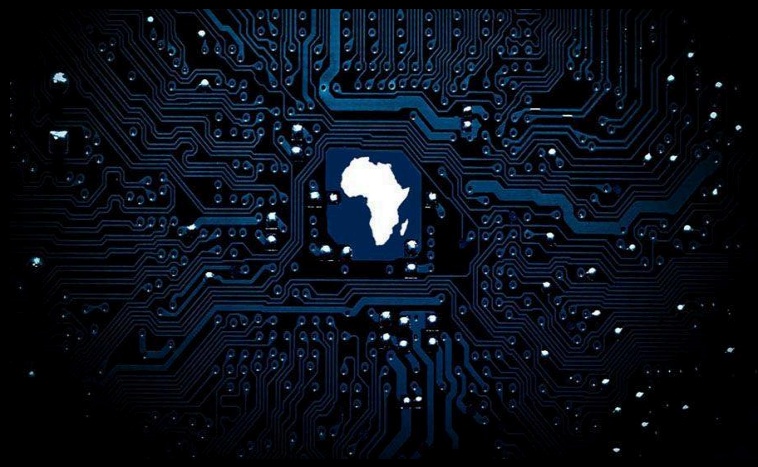


The Digital Black Atlantic

Prof. Ama Bemma Adwetewa-Badu, PhD
Email: AmaBemma@wustl.edu
Office: 220 Duncker Hall
ENGL 3525 | Time: M/W
11:30am-12:50pm | Location: Eads 215 |
Spring 2026
Student Hours: By Appointment [Link]

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
In this course, we'll be bridging two interdisciplinary fields- the digital humanities and Black diaspora studies- in order to examine how technology has mediated new engagements with the Black Atlantic. Following the concept of "juxtaposition," what Kelly Baker Josephs and Roopika Risam see as the intersection "of disciplines, cultures, and methods" (*The Digital Black Atlantic* 2021), this course will consist of traditional class discussion, writing assignments, and lab days that bridge theory, method, and application. Ultimately, we will aim to discover how scholars utilize digital tools to engage with and better understand the cultures, histories, and literatures of the Black diaspora. We will examine a broad range of scholarship, such as Brittle Paper, an online literary magazine, "Digital Nollywood," "The Global Poetics Project," and "Archive of Languages and Oral Resources of Africa," which are digital archives and repositories, "Migration Stories: Africans in Midwestern Communities," a digital storytelling initiative, and the web series "Left of Black," which is a multimedia source. Throughout the semester, students will learn to work with DH tools like Voyant and Omeka, will conduct text analysis, develop maps and network models, and learn how to utilize and build databases. Readings and classwork will be supplemented by practicums, and a small-scale final DH project will serve as an entry-point into both the public and digital humanities. This course may fulfill the global or minority literatures requirement for students who declare an English major in the fall 2021 semester and beyond.

Course Schedule

Week 1
8/24: Welcome to the course

8/26: Introduction to Digital Humanities projects & the course [Practicum 0 & 1]
Please come in prepared to discuss some of the projects in the archive.

(Navigating the) Digital (as a No-Code, Low-Code, Minimal-Computing) Humanist

- "Navigating the Global Digital Humanities: Insights from Black Feminism," By Roopika Risam, pp. 359-367 [Link]
- "Micro DH: Digital Humanities at the Small Scale," Roopika Risam [Link]
- "Introduction: The Questions of Minimal Computing," Roopika Risam and Alex Gil [Link]
- "The User, the Learner and the Machines We Make," Alex Gil [Link]
- "Minimal Definitions," Jentery Sayers [Link]

Look up the terms "no-code," "low-code," and "minimal computing."
Complete the WashU AI literacy module now so that you have access to it in the next few weeks.

Week 2

8/31: An Exploration of: Black DH, African DH, Decolonial DH [Practicum 2]

- Kim Gallon, Making a Case for the Black Digital Humanities
- Roopika Risam, Decolonizing the Digital Humanities in Theory and Practice
- Kelly Baker Jospehs and Roopika Risam, Introduction to The Digital Black Atlantic
- Alan Liu, "Toward a Diversity Stack: Digital Humanities and Diversity as Technical Problem" [Link]
- Review 3 of the following sites from The University of Kansas African DH project resource page: https://africandh.ku.edu/resources (skip the GPP). Be prepared to offer an in-depth walk through with the class.

