

English 2095: Literature by the Numbers
General Education designation: Quantitative Reasoning B
Professor Craig Dworkin
Fall 2016

This course serves as an introduction to one aspect of what has come to be called "digital humanities": the algorithmic analysis of literary texts. By revealing patterns not normally perceptible through traditional reading methods, the computer-aided statistical analysis of texts has proven to be the most exciting and controversial methodological development in 21st-Century literary criticism. Although we often think of literature as the occasion for subjective responses ("appreciation"; "favorite" books; personal reflection; "reader response," *et cetera*), this class will ask what *objective* readings might look like, and how the quantitative analysis of literature can both challenge and be put in the service of more traditional interpretive and humanistic arguments. Along the way, we will think through the differences between data and information, objectivity and accuracy, description and interpretation, signification and chance. Above all, we will come to terms with what it means to *read* – and what the future of reading might look like.

Although the class does not presume any prerequisite knowledge of statistics or programming, students will be expected to approach mathematical reasoning and pre-built software without too much panic. There will be support and resources for everyone who needs them.

After progressing through introductory learning modules in the fundamentals of statistical analysis and basic tutorials on Google *n*-gram viewer; MONK; R; or similar tools, students will devise their own project in the quantitative analysis of literature and present their findings to the class for questions and critiques. Prior to presentation, projects will be work-shopped in small groups that will also serve as a venue for testing technical tools, solving basic statistical equations, and undertaking collaborative practice exercises in computational problem-solving.