Hacking and Yacking </Digital> Texts:
An introductory interdisciplinary digital scholarship course

1. “There are these two young fish swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, ‘Morning boys, how’s the water?’ And the two young fish swim on for a bit and eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, ‘What the hell is water?’”
-David Foster Wallace, This is Water

A hacker (n.): A person (usually possessing thorough knowledge in no single field), who is talented at devising superficial “fixes,” which are nothing more than auxiliary work-arounds for problems which eventually have to be solved “correctly” by a “trained professional.” Hackers are self-motivated, and learn through experimentation and persistence, as opposed to

2. Interdisciplinary Studies 11b:
Hacking and Yacking /Digital Texts
It’s the 21st century and we swim in the digital. Every day we engage with different sets of zeroes and ones, which tell us everything from what our friends did last night via a Facebook post to a web page which recreates an ancient Roman world in 3-D view. Digital texts cover everything from the banal to the erudite. However, because these texts are seemingly everywhere, we don’t take the time to understand how they came to be and what they do that distinguishes them from the analog. In this course, you’ll have the opportunity to yack about these and other questions and at the same time hack your own digital texts.
--Course Catalog Description

3. Context
➢ 3-Credit course open to all students (Taught during a weekly 3 hour class period)
➢ - Half of the class period is spent discussing texts centered around digital scholarship
➢ - Half the class period is spent learning and working with digital tools and platforms
➢ Students selected a topic of expertise centered around a social justice issue or of academic or professional interest to use as content for their hacking endeavors

4. Course Endeavors:
Weekly blogs (20%): As part of this course you will create a blog, which will be your forum in which to write one entry per week on a topic of either social justice, personal or professional interest. No fan blogs, please. Blog entries should be at least 300 words in length. You may blog under a pseudonym. Ten blog entries are required. Formalized reflection on your blogging experience will occur.

Twitter exercise (5%): Develop a Twitter network around your blog topic. Formalized reflection on your blogging experience will occur. You may create an account under a pseudonym.

Project Critique (10%): You will write a three page critique of an existing digital humanities project, which discusses the project’s successes and areas for improvement.

Reading Discussions (20%): Each week we will read texts, which relate to that session’s theme. Before the class you will: A) Annotate the text (if digital) using the Hypothes.is annotation tool. B) E-mail me two questions of substance about the reading before noon on the day of class.

Mini Projects (10%): During the lab portion of each class, you will have the opportunity to work with new software, which creates or analyzes digital texts in new ways. You will turn two of these projects in for credit.

Final Project (35%): For your final project, you will take a project started in one of these labs and expand upon it. It should be related to your semester area of expertise. These will be presented during the final session of the semester.

Final Reflection Essay (10%): At the end of the semester, you will write a five to seven page reflection essay due during the final exam period reflecting on two of the course “yacking” questions.

5. Yacking: Course Questions
1. What do digital versions of texts do differently than analog versions?
2. What is my digital identity?
3. What does it mean to be a digital native?
4. How can I most effectively advocate for a social, intellectual or professional issue in the digital world? Who can help me do this?
5. _______ [Students’ own questions]

6. Outcomes
1. Increased awareness of digital scholarship on campus—by students AND faculty members
2. Integration of digital assignments into other disciplinary curricula
3. Increased visibility of the library as a pedagogically progressive force on campus
4. Students’ increased awareness of digital culture and improved problem-solving grit.

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to yack (verb): to talk at length