9/2: Humanities Data and Metadata Part 1 [Practicum 3] **(Pilar)**

- *Understanding Metadata What Is Metadata, And What Is It For?*, only pp.1-7, Jenn Riley [Link]
- "Going Meta on Metadata," Michael Kramer [Link]
- "Digital humanities projects and standards: Let's get this conversation started!," Michelle Urberg [Link]
- Daniel Rosenberg, "Data Before the Fact," [Link]
- "Digital African Literatures and the Coloniality of Data," James Yeku [Link]

Explore these examples:

1. https://plateauportal.libraries.wsu.edu/digital-heritage/root-gathering-bag-3
2. https://plateauportal.libraries.wsu.edu/
3. https://baltimoreuprising2015.org/
4. "Mukurtu CMS: An Indigenous Archive and Publishing Tool," [Link]

Week 3

9/7: No Class- Labor Day

9/9: Humanities Data and Metadata Part 2

- "Big? Smart? Clean? Messy? Data in the Humanities," Christof Schöch [Link]
- "Data Cleaning: An overview of categories data cleaning, general techniques, and available platforms for data cleaning"[Link]
- OpenRefine Guide [Link]
- Download: Open Refine [Link]. Please do this before class.
- Create: A Claude account

Review the following links:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heinemann_African_Writers_Series

- https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/73176.African_Writers_Series

[We will work on practicum 4 together in class. Please download Open Refine before class]

Week 4

9/14: Data Visualization: Network Analysis [Practicum 4a and 5] (**Lily**)

- "Cheat Sheet: Social Network Analysis for Humanists," Marten Düring [Link]
- "Postcolonial Network Analysis of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," Lestari Manggong and Mohamad Noor Rizal [Link]
- Elijah Meeks and Scott B. Weingart, "Introduction to Network Analysis and Representation" — click on the tabs for "centrality, " "clustering coefficient," etc. for brief interactive tutorials [Link]
- Franco Moretti, "Network Theory, Plot Analysis" [Link]

9/16: Digital Visualization: Maps Meeting with with Sarah Swanz

Explore the following visualization projects:

- Mapping Inequality [Link]
- The Decolonial Atlas [Link]
- Urban Africa [Link]
- Not related to the course, but very interesting: Dante's Inferno [Link]

Week 5:

9/21: Digital Visualization: Maps, Charts, and Graphs [Practicum 6] (**Natasha**)

- "Finding the Right Tools for Mapping," Olivia Ildefonso [Link]
- "Visualizing Sovereignty," Yarimar Bonilla and Max Hantel [Link]
- "Dividing Lines. Mapping platforms like Google Earth have the legacies of colonialism programmed into them," Mayukh Sen [Link]
- "A Review of 'Two Plantations'," Jessica Marie Johnson [Link]
- "Unmapping the Caribbean: Toward a Digital Praxis of Archipelagic Sounding," Tao Goffe [Link]

Explore the following visualization projects:

- Slave Revolt in Jamaica, 1760-1761 [Link]
- Mapping Inequality [Link]
- Renewing Inequality [Link]
- The Decolonial Atlas [Link]
- Two Plantations [Link or Link]

9/23: Digital Archives **(Pilar)**

- "Introduction: Beyond Digital Hype and Digital Anxiety," in *The Theory and Craft of Digital Preservation*, focus especially on the "Sixteen Guiding Digital Preservation Axioms" (pgs 4-9), Trevor Owens. [Link]
- "On Collections As Data Imperative," Library of Congress, Thomas Padilla [Link]
- "Generative Tensions: Building a Digital Project on Early African American Race Film," Miriam Posner and Marika Ciford [Link]
- "Colonial Violence and the Postcolonial Digital Archive" in *New Digital Worlds*, Roopika Risam [Link]

