

**Carleton University
Late Summer 2016
Department of English**

**ENGL 4155A/5900S / DIGH 4001: Studies in Digital Humanities
Introduction to Electronic Poetry**

Prerequisite(s): DIGH 2002 and fourth-year Honours standing, or permission of the department

Times of lectures: Tuesday & Thursday, 11:35 AM – 2:25 PM

Location: TBA (*Please confirm location on Carleton Central*)

Instructor: Chris Tanasescu (MARGENTO)

Email: chris.tanasescu@carleton.ca

Office: TBA

Phone: 613-282-3307; 613-858-3788

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, by appointment

The course is an introduction to the main concepts, moments, and developments in electronic—digital and computational—poetry. Its first part involves a chronological, thematic, and technical presentation of the main moments in electronic poetry, from the “prehistoric” (C.T. Funkhouser’s term) to the “classic” digital poem to video and then to the most recent tendencies and advances in interactive and interdisciplinary electronic poetry, to multi-, inter- or new-media, to animation, cross-art, and performance digital poetry.

As part of its main objectives, the course then tracks, analyzes, exemplifies—and also encourages the students to explore on their own—the connections between electronic poetry and major schools, movements, and trends in 20th and 21st century poetry: Dadaism and the traditional avant-gardes—by looking into the permutational and combinatorial paradigms in digital poetry—, modernism (and postmodernism)—from modernist protohypertexts to digital experiments on language and form to computer-processed or computer-generated political, cultural, and ecological critique—, conceptual, concrete, and visual poetry—from traditional mathematical or generative formalisms (Oulipo et al.) and concretism to nowadays time-sensitive/interactive/multimedia/performative electronic poetry.

Another major component of the course focuses on computer-assisted creative writing or computer-generated poetry. While being introduced to some of the most remarkable trends and accomplishments in the field, the students shall be encouraged to do research on and experiment with such tools, and thus understand the basics of algorithmic thinking and coding as related to electronic poetry. Familiarization with such topics and experiments shall help to explore and re(de)fine the typical and dynamically evolving position of the reader of electronic poetry as user, (actual, acting, and actualizing) (co-)author, watcher, player, and performer.

A fourth chapter is dedicated to elucidating the distinction between digital and computational poetry which shall occasion an introduction to the main topics and accomplishments in poetry computational analysis as part of the wider field of Natural Language Processing and Computational Literature, and closely correlated with Machine Learning. How can machines learn, classify, analyze, and generate poetic diction, form, and style? What are the

most advanced and innovative theoretical approaches and computational tools used in analyzing poetry, and what are the most remarkable programming accomplishments in generating poetry by observing various genre-related constraints? Thoroughly asking such questions and investigating their multiple possible answers shall help us understand the crucial contribution of computational analysis and machine learning to poetry criticism and poetics, as well as to poetry writing/generation within the subject of Digital Humanities.

Last but not least, the course familiarizes the students with the major resources and databases in the field—Buffalo Electronic Poetry Center, eliterature.org, Penn Sound, Ubuweb, etc.—and encourages them to discover, analyze, assess, and integrate in their own work new resources, approaches, and directions in electronic poetry.

Types of assignments, weighting, and due dates:

- a. 1 seminar (20 – 25 min) on a scholarly article, due in assigned class – 15%;
- b. 1 short paper (2 pages) analyzing a work of electronic poetry not approached in class – August 4th – 15%;
- c. Attendance, participation, workshop and discussion group contributions – 15%;
- d. Midterm Test (1h 30min) – July 26th – 25%;
- e. Final Project with Rapid Fire Presentation – August 16th – 30%.

On the Final Project:

An essay-project due on August 13—at least 8-page long, out of which at least 5 pages on the general electronic poetry context and related previous works in the field, and at least 3 pages on your own proposed electronic or computational poetry project. The latter has to present a concept/idea regarding a new electronic poetry work or poetry computational analysis project, and its possible implementation(s) and implications/advantages in the field of digital poetry and electronic literature—or literary computational analysis, respectively. Although no actual computer programming or coding elements are expected or required, reference to that in the general context of the subject matter will be appreciated, and so will be ideas regarding or even tentative steps towards a collaboration with (a) programmer(s) over a future actual implementation of the project. The concept may also involve social media and/or crowdsourcing and/or (poly)media apps scenarios. On handing it in, each author shall give a rapid fire (10 min) presentation on the main points in their project and will take questions from the course instructor and classmates. All students are strongly encouraged to discuss with the course instructor their project idea, outline, and references as early as possible and throughout the duration of the course but no later than August 6.

