Module Title: Criticism and Code: Digital Practices for English Studies

Module Code: ESH6087

Credit Value: 15

Level: 6

Pre-requisite modules:

Content Description

We live in a digital age. As students of English we operate within digital environments. But as humanities scholars we can often be resistant -- for both good and bad reasons -- to the power of technology for enabling and transforming the study of literature. What possibilities does the massive digitization of the textual past offer to literary scholarship? To what extent can computers read and interpret this textual past? What can they tell us -- and what can we tell them? A range of critical, theoretical, and practical angles will be brought to bear upon this enquiry. Class reading and discussion will survey key works of scholarship in what has come to be known as the Digital Humanities, assessing tools, techniques, and methods including distant reading, machine learning, text encoding, and network analysis. We will ask how digital approaches might enrich, challenge, or revise core concepts of literary study like interpretation, history, genre, and style. As students on the module, you will also become acquainted with a wide range of available digital tools by using them as instruments of literary inquiry. There are no prerequisites for taking this module: all necessary technical training will be provided as part of the regular teaching. Weekly workshop sessions will offer opportunities for practical work, including the preparation of a collaborative online project directed towards the creation of an online scholarly edition of an important literary text. Assessment will reward your engagement with the in-class discussions and your willingness to experiment, as well as to read and think.