Race , Social Justice, & DH:

Applied Theories and Methods v. 2.0

DHSI 2019, University of Victoria, DH Course

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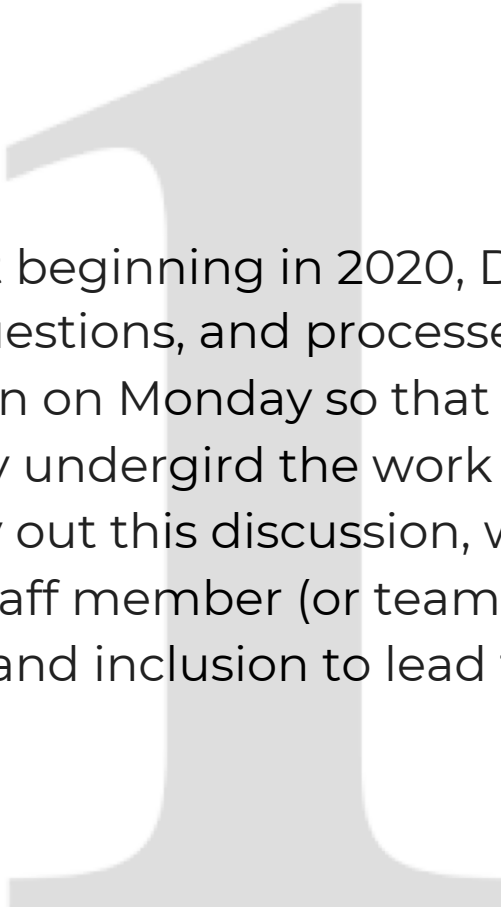
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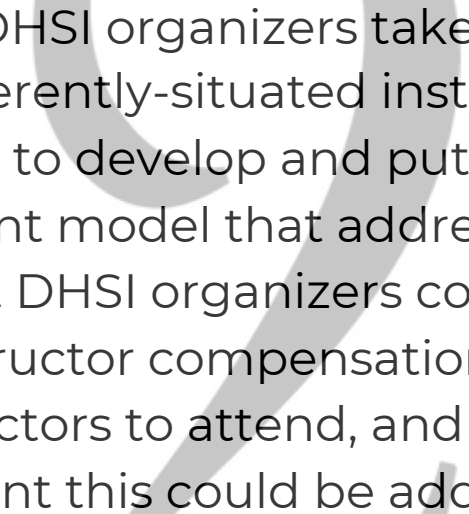
Last year's adoption of the Statement on Ethics and Inclusion is a useful first step for putting diversity and inclusion at the center of DHSI's collective work. Herein, we identify **two next steps** DHSI can take to continue this trajectory, and live up to the principles outlined in their statement.

Specifically, if indeed DHSI is "Commit[ted] to helping each other recognize our own positionality when articulating statements and beliefs, rather than enabling assumptions that we are 'all on the same page,'" we must take action to make sure that we are doing the hard and important work of "articulation, explanation, asking questions, working respectfully across difference, and showing compassion and understanding."

In the spirit of this statement, we respectfully request that DHSI take the following steps toward ensuring that all who attend DHSI leave with a commitment to designing and producing digital humanities projects that consider the role of power and embrace foundational social justice frameworks.

First, we propose that beginning in 2020, DHSI incorporate the included readings, questions, and processes into a discussion-based opening session on Monday so that questions of power and social justice may undergird the work of all during their time at DHSI. To carry out this discussion, we propose that UVic provide a faculty or staff member (or team) who is well-trained on issues of diversity and inclusion to lead the discussion(s).

Second, we ask that DHSI organizers take seriously the uneven representation of differently-situated instructors and speakers, and we implore them to develop and put in place an intentional recruitment model that addresses the disparities. Relatedly, we ask that DHSI organizers consider the extent to which the lack of instructor compensation limits the ability of some potential instructors to attend, and seriously consider how and to what extent this could be addressed.

We believe these measures can make DHSI a more welcoming and hospitable environment for more students and instructors, and improve the experience of DHSI for all. Towards this end, we request that the DHSI Directorial Group put this topic on the agenda of their next meeting.

We hope this class project from 2019's "Race, Social Justice, and DH: Applied Theories and Methods" provides tools to support DHSI's further incorporation of its Statement on Ethics and Inclusion.

Who's Here?

	2019	2018	2017
Instructors	99 total 15 POC 35 women 6 women of color	84 total 6 POC 27 women 4 women of color	75 total 4 POC 28 women 2 women of color
Invited Institute Lectures	4 total 1 POC 2 women 0 women of color	4 total 1 POC 1 woman 0 women of color	6 total 0 POC 4 women 0 women of color
Invited Speakers	3 total 1 POC 1 woman 1 woman of color	7 total 1 POC 6 women 1 woman of color	7 total 1 POC 4 women 0 women of color

data based on cursory review of "people" lists and the archive on dshi.org

Guidelines for Designing and Producing a Project in DH

1) **Situate yourself in relation to your work and archives/data**
Reflect on your position as a researcher: your gender, race, sexuality, ability, and class and how they affect your relationship with the world and with your data/archive. Reflect on the kinds of archive/data that you use: Who collected it? Who has access to it? What is missing from it?

2) **Consider Stakeholders/community/audience**
Who is the audience for your project? Who will the users be? What communities are represented in the content of the project and how will representatives of these communities participate in the project? What will consultation and power-sharing processes look like?

