



COURSE UNIT DESCRIPTION

| Course Unit Title | Code |
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| DIGITAL METHODS: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION | - |

| Lecturer(s) | Department(s) |
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| Coordinator: j. assist. Jūratė Kavaliauskaitė Other(s): | Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius university, Vokiečių str. 10, LT-01130, Vilnius, tel. +370 52514130, e-mail: tspimi@tspmi.vu.lt |

| Study cycle | Type of the course unit |
|-------------|-------------------------|
| First | Compulsory |

| Mode of delivery | Course unit delivery period | Language (s) of instruction |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Face-to-face | 5 (autumn) semester | English |

| Requirements for students | |
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| Pre-requisites: Designing social research | Co-requisites (if any): - |

| Number of credits allocated | Total student's workload | Contact hours | Self-study hours |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|------------------|
| 5 | 130 | 32 | 98 |

| Purpose of the course unit: programme competences to be developed | | |
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| <p>Aim of this course is to provide a critical introduction to digital research methods and tools aimed for broadening students' analytical abilities to tackle diverse political, sociotechnical and cultural issues of the contemporary media-saturated and tech-disrupted world; to develop basic knowledge and skills in the classical approaches of the field, such as digital ethnography and storytelling, exploratory network analysis, geo-mapping, and visualization; to provide knowledge about emerging research techniques, designed for the inquiry of born-digital data and methods built into new media devices, software or Internet platforms that are part of daily civic practices and global affairs.</p> | | |
| Learning outcomes of the course unit | Teaching and learning methods | Assessment methods |
| Students will understand and be able to reflect on current intellectual debates regarding the impact of the digital transformation on epistemologies, methodologies and research practices in social sciences and humanities; the students will comprehend the enriching potential of these developments, as well as realize that the emerging trends in research are constitutive of the society itself | Seminars (analysis of the leading literature and empirical research in the field, assessment of conceptual debates and innovation, (self-reflexive scholarly practices, critical arguments, and methodological challenges; group discussions and case studies), problem-oriented lectures, individual studies (critical literature studies, the analysis of theoretical debates and practical cases) | Participation in seminars and practical sessions, practical home assignments |
| Students will develop foundational knowledge in a range of digital research methods and be able to utilize them along with respective open-source software tools for exploratory analysis and visualization tasks in a flexible, effective, ethical and responsible manner; the students will comprehend the distinction between virtual and digital methods, be able to interrogate their affordances and limitations in their studies at university and beyond | Seminars (analysis of the leading literature and completed projects in the field), flipped classrooms, assignments and creative tasks, problem-oriented lectures, hands-on activities in practical sessions to familiarize with variegated data and open-software tools, individual studies and experimentation | Participation in seminars and practical sessions, practical home assignments, a final mini-project |
| Students will be understand specifics of born-digital artefacts, devices and techniques also will be able to work with various types of structured and unstructured, digitally native, and digitized data harnessing their specific characteristics. | Seminars (analysis of existing scholarly research, experimental projects, relevant examples from non-academic fields), flipped classrooms, practical assignments and creative tasks, practical (hands-on) sessions with software tools | Participation in seminars and practical sessions, practical home assignments, a final mini-project |

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| Students will be able analyze and critically evaluate scholarly and other analytical production that employs digital methods and features visual data (information) representation techniques | Seminars (analysis of existing scholarly research, experimental projects, relevant examples from non-academic fields), homework and in-class assignments, individual studies | Participation in seminars and practical sessions, practical home assignments |
| The students are expected to gain confidence in utilizing new different methods and software tools in applied work, and development their motivation to enhance knowledge, competences, and skills independently in their professional field | Seminars, flipped classrooms, practical assignments, hands-on sessions learning software tools, individual studies | Practical home assignments, a final mini-project, participation in seminars and practical sessions |
| Students will be able to express their ideas in a clear, compelling and self-reflexive manner by developing open communication and respectful interpersonal dialogue skills | Seminars (discussions, analysis of empirical cases), collective in-class tasks, interactions in a virtual learning environment (forum) | Participation in seminars and practical sessions, practical home assignments |

