

Digital Lab Assignment (Detailed)

Schedule/Preparation: Over the next four sessions, we will explore digital scholarship in preparation for our analysis of a corpora on contemporary student activism.

Monday, September 28 (Virtual) – Intro to Digital Scholarship/Freedman Center

In this workshop, I will provide an introduction to digital scholarship and provide an overview of the different digital resources available within the Freedman Center. NOTE: In preparation for this session, students will explore different digital projects and consider the relevance of “digital scholarship” to civic/community engagement

Wednesday, September 30 (Virtual) – Student Activism Database and Intro to Voyant

In this workshop, I will provide an overview on how the student activism database was constructed, including the software used and the decisions made to categorize the different databases. I will also introduce Voyant and the different tools/methods of analysis. NOTE: In preparation for this session, we will read two short introductions to text analysis: Benjamin Peck, “[Data Science for History: Distant Reading](#)” and Kathryn Schultz, “[The Mechanic Muse: What is Distant Reading?](#)”)

Monday, October 5 (Virtual) – Research Questions

In this seminar, we will discuss the readings on student activism and expand our research questions. We will also experiment, as a class, with Voyant and the corpora.

Monday, October 12; Wednesday October 14; and Monday, October 19; and Wednesday, October 21 – Digital Labs devoted to group work (digital experiments, analysis, and report writing)

- Wednesday, October 7 – Introduction Framing and Methods
- Monday, October 12 – Cleaning the Data (Stop Words)
- Wednesday, October 14 – Research and Close Reading
- Monday, October 19 – Experimenting with Visualizations
- Wednesday, October 21 – The Data Suggests... (Reporting on Findings)

Exploratory Inquiry:

Guiding Questions (with methodology)

- Compare and contrast the sentiment analysis corpora. What do you notice in comparing “negative reporting” versus “positive reporting”? What does comparing the two reveal about student activism?
- Compare and contrast the top publishers corpora. How did newspapers report on student activism? Were there differences across country papers? (NOTE: You can run this experiment with the sentiment analysis).
- Compare and contrast the political groupings. What was the nature of student activism the past three years according to this database (That is, what were the political motivations, interests, and/or tactics)?
- Visualize each corpora using DreamScape and examine the links in context. Then, consider: To what extent and in what ways (how) was student activism linked over the past 3 years?
- Examine the corpora (chronology) using the trends tool. What trends emerge when exploring student activism from 2017-2020?

NOTE: On October 7, we will also develop some possible research questions to consider.

Methodological Guidelines

Each corpus has been constructed for a comparative analysis. Given this, follow these guidelines. I will use the Publishers corpora as an example (but you will do this process with each corpora):

Step 1: Open a new window (Safari or Chrome) and go to Voyant

Step 2: Upload corpus #1 (e.g. NY Times)

Step 3: Open a new tab and upload corpus #2 (e.g. The Guardian). Do this step for each publisher

Step 4: You should have a total of five tabs open, with each publisher. Now, begin to compare the visualizations.

- What do you immediately notice after uploading a text to Voyant?
- What stands out, or catches your attention?
- What types of information are contained in this page?
- What do you have questions about, or what is confusing and not immediately clear?
- Based on your initial scan, what function do you think these various components serve?

Step 5: Begin to adjust your analyses by:

- Expanding the stop word list
- Exploring other analytical tools (e.g. DreamScape across all five)
- Conduct searches for key terms
- Read key terms in context
- Explore trends across corpora (especially relevant to chronology)

NOTE: As part of Step 4 and 5, be sure to take a robust set of notes. These notes will serve as the basis of your methods discussion (see below).

Submission Guide and Format:

Purpose: You will use our most recent readings to make an argument about student activism and civics. You will answer: What type of “civics” do student activists want in the university? What type of civic mission do they expect of the university?

Audience: The purpose of this digital civic lab is to conduct digital research and provide a research report for a student activist group. In this report, using the format below, you will make an argument about student activism

Format:

Introduction (Scholarship and Argument). In this section, your team will use the They Say/I Say framing to chart out the scholarly conversation (on activism and civics) and set up your argument.

Methods. In this section, you will discuss the set of methodological decisions you made, including: the construction of the corpora (Charlie and background above), stop words, search terms, etc. In discussing the methods, be sure to explain WHY you made certain decisions

Findings (Visualizations). In this section, you will provide the visualizations that are key to your findings. In this section, be sure to discuss and clarify what the visualizations are demonstrating (based on your analysis).

Conclusions and Limitations. In this section, you will a summary of your main argument in light of your discussion of the key findings. As part of this section, you will also discuss limitations of your experiments and suggest areas for future research.