

Hons 3050 - Methods of Discovery

CogS 4350 - Information of Meaning

Fall 2016

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Texts:

Digital Culture, by Charlie Gere,
Reaktion Books, Ltd. ISBN 978-1861893888

Earth Abides, by George Stewart,
Del Rey, ISBN 978-0345487131

Pandora's Hope, by Bruno Latour,
Harvard University Press, ISBN 978-0674653368

Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, by Robert Pirsig,
Harper Perennial Modern Classics, ISBN 978-0061673733

The Gold Bug Variations, by Richard Powers.
Harper Perennial. ISBN 0-06-097500-8

Other readings will be identified during the course, and you can expect to read other works along the way.

General Introduction: Our goal in this course will be to develop and enrich our understanding of methods of discovery and research used in the broad range of human intellectual and creative endeavors. Our efforts will include and integrate examples from the sciences (biological/physical, social/behavioral) and humanities (visual/performing arts, literature, philosophy). We will explore relationships among the methods, and examine interdisciplinary and team approaches to these projects. We will include recognition and evaluation of ethical, social, and political aspects and ramifications of research and creative work. As touchstones, we will use digital culture and genomics as themes and points of departure. This course is intended to help you develop your ability to identify reasonable research problems, and to specify and design particular research projects. We will focus on clarifying appropriate methodologies to be applied in doing your own research/creative projects, and in analyzing and assessing the results of your work. We will explore these issues through a variety of discipline based and interdisciplinary examples. You can expect to find the course challenging, but rewarding.

During the course, we will explore and apply a variety of investigative methodologies. Our emphasis will be on the application of advanced reading, thinking and writing skills to the study of complex problems.

Requirements/Responsibilities: Your first responsibility is to be prepared, aware, active participants in class. This means that you will be expected to read attentively each of the assigned sections, and be prepared to contribute to discussions of the material each class day.

1. To help you prepare for class discussions, you will write a brief response to each reading, to be handed in each class day; and be active participants in class. For some sections, I may give you more explicit directions for your responses to the readings.

More extended writing is also important, and so you will be writing longer pieces both in and out of class.

2. There will be at least one in-class writing experience . . .
3. There will be a four to six page written response to / analyses of one or more books you are reading for the class.
4. Each of you will also write/develop an individual longer (6-8 pages) final paper/project, on a topic of your choice related to the material of the course, and showing your own learning and development through the course.

The grades for this course will be based on these four components. Each component will carry approximately the same weight. Plus/minus grading may be used.

The work you do for this course will be your own. You are not to submit other people's work and represent it as your own. However, you will be expected and encouraged to work collaboratively with others during the course.