Schedule:

1. Introduction to Electronic Poetry. Literary, Cultural, and Historical Contexts. Digital and/versus Computational Poetry. Electronic Poetry and Digital Humanities – July 5th
2. An Outline of the “Prehistory” and History of Digital Poetry. Tools, Methods, and Media in Evolution. Avatars of the Text and the Issue of Form and Experimentation in Digital and Computational Poetry – July 7th

[Reading: “How To Make a Dadaist Poem” and “Dada Manifesto” (Tzara); “Ovonovelo” and “From Dante to the Post-Concrete” (de Campos); “Chronology” and “Introduction” (Funkhouser)]

3. Digital Poetry and the Traditional Avant-gardes. The Impact and Constraints of Data (and) Input. The Poem as Variable and/or Aleatory Output. Permutational and Combinatorial Poetics—from Classic to the Digital – July 12th

[“Text Generation,” “Historical Forebears,” “Technological Methods,” “Typology,” and “Permutation”; “Combinatoric Poems;” “Verse Forms” and “Slotted Works;” “Alternative Permutations” and “Travesty Extended” (Funkhouser)]

4. Conceptual Roots and Developments in “Page Poetry” and/through the Digital Poetry of the 20th and 21st Century. Digital Poetry and Its Concrete Poetry Background. From Visual to Video to Multi/inter/transmedia Poetry. Image and/as/vs Text: from Decoding to Recoding – July 14th

[“Animated Poetry” (Bootz) & “Animation/Kineticism” (Stefans); “Digital and Net Art” (Simanowski); “Videopoetry (de Melo e Castro);” “Mimesis, Coding, Programming” (Sisik)]

5. The Question of (Digital) Media; Media Studies 2.0. The Textual Media Perspective. The Critical Code Approach. Poetry as Code, Code as Poetry – July 19th

[“Making, Critique...” (Hayles & Pressman); “Critical Code Studies” (Marino); “Digital Code and Literary Text” (Cramer); “Becoming Digital” (Merrin); “Characteristics of Digital Media” (Golumbia)]

6. Midterm Exam (1st half; workshop and discussion group in the second half, as usual) – July 21st

7. Multi-sensory Approaches. The User’s/and the Body as (Co-)author in the Age of Web 2.0 and Beyond. Digital Poetry as Virtual (Cross-Artform) Lab. The Platform Studies Context and Digital Poetry as/within Computer Games – July 26th

[“Body and Machine in Electronic Literature” (Hayles); “Games as Art/Literature” (Ciccoricco) & “Platform” (Montfort & Bogost); Bouchardon’s Projects “Touch” and “Loss...” (Funkhouser)]

8. Politics, Cultural Criticism, and Gender in Electronic Poetry. Critical Digital Studies and Electronic Poetry – July 28th

[“Gender and Media Use” (Page) & “Gender Representation” (Knight); Ferraiolo’s Project “End of Capitalism” (Funkhouser); “Becoming Dragon” (Cardenas); “Territories of Resistance” (Kennedy)]

9. Digital vs Computational Poetry. Authorship vs the Automatic. From Hypertext to Cybertext to the Writing Machines. Technotexts. Databases in/as Poetry. Natural Language Processing, Machine Learning, and Computer-generated Poetry – August 2nd

[“Machine Learning and Automated Text Categorization” (Sebastiani); “Poetry Classification by Meter and Rhyme as Part of the Graph Poem Project” (MARGENTO et al.); “Evolutionary Algorithms for Poetry Generation” (Manurung); “Writing Machines” (Winder); “Performance Stylistics in Poetry” (O’Halloran)]

10. Computational Analysis of Traditional and Electronic Poetry. The Come-back of Traditional Poetic Form in Computational Poetry. Digitized vs Digital vs “Born Digital” – August 4th

["Meter Evaluation; Line-by-line Generation" (Manurung); "A Computational Analysis of Style, Affect, and Imagery in Contemporary Poetry" (Kao & Jurafsky); "Time Code Language" (Cayley); "Performance Stylistics" (II) (O'Halloran)]