| Content: breakdown of the topics | Contact hours | | | | | | Self-study: hours and assignments | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|----------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|---|
| | Lectures | Consultations | Seminars | Practical sessions | Laboratory activities | Internship/work | Contact hours | Self-study hours | Assignments |
| 1. What are digital methods (for)? Creative & critical inquiry in a disrupted world | | | 2 | | | | 2 | 5 | Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Rogers, R. (2013). <i>Digital Methods</i> . Cambridge, MA: MIT Press (Chapter 1, “The End of the Virtual: Digital Methods”), 19-38. - Ruppert, E. et al. (2013). “Reassembling Social Science Methods: the challenge of digital devices.” <i>Theory, Culture & Society</i> , 30(4), 22-46. |
| 2. What is (new about) <i>data</i> ? Practices, myths & politics | | | 2 | | | | 2 | 5 | Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Kitchin, R. (2014). <i>The Data Revolution</i> . Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications (Chapter 1 “Conceptualising Data”), 1-26. - Gitelman, R. (2013). <i>‘Raw Data’ Is an Oxymoron</i> . Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The MIT Press (Introduction), 1-14. |
| 3.-4. Critical cartography & geospatial mapping | | | 2 | 2 | | | 4 | 8 | Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: -Drucker, J. (2021), <i>The Digital Humanities Coursebook. An Introduction to Digital Methods for Research and Scholarship</i> . Abingdon, New York: Routledge (Chapter 8, “Mapping and GIS”), 130-150. - Crampton, J. (2010). <i>Mapping: A critical introduction to cartography and GIS</i> . Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell (Chapters 1 & 4), 1-12, 39-48. Practical home assignment and preparation for a hands-on session |
| 5.-6. Thinking with/ rethinking networks (SNA, ANT, VNA, etc.) | 2 | | | 2 | | | 4 | 8 | Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Marres, N. & Moats, D. (2015). “Mapping controversies with social media: the case for symmetry.” <i>Social Media & Society</i> , 1(2): 1-17. - Decuypere, M. (2020). “Visual Network Analysis: a qualitative method for researching sociomaterial practice”. <i>Qualitative Research</i> , 20(1), 73-90. |

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| | | | | | | | | | Practical home assignment and preparation for a hands-on session |
| 7. Digital visual methods | | | 2 | | | 2 | 8 | | Reading and preparation for hands-on activities: - Drucker, J. (2020). <i>Visualization and interpretation: humanistic approaches to display</i> . Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press (Introduction), 1-10. -Rogers, R. (2021). "Visual media analysis for Instagram and other online platforms." <i>Big Data & Society</i> . January-June, 1-23. Practical home assignment |
| 8.-9. Information visualization & data stories | 2 | | 2 | | | 4 | 9 | | Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Healy, K. (2018). <i>Data Visualization: A Practical Introduction</i> . Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1-31. - Schwabish, J. (2017). <i>What is Story?</i> (Part 1-5). Available at https://policyviz.com Preparation for a hands-on session |
| 10.-11. Digital & mobile storytelling | | | 2 | 2 | | 4 | 8 | | Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Lambert, J. & Hessler, H. B. (2018). <i>Digital storytelling: capturing lives, creating community</i> . London: Routledge (Chapters 4, 5), 37-69. - Farman, J. (ed.). (2014). <i>The mobile story: Narrative practices with locative technologies</i> . New York, London: Routledge (Chapter 1), 3-10. Practical home assignment |
| 12. Digital ethnography/ technography | | | 2 | | | 2 | 7 | | Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Jemielniak, D. (2014). <i>Common Knowledge? An Ethnography of Wikipedia</i> . Stanford: Stanford University Press (Chapter 3), 59-84. - Xu, Y. (2018). "Programmatic Dreams: Technographic Inquiry into Censorship of Chinese Chatbots," <i>Social Media & Society</i> , 4(4), 1-12. Practical home assignment |
| 13-14. 'Follow the medium': repurposing web-native devices & methods for political inquiry | | | 2 | 2 | | 4 | 8 | | Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Venturini T, et al. (2018). "A reality check(list) for digital methods." <i>New Media & Society</i> , 1-23. - Selected state-of-the-art empirical studies of 'following the medium' Preparation for a hands-on session |
| 15. Consultations and individual work on a final mini-project | | 2 | | | | 2 | 26 | | The development of a project idea based on a student's chosen course topic(s), preparation for the consultation, design and realization of the project idea |
| 16. The future of digital methods | | | 2 | | | 2 | 6 | | Reading and preparation for in-class discussion: - Bruns, A. (2019) "After the 'APicalypse': social media platforms and their fight against critical scholarly research", <i>Information, Communication & Society</i> , 22(11), 1544-1566. - Puschmann, C. (2019). "An end to the wild west of social media research: A response to Axel Bruns." <i>Information, Communication & Society</i> , 22(11), 1582-1589. |
| Total | 4 | 2 | 14 | 12 | | 32 | 98 | | |

