

Research Course Opportunity: Digital Humanities

Are you interested in doing innovative digital humanities research at the University of Toronto? Would you like to learn digital technologies and methods for research, analysis, and storytelling?

DHU 437H1S, Research Opportunities in Digital Humanities, is an unusual research opportunity **open during the January-April 2023 term**. Up to two excellent undergraduate students per project will join faculty research projects with a strong Digital Humanities component, in Indigenous Studies, Women's/Gender Studies, and History. Within these projects, undergraduate students will conduct original research in collaboration with faculty and graduate students. In alphabetical order by faculty last name, the projects are:

- Prof. Krista Barclay: The Mounds Research Collective
- Profs. T. L. Cowan & Jasmine Rault: The Trans- Feminist Queer Digital Praxis Workshop & Cabaret Commons
- Prof. Jon Johnson: First Story Toronto

For the first 5 or 6 weeks of term, students will attend DH workshops taught by the course coordinator, in the timetabled slot for DHU437. In the first class, we will all get to know one another and our projects. The subsequent four or five classes will be hands-on learning experiences: we will cover important DH tools and methods, knowledge that students can take back to their projects. Participation in all these workshops is mandatory, but there is no homework; students' time and energy should focus on the research projects. In addition to the DH workshops, students will meet regularly with their project's faculty and graduate research assistants, to determine the shape of their own (undergraduate) research within the project.

This opportunity counts for a half-course (H) credit in DHU437H1S.

Why Apply

Past versions of this opportunity, offered through UofT's Step Forward funding initiative, saw students [make significant contributions](#) to [major, ongoing faculty research projects](#).

Apply to this course to learn about digital storytelling, scholarship, and communities. Learn knowledge in the making. Participate in cutting-edge faculty research at the University of Toronto. Experience academic research in its complexity. Build professional relationships within the University of Toronto's digital humanities community of practice. Acquire experience to make your graduate school application or resume stand out.

How To Apply

To apply, please email the coordinator of the Digital Humanities Minor, Prof. Alexandra Bolintineanu, at alexandra.bolintineanu@utoronto.ca. Please put **DHU437-2023 Application** in

the subject. The course is open to applications from undergraduate students from all three University of Toronto campuses.

Application Deadline: October 15, 2022

What your application must include:

- Your UofT transcript
- A sample of your academic writing (for example, one or two assignments you are especially proud of)
- A cover letter (600-800 words maximum) with the following components:
 - Your name, program of study, and the research project (**from the four listed below**) in which you would be most interested
 - Academic work you have completed that prepares you for the project (courses, languages spoken and written, specific assignments you completed). Technical skills are not a prerequisite; experience with e.g. various software platforms is terrific, but you will also have an opportunity to learn software platforms during the course itself.
 - Any other relevant information, such as your own research interests, and how these might intersect with the scholarly project you're interested in

We look forward to learning about you!

Participating Faculty & Projects

The Mounds Research Collective: Prof. Krista Barclay

Project Background

The Mounds Research Collective brings together scholars, Indigenous history experts and curators from Canada and the United States to catalogue, re-examine, and remediate nineteenth-century mound-builder theories and their ongoing effects. Found across Turtle Island (North America), ancient mounds and earthworks are remarkable landforms created by the labour and artistic vision of human beings who lived millennia ago. Working in collaboration with Indigenous and settler public history organizations in the Great Lakes region, the project will catalogue settler narratives of the mound builders and examine how they continue to have an effect on the mounds themselves, as places that have been excavated, bulldozed, turned into golf courses, or made into "National Historic Sites." The project will also document and analyze how Indigenous peoples have written and performed counter-narratives that center mounds as material witnesses of their ongoing relationship with the land, which they continue to visit and steward as places of ceremony. This research partnership builds on the Kiinawin Kawindomowin Story Nations project, which has worked collaboratively with Rainy River First Nations Elders,

knowledge keepers, and community members for several years on research, curriculum, experiential learning and digital storytelling projects.

Student Research

DHU437H1S students will be able to contribute to an aspect of the larger project that aligns with their interests and aptitudes. This could include work on the project website, GIS mapping, digital storytelling, or working with digitized archival documents to create a database that makes research materials accessible to community partners.