3) **Make labor practices visible: give credit and compensation where it is due**
DH is collaborative work. It involves contributions from faculty, staff, librarians, partners in the community, and undergraduate and graduate students. These contributions should be recognized and credit should be clear and unambiguous. Know that professor-student relationships have an unequal power dynamic, which can lead to coercive labor practices. When it comes to student work, follow the guidelines found in UCLA's A Student Collaborators' Bill of Rights.

4) **Research the History of digital tools used in your project**
Many of the tools that DH now relies on were originally invented by the military for surveillance, counterintelligence, and other invasive/oppressive aims. How does this history affect how we use the tools today? What labor relations underlie the production of these tools? What are the racialized & gendered nature of these relations?

Guidelines for Designing and Producing a Project in DH

5) **Be accountable to the people and places with which you are engaged first and foremost, and not the outcome of the project**

Sometimes projects change, and our interlocutors change their mind about the parameters of the project. In her keynote address on June 3, Jacqueline Vernimont started with her own question, "What am I doing to ensure we all get more free?" and ended with a challenge to all of us, "What can you do?". To create work that is committed to social justice, prioritize your accountability to the people and places you study over the final outcome of the project. By not doing so, are you perpetuating a relation of power that your project purportedly wants to break?

6) **Design with accessibility in mind**

It is important to consider how your project privileges certain bodies over others and how you can make it more accessible. Incorporate disability thinking for different user groups into project planning and use multiple modalities in the final product.

7) **Re-evaluate ethical implications of the completed product and be willing to revise**

In each step of project development, build in review processes with stakeholders and community members. The process should allow time for revision, even after the product is considered complete.

Getting Started: Questions to Consider

1) What is the history of the DH tool you're using?

2) When you think of the journey to creating your DH project, how do you weigh the importance of process and product?

3) What silences are present in your DH project? Does your project give back to the communities it draws from?

4) How does your project harm and not harm? How is your DH project weaponized and/or how could it be weaponized in the future?

5) When do you find yourself thinking critically about your DH project? Who inspires you to think critically about race and social justice in your DH project? Do outside agencies or events cause you to think critically about your DH project?

6) What readings would you use to start discussing social justice and race in your DH project and research?

Here are some readings that will help you productively work on some of the issues.

SELECTED READINGS -- RACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE IN DH

- "Disrupting Labor in Digital Humanities; or, The classroom Is not your crowd" by Spencer D. C. Keralis
  https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329248021_Disrupting_Labor_In_the_Digital_Humanities_or_The_Classroom_Is_Not_Your_Crowd
  - How do you compensate students for their labor in your courses and/or to your DH projects?
  - How does your research and writing acknowledge the labor and intellectual contributions of students and community members?
  - What additional steps could you take to improve upon current modes of compensation and acknowledgement, to make them more equitable so that you can honor the central role that students and community members play in the brainstorming, development, and maintenance processes of DH projects?`
  - *Supplemental reading*: AnnMarie Perez, "UndocuDreamers: Public Writing and the Digital Turn" *Boundary2* (2018)

SELECTED READINGS -- RACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE IN DH

- "The racial politics of citation" by Victor Ray https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2018/04/27/racial-exclusions-scholarly-citations-opinion
  - How can you practice citation that amplifies the voices of scholars of color in your discipline and fields of study?
  - What additional research work do you need to perform in order to educate yourself about the work that has been done in the past and is currently being produced by academics of color?
  - *Supplemental reading*: Hemmings, Claire, " Citations Tactics" in *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory*

SELECTED READINGS -- RACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE IN DH

- "The Ladies Vanish" by Shawn Wen https://thenewinquiry.com/the-ladies-vanish/
  - What is the history of women in computing?
  - Describe the segmentation (spatial, temporal, economic) of the different groups of workers in IT.
  - What percentage of workers are full-time employees with benefits in the app economy?
  - How would you plan to teach about the racial and gendered inequalities inherent in the workplace of companies like Google or Amazon?
  - *Supplemental reading*: "How Kodak's Shirley Cards Set Photography's Skin-Tone Standard?" https://www.npr.org/2014/11/13/363517842/for-decades-kodak-s-shirley-cards-set-photography-s-skin-tone-standard
    - *Supplemental reading:* https://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/2196/2055
    - Question: How have visual "norms" structured the history of technology? How do visual "norms" continue to structure scholarship being done in the Digital Humanities?

SELECTED READINGS -- RACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE IN DH

- "Mark-up Bodies: Black [Life] Studies and Slavery [Death] Studies at the Digital Crossroads" by Jessica Marie Johnson
  - How are the histories of technologies and media material, corporeal and personal, and how are they entangled with race, capital, and social justice?
  - How does uncompensated labour structure the Digital Humanities? How can the work you do and the projects you engage with work to compensate and acknowledge labour in an ethical way?
  - *Supplemental Reading:* "Indigenous Circuits: Navajo Women and the Racialization of Early Electronic Manufacture" by Lisa Nakamura
    https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/article/56366

SELECTED READINGS -- RACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE IN DH

- "White Fragility" by Robin DiAngelo
  http://libjournal.uncg.edu/ijcp/article/view/249/116
    - What is white fragility?
    - How does white fragility affect your DH project?
    - How segregated is your DH project?
    - *Supplemental reading:* "Social Media and Academic Surveillance: The Ethics of Digital Bodies" by Dorothy Kim