| Assessment strategy | Weight, percentage | Assessment period | Assessment criteria |
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| Participation in seminars and practical sessions | 40 | During semester | <p>4 points – misses no classes without a legitimate reason, participates in class work actively and effectively, being constantly well-prepared, having pre-class readings and other tasks completed in time; demonstrates superior performance – shows an initiative in discussions and group work, meets and exceeds expectations in personal contributions, feedback, critical reasoning, interpretation and argumentation, raised questions and offered ways to deal with posed problems or given tasks; engages with colleagues in a constructive, respectful and facilitating manner.</p> <p>3 points - misses up to 20% of classes without a legitimate reason, all other previously listed criteria having been met; or demonstrates higher than average performance from time to time: being prepared, having pre-class readings and other tasks completed in time, remains moderate in showing initiative and active participation in a class, although meets expectations in critical reasoning, interpretation and argumentation, raised questions and offered ways to deal with posed problems or proposed complex cases; engages with colleagues in a constructive and respectful manner.</p> <p>2 points - misses up to 30% of classes without a legitimate reason and demonstrates average and lower than average performance: regularly fails to properly prepare for a class; yet shows willingness to actively participate in group discussions/ activities and engage with colleagues in a respectful manner.</p> <p>1 point - misses up to 30% of classes without a legitimate reason and demonstrates lower than average performance: regularly fails to properly prepare for the class, remains relatively passive in class activities and fails to provide satisfactory contribution if requested; poorly engages with colleagues.</p> <p>0 points – misses more than 30% of classes, or the accomplishment of course requirements is not sufficient to receive a passing grade.</p> <p>If a student receives 0 points for this part of the course, the final course evaluation is negative (failed), independent of the number of points received for other parts of the course.</p> |
| Practical home assignments | 30 | During semester | <p>The willingness to engage in critical thinking, experimentation and hands-on work is essential in the course. Students are expected to actively engage with the studied material and tools. Therefore, small written assignments (to answer a question, to assess, etc.) or creative tasks (to try out, to experiment, to make, etc.) of the same weight will be given in relationship to at least some sessions throughout the course, in order to facilitate and consolidate students' knowledge and abilities.</p> <p>On-time submission, creativity, strong argumentation, relevant reference to studied ideas/ material, clear and compelling presentation styles are major criteria of success. Individual preparation for hands-on training sessions (e.g., getting required software ready) and the regularity of attendance in these sessions will be taken into consideration, too. A chronic failure to complete assignments, the delivery of poor/ superficial results or regular absence in practical sessions may reduce the final evaluation to 0.</p> |
| A final mini-project | 30 | At the end of course | <p>This course requires a student to undertake an independent small-scale, digitally-engaged project/ experiment that addresses a well-framed idea/question and demonstrates a mindful use of one or more digital methods and/or tools learned during the course. Here, there will be a (non-mandatory) possibility to cooperate with a parallel course of the same semester (“Network governance”) and implement the mini-project as a part of a larger domain-specific study and facilitate its goals, as well as harness the potential of new tools and competences in a specific area of expertise.</p> <p>The requirements for a mini-project, directly related to the assessment criteria:</p> |

