematical foundations necessary to put these methods into practice. The course is designed to accommodate students both with and without prior programming experience. Our goal is for all students to leave the course able to engage with and critically evaluate research in cognitive/linguistic modeling and NLP, and to be able to implement intermediate-level computational models for novel computational linguistics research.
Instructor(s): Allyson Ettinger Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): CMSC 35620, LING 28620, LING 38620

DIGS 49900. Reading and Research. 100 Units.
Reading and Research
Instructor(s): David Schloen Terms Offered: Spring