Digital Methods and Cultures Seminar – Annotated Bibliography

*Ordered thematically

<u>**Digital Cultures:**</u>

Manovich, Lev. *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT Press, 2001.

Manovich's book has become a significant point for discussion by thinkers on digital cultures and new media in the twenty-first century, and is often considered as marking a turning-point between approaches to digital cultures and materialities in the 1990s and subsequent developments. The approach seeks to position new media within a specific cultural and historical context, discussing how it relies on earlier conventions, particularly in visual cultures. It combines theoretical approaches from art history, literary theory, software studies and especially film theory and the history of cinema. Manovich draws connections between cinema and of new media, and suggests there are important ties between avant-garde film and new media. It's been an important reference-text for a number of subsequent works, for example Galloway's *The Interface Effect* (2012).

Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006.

Chun is an unusually clear and lucid writer on the impact of digital technologies on society and individuals, and this book offers an influential commentary on social, literary, and political approaches to the internet in the 1990s and early 2000s. Chun draws on Deleuze and Foucault to challenge perceptions of the internet as a "medium of freedom," and uses case studies ranging from advertisements to literary works to demonstrate how networked contact fails to transcend established perceptions of race and gender. Good companion pieces include Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control" (1992), Lisa Nakamura's *Cybertypes* (2002) and essays in *The World Wide Web and Contemporary Cultural Theory* (2000)

Kirschenbaum, Matthew G. *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination*. Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT Press, 2008. Print.

Kirschenbaum's writing in Mechanisms is highly technical at times, but it's worth persevering, however, as it's a thoughtful and influential consideration of the "materiality" of new media. Kirschenbaum draws on a wide range of sources and influences drawn from software studies, cultural theory, as well as analysing digital literary works. His overall thesis aims to disprove the popular 1990s conception of digital texts as essentially ephemeral, so this is also an important

work in tracing changing conceptions of digital technologies. Interesting companion texts include Jussi Parikka's What is Media Archaeology? (2012) and chapters 1 and 2 of Programmed Visions by Wendy Chun (2011).

Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Think: Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis*. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 2012. Print.

It's difficult to select a single text by Hayles as she has been a tremendously influential critic and theorist at the intersection of literary study and digital environments over the past twenty years. This work is a useful starting-point, since it combines commentary on academic study in the "digital humanities" with broader speculation about how digital media are affecting our approach to reading and concentration. It's also a good introduction to Hayles's thought and writing, as she tends to rework topics and approaches discussed in her earlier texts. Hayles responds directly to Nicholas Carr's *The Shallows* (2011), and other companion pieces include her own *Writing Machines* and *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), and Lisa Gitelman's *Always Already New* (2006).

<u>Digital Methods:</u>

*Introduction to Digital Methods in Humanities Research:
Schreibman, Susan; Siemens, Ray; Unsworth, John (eds.) *A Companion to Digital Humanities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004)
http://www.digitalhumanities.org/companion/

Schreibman, Susan; Siemens, Ray (eds.) *A Companion to Digital Literary Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008)
http://www.digitalhumanities.org/companionDLS/

Both these volumes are an excellent starting point for introductions to the field as well as for more advanced reading. The *Companion to Digital Humanities* provides a history of the use of digital methods in the humanities as well as an overview of the interactions between digital methods and humanistic research in specific disciplines - such as art history, classics, linguistics, literary studies, music, performing arts, etc. (Part I). This volume also provides introductions to certain technical aspects of working with digital tools in the humanities and relates them to theoretical and epistemological debates within the field (Part II). It therefore also explores key issues related to carrying out humanistic research with digital tools and provides examples of different applications of humanities research projects using digital methods and tools (Part III and IV).

The *Companion to Digital Literary Studies* is more focused on the use of digital methods in the field of literary studies - it provides histories of the different uses of digital methods in literary studies and addresses key issues specific to working with digital methods in literary studies. Both these volumes are available online free and open-access.

*Humanities Computing:
McCarty, Willard. *Humanities Computing* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2005)

Willard McCarthy is a prominent figure in the field of humanities computing (now also know as "digital humanities") since the mid 1980s. *Humanities Computing* considers the use of digital tools in humanities research as an emerging field. It seeks to address some of criticisms levied against digital methods in humanities research and engages with philosophical, historical, ethnographic and critical perspectives to show how the use of computings tools and methods is not incompatible with humanistic enquiry and can be a valuable resource for asking better questions. It also considers crucial issues for the development of humanities computing as a discipline and sketches out an agenda for the future of the discipline.

*Distant reading:
Moretti, Franco, "Conjectures on World Literature" *New Left Review*, I, Jan/Feb 2000
http://newleftreview.org/II/1/franco-moretti-conjectures-on-world-literature

Moretti is a major figure for introducing digital tools in the study of literature and culture. He coined the term "distant reading in his article "Conjectures on World Literature" and refined the concept in his later works such as *Graphs, Maps and Trees* published in 2005. Distant reading consists in using quantitative analyses of the content in or information about a large number of texts or items to bring to light patterns of interest for analysis which would not be visible without relying on these techniques. Crucially Moretti relies on the processing and analysing of the data for his analyses without reading the actual texts (hence the term "distant reading" as opposed to "close reading"). Moretti's work is controversial, and his concept of distant reading changes throughout his own work, but he remains a key figure for opening up debates about digital methods in humanities scholarship, and many scholars have taken Moretti as their starting point for framing and developing their own theoretical and methodological frameworks.

*Cultural Analytics:
Manovich et al., "How to Compare One Million Images" in Understanding Digital Humanities, ed. David Berry (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)
http://softwarestudies.com/cultural_analytics/2011.How_To_Compare_One_Million_Images.pdf

Cultural analytics relates to distant reading in many ways, primarily in that they both rely on digital tools and methods to explore aggregated patterns and relations between items in large corpora for cultural analysis. However, cultural analytics is more strongly focussed on visual data. Lev Manovic coined the term cultural analytics to describe the work he does using large screen displays and digital capacities to analyze, organize, sort, and computationally process large numbers of images. The properties of images differ from those of texts and working with images in digital form raises a number of specific issues which constitutes a core focus for cultural analytics.

*Algorithmic Reading:
Ramsay, Stephen. *Reading Machines: Toward an Algorithmic Criticism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011)

In his work Ramsay seeks to bridge the gap he sees between computation methods and literary studies. He aims to highlight how computational text analysis can open up new fields of investigation for literary criticism, and that digital methods can have a valuable impact on the interpretative analysis of texts in ways that were not previously possible. He therefore aims to rectify the misperception that computational techniques are disconnected from humanistic epistemology. He starts by pointing to the similarities (both historically and methodologically) between traditional literary criticism and computational text analysis which he terms "algorithmic criticism". He then develops further the idea of algorithmic criticism (which involves not only news means of handling vast amounts of data but also brings to the fore questions of subjectivity in critical analysis) and he ends with examples of analyses and types of tools used in these analyses.