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| | | | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) a project should address and/or benefit from one or more digital methods, techniques, or tools studied in the course; 2) a student should provide the results of a mini-project in the form of a well-structured written report (4-6 pages) that a) presents and defends a project idea/goal(s), method(s)/ tool(s), data (as well as articulates the project's relationship with and benefits for a study in a parallel course, in the case of chosen cooperation), b) displays results of visual, video, graphic, geo-mapping, device repurposing or other form of experimentation, depending on exercised methods and tools), c) offers a self-reflexive assessment of the methodological/ technical procedure, compiled and used data, major challenges of the project, the level of practical attainment of its goal(s), strengths and limitations of the delivered results of the project (the quality of self-reflexive assessment is as much important and appreciated as the quality of project results). 3) if a mini-project is designed and implemented in cooperation with another (parallel) course of the same semester, it must prove to be an integral part of a study/ piece of research in the (parallel) course; should contribute to the goals of that study/ piece of research in a substantial, non-superficial manner (e.g., visualization as illustration is not a substantial contribution). <p>The assessment criteria and levels of achievement are the following in this section:</p> <p>3 points – the quality of the project idea, implementation and student's self-reflection is higher than average; minor flaws in a single area of the work are acceptable.</p> <p>2 points - the quality of the project idea, implementation and self-reflection is average; some shortcomings in several areas of the work are acceptable.</p> <p>1 point – the quality of the project is poor; major problems in several areas of the work are acceptable.</p> <p>0 points – the project is not completed, or the quality of work is unacceptable, failing to meet basic course requirements and/ or standards of academic integrity/ honesty. The failure to deliver either the results (a) or the report (b) after the completion of a project leads to 0 points.</p> <p>If a student receives 0 points for a mini-project, the final course evaluation is negative (failed) independent of the number of points received for other parts of the course.</p> |
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| Author | Year of publication | Title | Issue of periodical or volume of publication | Publishing place and house or web link |
|---|---------------------|--|--|--|
| Compulsory reading (alphabetically) | | | | |
| Drucker, Johanna | 2021 | The Digital Humanities Coursebook: An Introduction to Digital Methods for Research and Scholarship | | Abingdon, New York: Routledge |
| Healy, Kieran | 2019 | Data Visualization | | Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press |
| Kitchin, Rob | 2014 | The Data Revolution | | Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications |
| Rogers, Richard | 2013 | Digital Methods | | Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: The MIT Press |
| Rogers, Richard | 2019 | Doing Digital Methods | | London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Singapore: SAGE Publications |
| Schäfer, Mirko Tobias, & van Es, Karin (eds.) | 2017 | The Datafied Society: Studying Culture through Data | | Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press |
| Recommended reading | | | | |
| Crampton, Jeremy W. | 2010 | Mapping: A critical introduction to cartography and GIS | | Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell |

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| Drucker, Johanna | 2020 | Visualization and interpretation: Humanistic approaches to display | | Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press |
| Farman, Jason | 2014 | The mobile story: Narrative practices with locative technologies | | New York, London: Routledge |
| Gitelman, Lisa | 2013 | 'Raw Data' Is an Oxymoron | | Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The MIT Press |
| Jemielniak, Dariusz | 2014 | Common knowledge? An Ethnography of Wikipedia | | Stanford: Stanford University Press |
| Kirk, Andy | 2016 | Data visualisation: A Handbook for data driven design | | Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage |
| Lambert, Joe & Hessler, Brooke | 2018 | Digital storytelling: capturing lives, creating community | | London: Routledge |
| Levenberg, Levis, Neilson, Tai & Rheams, David (eds.) | 2018 | Research methods for digital humanities | | Cham: Palgrave Macmillan |
| Manovich, Lev | 2020 | Cultural analytics | | Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press |
| Michelkevičė, Lina & Michelkevičius, Vytautas | 2019 | Atlas of Diagrammatic Imagination: Maps in Research, Art and Education | | Vilnius: VDA leidykla |
| Rogers, Richard A. | 2015 | Issue mapping for an ageing Europe | | Amsterdam: AUP |
| Snee, Helene et al. | 2016 | Digital methods for social science: an Interdisciplinary guide to research innovation | | Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan |
| | | <i>Big Data & Society</i> | | SAGE Journals |
| | | <i>Information, Communication & Society</i> | | Routledge |
| | | <i>New Media & Society</i> | | SAGE Journals |
| | | <i>Social Media & Society</i> | | SAGE Journals |
| | | <i>Theory, Culture & Society</i> | | SAGE Journals |