

Dr. Stephen Ramsay
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303 Andrews Hall
office hours: MW 3:30–5:00

ENGL 8/478: Electronic Texts

MWF 11:30–12:20 207 Andrews Hall

Description

This is an intensive course in programming and software design for the humanities. We will study the Ruby programming language in detail and use it to explore the algorithms, data structures, and design patterns relevant to the advanced use of computers for computational linguistics, digital library creation, and text analysis. We will also survey some of the more important scholarly work in digital humanities and theory of new media. Students are expected to demonstrate understanding of the material through frequent exercises.

Readings

Peek, Jerry D., et al. *Learning the UNIX Operating System*. 5th. ed. Sebastopol: O'Reilly, 2002. ISBN: 0596002610.

Spiller, Neil. *Cyber Reader: Critical Writings for the Digital Era*. New York: Phaidon, 2002. ISBN: 0714840718.

Thomas, David, Chad Fowler and Andy Hunt. *Programming Ruby 1.9: The Pragmatic Programmer's Guide*. 3rd ed. Raleigh, NC: Pragmatic Bookshelf, 2004. ISBN: 1934356085

Assignments

The primary work for this course consists of a series of graded problem sets designed to reinforce the material and to encourage exploration of the technologies we're studying this semester. The final grade is computed by dividing 100 by the total number of points accumulated (point values vary with each assignment) and then multiplying the resulting number by the point total. The professor reserves the right to curve final grades and to adjust individual grades up or down based on class participation, the progress of the student's work, and other standard metrics.

Schedule

Our schedule will alternate between formal instruction and theoretical meditation. We will study programming and software engineering in detail, but as we

move through the technical material, we'll also be reading some of the more important scholarly works in digital humanities and media studies from the last forty years or so.

Every group of students represents a different set of interests and skills, and so it is difficult (one might say futile) to create a tight schedule for a course like this in advance. For most of the semester, we will be learning new material on Wednesdays, engaging in spirited discussion of various readings on Fridays, and going over problem sets on Mondays. However, the basic pattern may change occasionally depending on the difficulty of the material or other factors.

There are no required papers for this course, and there is neither a midterm nor a final.

Additional Resources

My office is in Andrews 303. I hold regular office hours from 3:30 to 5:00 on Mondays and Wednesdays, but I'm also available by appointment. You can contact me via email at sramsay.unl@gmail.com. My AIM nick is **FatherBusa**.

There are several societies and associations for scholars working at the intersection of computing and the humanities: including, most prominently, The Association for Computers in the Humanities (<http://www.ach.org>), The Association for Literary and Linguistic Computing (<http://www.allc.org>), and the Society for Digital Humanities / Société pour l'étude des médias interactifs (<http://www.sdh-semi.org/>). The Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations (ADHO) maintains a website containing a great deal of information about the field at <http://www.digitalhumanities.org>.

The main journals in the field are *Literary and Linguistic Computing* (<http://llc.oxfordjournals.org/>), *TEXT Technology* (<http://texttechnology.mcmaster.ca/>), and the online journal *Digital Humanities Quarterly* (<http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/>).

The main discussion list for the discipline is called *Humanist*. This is a medium-traffic listserv with an international audience that includes, among its participants, nearly every scholar working in the field. You can subscribe to Humanist at <http://www.princeton.edu/~mccarty/humanist/>.

General Policies

All academic work must meet the standards set forth in Section 4.2 of the Undergraduate Bulletin (<http://www.unl.edu/unlpub/undergrad/>) concerning academic honesty. Each student is responsible for informing themselves about

those standards before performing any academic work. Students are also expected to arrive prepared and on time for all scheduled classes. The professor reserves the right to exact grade penalties (at his discretion) for failure to comply with the policies of the course.

If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you will need to contact the Disability Resource Center for coordination in your academic accommodations. The DRC is located in the Reynolds Student Services Complex in Room 137. The DRC phone number is 895-0866. (TDD-895-0652).

The campus policy states that the instructor be informed of anticipated absences for religious holidays by the beginning of the second week of school.

N. B. The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary. The authoritative version of this document is available on the Moodle page for this course.