

ENGL4374, Text, Tech, Humanities

Turning Literature into Numbers?

Can we turn literature into a bunch of numbers?
Or, should we? Throughout the semester,
students will work on a digital geospatial literary
studies project to answer these questions.

Map and visualize a story.

With Dr. June Oh joh@uttyler.edu

Texts, Tech, & Humanities (ENGL4374)

Instructor: Dr. June Oh
Email: joh@uttyler.edu
Class Meeting: 2:30-3:50 MW @ COB 00227
Office: CAS (College of Arts and Sciences) 240
Office Hours: Tu 1-3 pm; and by appointment

Course Information

Historical survey of reading and writing technologies that create, transmit, and consume knowledge and information from orality to script, to printing, and to digital production. (Prerequisite: ENGL 1301 and ENGL 1302)

Course Description

This class is about geospatial humanities, the practice of applying Geographical Information System (GIS) and other quantitative technologies to the study of the representation of spatiality in texts, often to literary or historical context (Katib and Schaeben 2020).

We'll start with the critical approach known as "close reading" and its variations, exploring its historical context and alternative methodologies. It is a class in intellectual history as well as of experiential learning of alternative reading methods. We will engage with the theory and history behind close reading as well as major critiques of the technique that have arisen in the past few decades and practice "non-close reading" such as "distant reading."

Beyond assessing the merits and workability of some of these alternative methods, we will try, more importantly, to discern the underlying stakes of the debates and actual practicability. Indeed, because "close reading" is frequently treated as synonymous with or a subset of terms such as "explication," "analysis," "critique," or even "critical thinking," the class should also be understood as one that encourages you to think about these bigger questions: What is the proper function, or the point, of literary analysis? Should it seek to make small claims (about a literary work), or larger ones (e.g., about society, culture, history)? Is it the job of analysis to expose and uncover (thereby assuming, perhaps, that we know better than authors and are generally smarter), or to describe? Should analysis strive for objectivity, or lean into its subjective basis? Most importantly, what do we gain from it? What is the meaning of literary studies, and (how) does close reading or computational reading contribute to this meaning? In other words, can we turn literature into a bunch of numbers? What do we gain and lose? What is the meaning of it all?

Throughout the semester, students will work on a digital geospatial literary studies project to answer these questions. This project will help students gain experiential learning through computational methods, utilizing tools like Excel, QGIS, and sentiment analysis for hands-on exploration.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

1. Articulate how technology enables new or different ways of creating, communicating, and experiencing knowledge.
2. Gain basic training in textual and digital/computational literary analysis by producing, synthesizing, and analyzing text and numerical data.
3. Evaluate the affordances and limitations of close reading and digital/computational methodologies of reading literature.
4. Practice working collaboratively on a digital project.
5. Learn to be a critical reader and producer of various critical literary analysis approaches and methods.
6. Formulate their understanding of the meaning of literary studies.

Texts and Tech

- **Students will need access to laptops and the Internet.** The program we will be working with is unlikely to work on a mobile phone or a tablet.
- We will use QGIS and Excel. No previous experience is required.
- Students should expect “bugs,” “errors,” and other technology failures.
- Students should regularly check Canvas (announcements, course schedule, assignments, modules, etc.) and emails. Contact me as soon as possible if you have issues or anticipate problems with technology.
- For a tutorial on announcements, [click here](#). To manage notifications, click on “Canvas notifications” in the blue box at the top of the page. For help in resetting notifications, click on the help button on the left-hand side of your UTT Canvas home page (the question mark in a circle) and call the “Canvas Support Hotline (Students).”

Course Grade

Component		points
What is literary studies	P/reflection exam	5
	Final exam	20
In theory	Theory in-class workshops	15
In practice	Practice in-class workshops	15
	Log	5
Literature in numbers (Final Geospatial literary studies project)	Execution (Data set and explanation)	20
	Interpretation (Data analysis and limitations)	20
TOTAL		100

Grade Scale

A	90 to	100	points
B	80 to	89	points
C	70 to	79	points
D	60 to	69	points
F	0 to	59	points

Minimum Requirement to Earn a C in the Class

To earn a C or above in the class, students must earn a C or above **on *all* components**.

Syllabus Changes

Per the UTT Syllabus Policy: “The information contained in the syllabus, other than the grading criteria and absence and make-up policies, may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice as long as the change is without prejudice to the students.”

Course Calendar

[Link to course schedule](#) (external link to Google Doc)

Major Assignments

All writings done in this class are public and can be publicly shared.

