

**Sabbatical Leave Plan: Fall 2019**  
**Lisa A. Kirby, Professor of English**  
**“New Frontiers in English Studies: Exploring the Digital Humanities”**

**A. Research Plan**

The Digital Humanities are rapidly growing in many disciplines, including English. This field incorporates digital tools, such as data analysis, geospatial mapping, and textual visualization, to find new ways to study the humanities. There are many digital and multimedia platforms and programs that can accommodate Digital Humanities’ scholarly and pedagogical projects. As a Professor of English, integrating Digital Humanities into the curriculum allows students to use technology to enrich both their understanding of the course content and to engage more fully with digital resources. As Professor Anne B. McGrail points out, at the two-year college specifically, Digital Humanities can “offer empowering tools for students to represent their communities and to challenge inequalities.” The field of Digital Humanities models for students active engagement, collaboration, and the importance of community, all characteristics that are especially important at the two-year college.

This proposed sabbatical project will allow me to explore the Digital Humanities in more depth, consider their pedagogical opportunities, and think specifically about how they can enrich teaching in the two-year college. Through research and reading a variety of articles and books, as well as exploring websites, digital archives, and software programs, I hope to find tools and resources that will allow me to integrate Digital Humanities into both composition and literature courses. As an example, in Composition, I will explore how utilizing programs such as Story Maps can provide students ways to reconsider their writing and narrate their experiences in innovative new ways. With a program like Story Maps, students can re-imagine a personal narrative essay into a multimedia project that allows them to integrate maps, and images, along with the written word.

In American Literature, I will consider how students can locate and research primary sources, such as newspapers, maps, photographs, and other contextual information, as a way to increase their understanding of literary works. For instance, if the class is reading Jack London’s “To Build a Fire,” perhaps students will research maps of the Yukon from the time and photographs of the camps where gold seekers lived. Digital humanities offer incredible opportunities to explore not only the American experience but also to transform the way we narrate that experience. In American literature, I envision Digital Humanities as a way to help students gain a better sense of how history, culture, economics, politics, and region impact literature and society. Integrating Digital Humanities into the classroom provides a unique opportunity to transform the way my students and I consider both individual and communal experiences.

Additionally, with the emphasis on collaboration and community, I believe there are rich opportunities to connect Digital Humanities with the current work being done at The Texas Center for Working-Class Studies at Collin College. As Director of this Center, I know the importance of a strong online presence, as well as the opportunities that digital projects can offer. Exploring the intersection of Digital Humanities and Working-Class Studies could open up new possibilities for the Center’s website, student projects, and faculty development, as well as its annual conference.

The project will benefit Collin College and its students by allowing me to: 1) research the Digital Humanities and create new assignments for both composition and literature classes; 2) develop workshops or conference presentations, so I can share my discoveries with colleagues both at Collin College and at other institutions; and 3) consider the opportunities that Digital Humanities offer at the two-year college for both collaboration and community engagement.

## **B. Summary Timetable**

### August 2018

- Begin research into Digital Humanities by reading articles, books, and exploring websites related to the topic.
- Explore possible professional conferences to attend to learn more about Digital Humanities.

### September 2018

- Continue research into Digital Humanities by reading scholarly articles, books, and other resources.
- Explore software and online programs that could be used for classroom projects, such as geospatial literacy programs, Story Maps, Knight Lab, Blogger, Prezi, and other multimedia programs.

### October 2018

- Research various online Digital Humanities Centers housed at universities, and research online collections and projects that other universities and institutions are implementing.
- Begin drafting new Digital Humanities assignments for Composition I, Composition II and American Literature II classes.

### November 2018

- Submit proposal to present research findings at the January 2020 Faculty Development Conference at Collin College.
- Finalize composition and literature assignments for spring 2020 courses.
- Consider opportunities to connect Digital Humanities with The Texas Center for Working-Class Studies.

### December 2018

- Complete presentation for Faculty Development Conference.
- Begin integrating Digital Humanities assignments into Canvas for spring courses.

### January 2020

- Present research findings and sample assignments at Spring 2020 Collin College Faculty Development Conference.
- Implement new assignments into spring Composition I, Composition II, and American Literature II courses.

### C. Bibliography

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#### **D. Resources**

No additional resources or agreements with other organizations will be used for this project.