

**Digital Detectives: Detective Literature under a Digital Microscope**  
**Mondays 13:15-15:00 Lipsius 126**  
**Spring 2018**

Instructor: Paul Vierthaler  
Office: PJ Veth (Herbarium) T0.14  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 13:00-17:00 (or by appointment)  
p.a.vierthaler@hum.leidenuniv.nl

This course will teach students how to use digital humanities tools to study a variety of late nineteenth and early twentieth century detective novels and short stories. Students in the course will read many canonical detective works, including Poe's Auguste Dupin, Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, and Christie's Hercule Poirot. We will use digital tools to analyze their literary content and historical context. The course will introduce students to databases and online resources that contain contemporary materials and cover several advanced text-mining and visualization techniques. By the conclusion of the course, students will have acquired skills that will allow them to design projects that process, animate, map, and visualize a large corpus of texts.

The course is conceived of as a continuation of the Hacking the Humanities course offered in the Fall semester, but is focused more narrowly on how someone can apply various digital tools to a particular area of interest (in this case, detective fiction). While we recommend that you have taken the Hacking the Humanities course (because we will work with some tools that are difficult to use with no computational background), it is not required.

Course materials will be distributed through Blackboard. You are expected to do both the primary and secondary readings each week! We will discuss them in class. Note that almost all of the primary materials we work with are in the public domain (and we can thus text-mine them), and everything except the van Gulik reading is available online.

Over the course of the semester, I will provide students with assignments that will help guide you through the important concepts. Each assignment will require the student to use the tools we cover and write a short 200-250 word essay. Students should complete the assignment on her/his/their own. You are encouraged to search the internet for help in finishing the assignments. If you find a solution to the problem somewhere online, you can use it but post the source and explain in detail why the solution works.

Class attendance is required. The information we cover is cumulative, so if you do not attend, it will be very easy to fall behind. Attendance and active participation are obligatory for seminars. Students are required to prepare for and attend all sessions. The convenors need to be informed without delay of any classes missed for a good reason (i.e. due to unforeseen circumstances such as illness, family issues, problems with residence permits, the Dutch railways in winter, etc.). In these cases it is up to the discretion of the convener(s) of the course whether or not the missed class will have to be made up with an extra assignment. The maximum of such absences during a semester is two. Being absent without notification and/or more than two times can result in a failing grade for the course.

Each session will consist of a mixed lecture and practicum. We will have a 15-minute break in the middle of class.

Computers in the lab have the necessary software installed, but it may be easier for you to use your own laptop. If you have one, please bring it to class.

### **Grading Rubric:**

Attendance and Participation: 10 percent

Assignments: 30 percent

Final Project (paper or online project): 50 percent

Project presentation: 10 percent

Final mark for the course is established by determining the weighted average.

**Late Assignments/Late Papers:** will be penalized by a 10% reduction for each 24-hour period it is late. After one calendar week, the assignment will not be accepted.

**Writing Expectations:** While content is the most important component of your work, a portion of your grade on each assignment will be for style and understandability. There is a [writing center](#) at Leiden. Feel free to avail yourself of it!

**Resit:** Students who have scored an overall insufficient grade for the course may take a resit for the assignments and the Paper (or online project):

comprehensive take-home exam: (50 percent of grade)

Paper (or online project): (50 percent of grade)

### **A Word About Plagiarism**

You must document all of your source material. If you take any text from somebody else, you must make it clear the text is being quoted and where the text comes from. You must also cite any sources from which you obtain numbers, ideas, or other material. If you have any questions about what does or does not constitute plagiarism, ask! Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be treated lightly. Fortunately, it is also easy to avoid and if you are the least bit careful about giving credit where credit is due you should not run into any problems (thanks to [Alfred E Guy, Jr.](#) for this statement).

### **Course Schedule and Plan:**

Feb 5: *Course Introduction and a brief history of Detective Literature*  
Poe, Collins, Doyle, and Christie

Feb 12: *Putting the Digital in Digital Literature: Why do we do what we do as #DH people?*

#### **Primary Reading:**

Edgar Allen Poe "The Murders in the Rue Morgue."