The Trans- Feminist Queer Digital Praxis Workshop & Cabaret Commons: [Prof. T. L. Cowan](#) & [Jasmine Rault](#)

Projects

The Trans- Feminist Queer Digital Praxis Workshop (TFQ DPW) is both a collective of, and a space for, TFQ activists, artists, audiences, writers, and researchers, working from the University of Toronto and beyond. Anchored in TFQ ethics and praxes of reciprocity and responsibility, the TFQ DPW works on digital phenomena as forms and sites of potential (and potential problems) for multi-scalar, multi-disciplinary, collaborative works-in-progress on two digital research environments:

The Cabaret Commons & the Digital Research Ethics Collaboratory (DREC). Both projects are co-directed by [Prof. T.L. Cowan](#) & [Prof Jas Rault](#), who are both assistant professors in the Media Studies Program in the Department of Arts Culture & Media at UTSC and in the Faculty of Information.

For DHU437H1S, we are looking forward to working with students who have significant experience (multiple completed courses in any department) with a focus on the methods and materials in one or more of the following fields: Critical Race Studies, Anti-Colonial and/or Indigenous Studies, Women's & Gender Studies and/or Sexuality Studies. In your application please include 2-3 writing or other project samples of your scholarly and/or creative work in one or more of these fields (ie: your assignments in these courses).

Student Research

Students working with the TFQ DPW will become part of the bi-weekly workshop meetings and gain experience in activist-scholarship and collaborative and collective research-creation methods.

In your application students should indicate which TFQ DPW project you would like to work with:

[The Cabaret Commons](#) is a work-in-progress gathering place for trans- feminist and queer artists, activists, audiences and researchers.

The *Cabaret Commons* has two linked projects:

The Cabaret Commons Critical Practice (CCCP) is a venue for publishing in multimedia formats, reviews, responses, rants, and processes on everything to do with translocal grassroots cabarets and their worlds.

The Cabaret Commons Exhibition Place (CCXP) is a venue for digital exhibitions of works created and curated by translocal grassroots activists and cabaret artists, audiences and researchers.

Possible Cabaret Commons projects include:

- supporting an existing or ongoing exhibition (CCXP) or blog series (CCCP) as an editorial and/or curatorial assistant (contact Prof Cowan to find out what we have in progress)
- developing a small-scale digital exhibition or blog series, either as writer, curator and/or editor (in your application please include a 1-page project description of what you have in mind)

The [Digital Research Ethics Collaboratory](#) (DREC) is dedicated to building reciprocal, accountable, non-extractive, non-dispossessive practices and values for research in and on digital environments, and publishing short essays, conversations and experiments on these themes.

Possible DREC projects include:

- developing a small-scale blog series as writer and/or editor (in your application please include a 1-page description of what you have in mind)
- supporting an existing blog series as editorial assistant, (contact Prof Cowan to find out what we have in progress)

Please look at our sites to get a sense of what we are about before contacting Prof. Cowan for more details.

[First Story Toronto: Prof. Jon Johnson](#)

Project Background

First Story Toronto is a grassroots Indigenous community-based organization that is focused on researching and sharing Toronto's vast and enduring history and geography of Indigenous presence in Toronto and the surrounding area via popular educational initiatives such as storytelling tours and events (both virtual and in-person) as well smartphone and other online applications. First Story Toronto is led by a committee of mostly Indigenous scholars, artists, Elders, and community leaders, and like many other grassroots organizations, we are a mostly volunteer-driven and therefore have had limited capacity to sustain large-scale initiatives.

Despite this, in 2013 we successfully piloted the First Story app, freely available for Android and Apple devices, which featured a digital map (similar to a story map) of some of the stories we share on tours. The app was designed so that the content did not simply replicate the stories shared on in-person tours, but rather to extend some parts of the stories shared on in-person tours to audiences that could not participate (due to distance, accessibility, or funding) in the in-person tours. The app was popular and well-regarded as a valuable resource for learning about Indigenous presence in Toronto, but the organization we partnered with to help us create and maintain the app eventually ceased their technical support for the app and it eventually became obsolete and non-functional. Some of the content from the First Story app was made available via a new app called Driftscape, but this isn't our own app.

What project would we like assistance with?

We would like to develop a new online interface to replace and extend the functionality of the original First Story app. We are open to suggestions regarding the format of this interface, but our current thinking is that a web-based interface (ie: a website) would be easier for us to maintain and add content to over the long term, and would be more user-friendly for people to use than a mobile app interface. Ideally, the interface would allow for multiple authors to contribute content, with the ability to assign different roles and permissions to contributors. We would also like the flexibility to add and format a variety of audiovisual content (everything from text, images, video, and audio to 3D, 360 degree, and VR content) that we might develop into a pleasing and accessible interface. The website and its content should abide by OCAP principles and be sustainable over the long term.

We would like you to help us conceptualize and / or begin to build the interface for this new phase of First Story Toronto's online presence. We are very excited to work with you on this project, which we know will have a large impact on people's understanding of Indigenous community history and perspectives in Toronto!