- Jessica Marie Johnson, "Markup Bodies: Black [Life] Studies and Slavery [Death] Studies at the Digital Crossroads" (2018) PDF File
    - As accompaniment to Jessica Marie Johnson's essay, explore Slave Voyages (including the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database)

Explore the following examples:

- Early Caribbean Digital Archive [Link]
- The Colored Conventions Project [Link]
    - Read/Watch: Introduction, Principles, The Colored Conventions Project in Three Videos (watch the 3 videos), Explore the Digital Records, Download and Explore the CCP Corpus, Explore Exhibits (select at least 1 exhibit to explore at depth or skim)
- Revisualize Archives: https://revisualizearchives.com/

Week 6

9/28: Text Analysis Part 1 [Practicum 7] (**Lily**)

- "Coding for the Many, Transforming Knowledge for All: Annotating Digital Documents," Elton Barker, Anna Foka and Kyriaki Konstantinidou [Link]
- "Text Analysis for Thought in the Black Atlantic," in the *Digital Black Atlantic*, Sayan Bhattacharyya [Link]
- "Austin Clarke's Digital Crossings," in the *Digital Black Atlantic*, Paul Barrett [Link]

Explore the following examples:

- Haiti: An Island Luminous [Link]
- Models of Modernism [Link]

9/30: Text Analysis Part 2 [Practicum 8- We will work on this in class]

- "Race and Distant Reading," Richard Jean So and Edwin Roland [Link]
- In class lab

Week 7: Artificial Reality/ Virtual Reality

10/5: No Class- Fall Break

10/7: Meet in the library. Session with Harper Tooch. Room Olin A07

- Explore this project designed by https://africandigitalheritage.org/ : Rendered stills of the Kamiriithu Theatre _ 3D Reconstruction
    - They would like to know your experience with their project. If you are willing to write a few sentences/a short paragraph, please send it to me.
- Explore: https://gederuins.co.ke/virtualtour/
- Explore Black Rhino RV's portfolio: https://www.blackrhinovr.com/portfolio/

Week 8

10/12: Digital Storytelling and Digital/ Social Media (**Natasha**)

- "Hulu: Your Attention Please," Tao Leigh Goffe
- "Media and Cultural Hybridity in the Digital Humanities," Élika Ortega [Link]

- "Digital Queer Witnessing: Testimony, Contested Virtual Heritage, and the Apartheid Archive in Soweto, Johannesburg," in *The Digital Black Atlantic*, Angel David Nieves [Link]
- "SHGIS Social Justice History Platform (Preview)," Angel David Nieves [Link]
- "Signifying Shade as We #RaceTogether Drinking Our #NewStarbucksDrink 'White Privilege Americana Extra Whip'," in *The Digital Black Atlantic,* Toniesha L. Taylor [Link]
- Yékú, James, and Ayobami Ojebode. "From Google Doodles to Facebook: Nostalgia and Visual Reconstructions of the Past in Nigeria." African Studies Review, 2021.

10/14: Project Pitch [Project Proposal (directions on website) due before class]

A note about weeks 9-14.

At the start of each class, be prepared to give an extremely brief and informal (1-minute) spiel about how the project is going, what your intentions are for that particular work session, and what forms of support you need (either from Prof. Adwetewa-Badu or your peers).

Week 9
10/10: co-working
10/21: co-working

Week 10
10/26: co-working
10/28: co-working

Week 11
11/2: co-working
11/4: co-working

Week 12
11/9: co-working
10/11: co-working

Week 13
11/16: project team meetings with me in my office/ co-working
11/18: project team meetings with me in my office/ co-working

Week 14
11/23: Co-working
11/25: NO CLASS - Thanksgiving break

Week 15
11/30: co-working
12/2: co-working

Week 16: 12/07: Final Presentations

Final project and papers due a week after presentations

Learning Objectives

- Understand the historically shifting characteristics, debates, and terms behind key concepts of the course, especially Digital Humanities and the iterations of it in African DH and Black DH.
- Analyze digital projects, media, and texts as well as develop a vocabulary for thinking about how new technologies and methodologies enable new ways of engaging these "texts."
- Critically examine the relationship between digital technologies and the humanities, broadly conceived as an interdisciplinary field of study.
- Develop evidence-based arguments and interpretations about and using digital technologies.
- To consider how and when to use new methodologies for literary and cultural studies.
- Practice research skills for critically engaging with, assessing, and intervening in theoretical arguments and scholarship for both academic and public audiences.