<https://archive.org/details/CAugusteDupin>

**Secondary Reading:**

Ted Underwood “Seven ways humanists are using computers to understand text.”  
<http://tedunderwood.com/2015/06/04/seven-ways-humanists-are-using-computers-to-understand-text/>

Feb 19: *Detectives, Deduction, and Catching What is Missed*

**Primary:**

Poe “The Purloined Letter”  
<https://archive.org/details/CAugusteDupin>

**Secondary:**

Carlo Ginzburg and Anna Davin, “Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method,” *History Workshop*, No.9 (Spring, 1980), pp. 5-36.

Feb 26: *Machine Learning: What it is and why a detective might need it.*

**Primary:**

Wilkie Collins, “The Moonstone,” Prologue and First Period  
<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.210203>  
<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/155>

**Secondary:**

Joseph Kadane, “Bayesian Thought in Early Modern Detective Stories: Monsieur Lecoq, C. Auguste Dupin and Sherlock Holmes”  
<https://archive.org/details/arxiv-1001.3253>

March 5: *Digital Archives for Context: Criminals and Courts*

**Primary:**

Collins, “The Moonstone,” Second Period and Epilogue

**Secondary:**

Listen to Jeanette Bastian’s talk “Radical Recordkeeping: How Community Archives Are Changing How We Think About Records”

<http://sites.bu.edu/humanitiesforums/jeannette-bastian/>

Explore:

The Booth Online Archive: <http://booth.lse.ac.uk/>

The Old Bailey Online: <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/>

March 12: *Mapping the detective novel: literature meets history*

**Primary:**

Arthur Conan Doyle, “A Study in Scarlet”  
<https://archive.org/details/ost-english-studyinscarletno00doyl>  
<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/244>

**Secondary:**

May Yuan, "Mapping Text" in *The Spatial Humanities: GIS and the Future of Humanities Scholarship*, pp 109-123 (You can find this online via the library).

Look at:

Historical Maps of London

<http://mappinglondon.co.uk/2013/victorian-london-in-incredible-detail/>

March 26: *Public Humanities: Putting a face on it.*

**Primary:**

Doyle, "The Adventure of the Final Problem"

<https://archive.org/details/thememoirsofsher00834gut>

**Secondary:**

Robyn Schroeder, "What is public humanities?" <https://dayofph.wordpress.com/what-is-public-humanities/>

Miriam Posner intro to web publishing:

<http://miriamposner.com/classes/dh101f17/tutorials-guides/web-publishing/html-css/>

April 9: *Adding interaction: Javascript, Web Frameworks, and other cool things.*

**Primary:**

Doyle, "Hound of the Baskervilles"

<https://archive.org/details/thehoundofthebas02852gut>

**Secondary:**

The Basics of D3JS (read through tutorial):

<https://www.dashingd3js.com/table-of-contents>

April 16: *Maps in motion: interactive maps for a literary project*

**Primary:**

Agatha Christie, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* pt. 1.

<https://archive.org/details/themysteriousaff00863gut>

**Secondary:**

"Mapping with D3.js"

<http://maptimesea.github.io/2015/01/07/d3-mapping.html>

April 23: *3D modeling and interpretive practice (introducing SketchUp)*

**Primary:**

Christie, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* pt. 2

**Secondary:**

Sarah McPhee, "Envisioning Baroque Rome,"

<https://www.barquerome.org/>

April 30: *Video Games, Storytelling, and History in an Interactive Context*

**Primary:**

Robert van Gulik, “Celebrated Cases of Judge Dee,” chapters 1 to 6 (to be distributed via Blackboard).

**Secondary (from newspapers and blogs!):**

Justin Andress, “The History of Sherlock Holmes in Video Games,”

<https://www.inverse.com/article/13880-the-history-of-sherlock-holmes-in-video-games>

Robert Marks, “Video Games Aren’t Just Better With Stories, They Are Stories.”

<http://www.cgmagonline.com/2017/05/01/video-games-arent-just-better-stories-stories/>

Holly Nielsen, “Call of Duty: WWII could be the most important game of all time for historians.” <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/apr/25/call-of-duty-wwii-historians-video-games-activision>

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/apr/25/call-of-duty-wwii-historians-video-games-activision>

Robert Whitaker, “‘You have died of dysentery’ – History According to Video Games,”

<https://notevenpast.org/you-have-died-dysentery-history-according-video-games/>

Optional: Watch a few videos from HistoryRespawned

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyx1mPZXobOxCyzO2CwmDZA>

May 7: *Online Scholarly Communities and Presentations*

May 14: *Presentations*