11. Last-hour Directions and Future Perspectives in Electronic Poetry (I). Web-based Poetry and the Global (Techno-)Culture. Digital Performance Poetry – August 9th

["Fused Forms and Styles" through "Polyformally Advancing" (Funkhouser); "Encounters with a Digital Poem" (Funkhouser); "Sonic Dimensions" (Kennedy); "Meta-media" (Manovich)]

12. Last-hour Directions and Future Perspectives in Electronic Poetry (II). Electronic Poetry and World Literature. Electronic Poetry and the Digital Humanities 3rd Wave Prophecies. Social Media, Crowdsourcing, and Polymediation in(to) Electronic Poetry. Post- and Trans-Digital Poetry – August 11th

[Sondheim and Baldwin's "Second Life" (Funkhouser); "Social Media" (Ross); "Uncertainty in Knowledge Representation" (Kouw et al.); "Digital Humanities 2.0 Manifesto" (Schnapp et al.); "Digital Humanities 2.0 Report on Knowledge" (Presner); "What Is 'Post-Digital'" (Cramer); From *Postdigital Aesthetics* (ed. Berry)]

13. Final Project Presentations – August 16th

Classes will usually be split, with a 15-min break around 1 PM separating the lecture and workshop/discussion group components. During the workshop and discussion we will introduce significant electronic poetry works available online and other critical works to give you a greater range of possible topics for your assignments. The workshop activities will involve interactive individual and team work evaluating and responding to the electronic poems under discussion. For that to be possible, we all need to bring our laptops/tablets and be able to connect to the university WiFi. Any changes to the schedule will be announced ahead of time.

COURSE TEXTS, PORTALS, Online LIBRARIES, and DATABASES (available in the library and/or online):

Buffalo Electronic Poetry Center website, <http://epc.buffalo.edu/>

Cramer, Florian. "Digital Code and Literary Text," 2001,

http://www.netzliteratur.net/cramer/digital_code_and_literary_text.html

Delmonte, Rodolfo. "Computing Poetry Style," ESSEM IA AI 2013

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbxxtYXJnZW50b2dyYXBocG9ldHJ5fGd4OjM3NGIxNzAzMTYxY2M3Nw>

Electronic Literature Collection, vol. 1, <http://collection.eliterature.org/1/>

Electronic Literature Collection, vol. 2, <http://collection.eliterature.org/2/>

Funkhouser, C.T. *Prehistoric Digital Poetry: An Archeology of Forms, 1959 – 1995*. Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2007

Funkhouser, C.T. *New Directions in Digital Poetry*. New York: Continuum Books, 2012

Glazier, Loss Pequeño. *Digital Poetics: The Making of E-Poetics*. Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2008

Hayles, N. Katherine. *Writing Machines*. Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002

Hayles, N. Katherine. *Electronic Literature*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008
Kao, Justine and Dan Jurafsky. "A Computational Analysis of Style, Affect, and Imagery in Contemporary Poetry," 2012

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbntYXJnZW50b2dyYXBocG9ldHJ5fGd4OjQ4OTk5YTczYzkyY2MxMDM>

Kroaker, Arthur and Marilouise, eds. *Critical Digital Studies. A Reader*. 2nd Edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013

Morris, Adelaide and Thomas Swiss, eds. *New Media Poetics. Contexts, Technotexts, and Theories*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2006

Some of the publications above are bulky volumes and only certain chapters or articles (to be announced during the introductory lecture and/or two weeks prior to the respective session) in them are directly related to the subjects discussed in class. However, you are strongly encouraged to read extensively from them to broaden your knowledge and find possible topics and comparative background for your assignments. Other publications and resources will also be made available online and in class.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is not tolerated under any circumstances. Demonstrated plagiarism shall result in failing the course. If you are unsure about the applicable referencing rules, consult a relevant citation guide (i.e. APA, MLA, etc.) or [speak to your instructor](#). The Carleton Academic Integrity Policy is available on campus and also on the Web at:

http://www1.carleton.ca/studentaffairs/ccms/wp-content/ccms-files/academic_integrity_policy.pdf

Late assignments:

Failing in handing in assignments on time will result in a 10% decrease in final grade per day of delay.

Request for Academic Accommodation:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#).

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class

scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the [PMC website](#) for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).