INFO 290 ▸ CULTURAL ANALYTICS

Lab presentation and participation

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TL;DR

- Labs help enrolled students connect and develop their final projects.
- Presentation **(5% — Pass/Redo):** Sign up by **Fri, 9/12, 2025** (on the Google Sheet).
- Reflections **(3 × 5% — Pass/Redo):** Due the following **Wed, 5 p.m.** after the session.

The lab portion of this class is worth 20% of your final grade. While the syllabus provides a list of readings and potential topics for our lab sessions, these are intended to serve as a *starting point* and a resource, not a rigid agenda. The primary goal of these sessions is to create an interactive environment; the instructional team will be there to provide some support and guidance, but the content and direction will be shaped by you. Ideally, rather than as a mere continuation of the Tuesday lecture, Thursday labs will be *your* time to explore nascent ideas, connect with other students, and collectively build the intellectual foundation for your final projects, through presentation and reflection.

LAB PRESENTATION

Requirements

Each student is required to sign up for a 10–15-minute presentation (followed by 15–20 minutes of discussion, meaning each slot will be approximately 30 minutes long). Think of this as your opportunity to pitch your ideas, workshop your methods, and even identify potential partners for the final project.

Since the lab mirrors our three-act structure, your presentation should help you:

1. **Motivate your project through close reading** (during Act I). Explore your core research question and find the phenomenon that's interesting to you, especially through close reading techniques that provide preliminary evidence and show why the question is compelling.
2. **Explore computational methods** (during Act II). Try out different computational methods to see how they apply to your project, demonstrating *both* the affordances and limitations of a chosen method (it's still interesting if it doesn't serve your purpose!).
3. **Build a strong literature review** (during Act III). Present one or two published papers to ensure that your project is situated within the ongoing scholarly conversation.

The presenter's responsibilities include:

- **Curation**: Choose something (a theorist, an algorithm, a dataset, a paper, etc.) that resonates with you and that you are eager to share with the class. Include any necessary background or supplementary readings that will help the class understand it.

- **Preparation**: Distribute any required readings or materials to the class with reasonable advance notice. Prepare guiding questions, a brief introductory framing, or a small hands-on exercise designed to spark discussion and critical engagement.
- **Facilitation**: During the session, manage the flow of conversation and encourage broad participation. The aim is to cultivate a workshop atmosphere where ideas can be collectively tested and refined.

Again, the suggested syllabus topics are available for any student to adopt and lead; however, you are also strongly encouraged to propose alternative topics that align with your developing interests.

Logistics

Since we can fit around two presenters for each session, you can **team up with someone else** if that's more useful. To ease coordination we will use a shared Google Sheet, which is linked on bCourses.

All students must have signed up for **at least ONE** presentation slot by the end of Week 3:

Friday, September 12, 2025.

Lab presentation accounts for **5%** of your semester grade. You can expect to earn a *pass* if you come prepared with materials, make a clear connection to course themes or readings, and facilitate a brief discussion. If one or more of these elements are missing, you may be asked to *redo* the presentation based on the specific feedback provided. If you are unsure whether your topic fits, check with the instructor ahead of time.

LAB REFLECTIONS

Requirements

If the lab teaches you something new or gives you a fresh perspective on what you already know, take notes and record your reflections to earn credit. Ideally, lab reflections are low-stakes opportunities for you to practice synthesis of ideas and genres of academic writing with which you are less familiar: if you are used to describing algorithms, try summarizing a philosophical argument; if you have not taken a serious look at an equation for years, do that and try to explain it in your own language.

There is no prescribed template for the reflections; feel free to use whatever format you find most useful. With this in mind, you can reflect on one fleeting comment during the lab, one paper, or the entire session.

Logistics

This component totals **15%** of your semester grade (**3** $\times$ **5%**) and is graded on a *Pass/Redo* basis. To earn a pass grade, you want to do some of the following:

1. **Capture** something *concrete* from the lab (not a generic summary).
2. **Connect** it to a course theme/reading or your project.
3. **Reflect** on what changed for you (insight, confusion, limitation).
4. **Next step** you will try (a question to pursue, a small experiment, a reading).

You should submit a `pdf` file on bCourses; a good submission will look like this:

- *Length:* around 300–600 words, or 5–8 substantive bullets (full sentences).
- *Scope:* Zoom in on a fleeting comment, one paper/tool, *or* synthesize the entire session.
- *Style:* Any genre that helps you think (mini-essay, outline, annotated diagram/equation, pseudo-code plus notes).

Each reflection is due

the following **Wednesday at 5 p.m.**

Submit on bCourses. There's no formatting requirement, and informal citations are fine (author, short title).