Optional Texts:

The Digital Black Atlantic, Roopika Risam and Kelly Baker Josephs

Assignments and Grading

All assignments should be submitted on time. If you need an extension, please reach out. If you hand in late work, your final grade will drop by a third of a letter grade for each day it is late. Please speak with me if you believe that you will have an issue meeting a deadline. Labs and Canvas posts can't be submitted late.

Labs/ Canvas Posts: 20%
Leading Class Discussions: 10%
Final Paper: 20%
Digital Project: 50%

All practicums can be found at:
https://amabadu.com/labs-posts

Grading Scale:	
97-100	A+
94-96	A
90-93	A-
87-90	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
75-79	C+
70-74	C
60-69	D
59-Below	F

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

This is a conversation class, which means a major part of the work of the class comes from our discussions. Attendance at all sessions is important! I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences, but you are permitted four absences. Any absences beyond that will lower your participation grade by a third of a grade point (i.e., a B+ becomes a B. a B- becomes a C+). If you are not in the classroom within 15 minutes of the start time, you will be considered tardy. Being tardy three times will count as one absence. It is good to be in class on time. If that's not possible on any particular day, it is better to be late than to not show up at all. If you are ill or need to quarantine, please stay at home and rest. Please make sure to email me so that I know you're ok and will be missing class. If you miss part/all of a lecture, assume that you have missed "important"

information. Please get notes from a classmate. Afterward, if you still have questions, by all means, come see me.

Gizmos and Gadgets
Technology in the classroom has the tremendous potential to draw us deeper into a state of engagement by providing a way to efficiently take notes or look up information that can supplement the discussion. Technology can also, however, disrupt our engagement. You may use technology in the classroom to read assignments and to bring in your work, but please ask yourself if the technology is drawing you into class or pulling you away (i.e. with distractions such as checking your email, social media, or reading for another class). Please be judicious and conscientious in your use of technology.

Submissions
Submit a digital version of everything (.docx or .doc, not .pdf, .pages or google docs links) through email: amabemma@wustl.edu. Write our class number and the name of the assignment in the subject line. Bring short assignments to our meetings, either printed out or on a device, in case you want to share your writing with the class.

Extensions
During the semester, I will not accept work that is late by more than three days. In the case of the essay deadlines for the mid-semester or longer essays, this will not directly affect your grade because of the portfolio system; you simply lose that opportunity for me to read your work in draft form and provide you with feedback. So, it's always better to hand in something. For short, two-day extensions, ask before the day of. Labs and Canvas posts can't be submitted late.

Academic Integrity, Honesty, Collaboration, and Citation
All learning is inherently collaborative and interactive. We all discover our thoughts and refine our perspectives by coming into intimate contact with others' thoughts and perspectives. Because of this proximity with others' language and ideas, it is important that we all act consistently with the principles of academic honor. Plagiarism is the use of another person's ideas or writing without giving them proper credit. Please know that plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will be understood as very serious offenses that may result in an F for the assignment. All suspected instances of academic dishonesty will be investigated and will result in a failing grade for the course. For more on the University policy on academic integrity, see
ucollege.wustl.edu/faculty/academic_integrity

The Public Domain
All of the work that you produce for this class may be read by myself and anyone else in the class. I expect all students to treat every other student's written and spoken work with respect.

Email
I respond to emails on weekdays between 10am-5pm. Please allow 72 hours for a response. See https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/636/01/ for a guide on email etiquette. Please make sure to include the name of our class in the email messages. However, if your email implies a very long answer, please come and see me during office hours. I am typically also available in the classroom right before/after the lectures.

Accommodations for Disabilities
If you have a disability or health concern that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require adjustments or accommodations, please visit Disability Services at students.wustl.edu/disabilityresources/. Accommodations may require early planning. Please contact them as soon as possible.