“What is literary studies”: Reflection exams

- a. At the start of the semester and on the final weeks of the semester, students will write complete exams that asks them to write an essay regarding the theme of the class.

In theory

- a. Students will perform a series of in-class workshops that encourages them to think about critical theory and its practical approaches to literature. See course schedule for details.

In practice

- a. Students will perform a series of in-class workshops that engages them in hands-on learning experience with computational and alternative approaches to literary studies. See course schedule for details.

In practice log

- a. Students will keep a log of the map-making and analysis process. This can consist of questions, challenges, frustrations, and successes.

Literature in numbers (Final project)

- a. Students will work in groups to produce the final project. The final project will be scaffolded throughout the semester with various stages of development including data selection, collection, explanation, analysis, and discussion. Students will submit a data set with a set of documents that explains and interprets the data set and the analysis results.

** There is an optional extra-credit class facilitation activity. Students who wish to participate should sign up for class facilitation on the first day of class. There will be no other opportunity to receive extra credit for the course.

Course Policies and Resources

Attendance

Students are expected to **attend all class sessions**. Students who miss more than three weeks' work (e.g., absence, arriving late or leaving early, missing discussion, etc.) will automatically fail the course unless they withdraw by the census date. See “Standard UT Tyler Syllabus Policies” for information on the census date.

Attendance is not a “portion” of your grade in this course but an absolute requirement for you to succeed in this course. Starting from the third time a student misses a class, 5 % will be deducted from the final grade.

Submitting Written Work

To be counted for a grade, written work must be submitted (unless instructed otherwise) via Canvas. Assignments that do not follow the designated format, that are emailed, that are submitted to the wrong drop box, or that I cannot open (e.g., zipped files, ios files, damaged files) will receive 0.

Academic Dishonesty & Disruptive Behavior

This class has a **Zero Tolerance Policy** for academic dishonesty. Any act of academic dishonesty will result in immediate failure of the entire course and will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Intervention.

For the UTT definition of “academic dishonesty,” go to the UT Tyler Syllabus Module in the class Canvas shell. Click on “University Policies and Information.” Scroll to the “Academic Honesty and Academic Misconduct” section. Click on “Student Conduct and Discipline policy.” Read Section 8-802 “Academic Dishonesty.”

Disruptive behavior will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Intervention and may result in failing the class and/or University sanction. Disruptive behavior includes, but is not limited to:

- hindering other students from working on the tangible learning activities taking place during face-to-face and online class sessions
- talking when the instructor is talking
- repeatedly arriving late and/or leaving early
- using technology for purposes other than working on the tangible learning activities taking place during the class period
- doing something other than working on the tangible learning activities taking place during the class period
- sleeping during class

For the UTT definition of “disruptive behavior,” go to the UT Tyler Syllabus Module in the class Canvas shell. Click on “University Policies and Information.” Scroll to the “Academic Honesty and Academic Misconduct” section. Click on “Student Conduct and Discipline policy.” Scroll to Section 8-804 “Certain Other Offenses.” Read item number four “Disruptive Behavior.”

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) USE POLICY

I expect all work students submit for this course to be their own. While using artificial intelligence assistance can aid various parts of the writing process such as brainstorming, editing, and peer review, in such instances, students should clearly indicate how much and which part of their writing and thinking process are facilitated by such programs. In other words, any unacknowledged AI-facilitated work **and** acknowledged AI-facilitated work without considerable edition and critical revision will be considered cheating and will be directly reported. Students should never submit any work generated or supported by an AI program as their own. Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including full revocation of credit for the assignment, and other sanctions.

Class Conduct

All students are expected to behave in a becoming manner, both in-person and online. Sensitive topics may be addressed during discussion, and passionate opinions are welcome. However, each student should remain respectful and civil throughout, and avoid using inflammatory language or taking insubordinate action by practicing equitable etiquette/netiquette.

Contacting the instructor

If you have individual questions, you can set up a time to meet either in-person or via Zoom.

To contact me, use UTT email or Canvas messenger. Per the [UTT Email Policy](#), I will not reply to emails sent from non-UTT email addresses.

Emails and Canvas messages should provide a succinct overview of the topic and be written using complete sentences, reasonably correct grammar, and proper structure. In the subject line list the class (ENGL4374), your name, and a topic.

University Policies and Information

Go to our class Canvas for information relating University Policies.

Student Resources

Go to our class Canvas for information relating University Policies.

This syllabus is a product of many educators' hard work, generosity, and support including accessible online syllabi. I give special thanks to UT Tyler's English department faculties and staff and my former colleagues at Michigan State University.