

## Literature by the Numbers

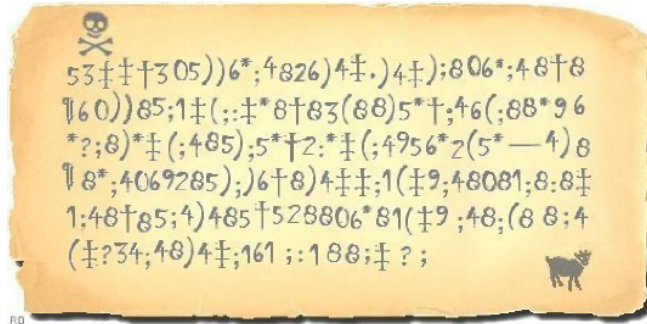


Image from Edgar Allan Poe's "The Gold Bug"

In the field of the Digital Humanities, computational tools allow readers to apply new forms of "objective" (or at least statistically quantifiable) critique to the study of literature, and, in complementary fashion, enable writers to generate literary texts that are shaped by digitally-powered formal constraints. In some ways, this "Literature by the Numbers" approach might seem incompatible with tradition. Conventional literary study, after all, involves close reading, demands careful interpretation, and generates multiple and sometimes even contradictory conclusions. And yet literature itself has always been constrained by form, genre, and cultural mores. And some instances of literature, in particular, such as mysteries, puzzles, and algorithmically generated texts, invite a more specific analytic approach, requiring readers to deduce a single solution or methodology before any meaning can be explicated. In this course we will look at examples of such texts, as well as how a variety of computational tools might assist us in making sense of them and literary production in general.

Note that although this course involves frequent hands-on interaction with digital tools, no special knowledge of computing is required or expected.

**REQUIRED TEXTS** will be available in pdf or online, in our dropbox folder on on Canvas.

### GRADE BREAKDOWN

Participation: 20%

In-class assignments: 20%

Homework: 20%

Quizzes: 10%

Final Project: 30%

### EXPECTATIONS

Careful reading, active participation in class discussions, and a high quality of written work are all required to be successful in this course. In other words, come to class, do your work, be prepared, be original, be courteous, be critical, be kind, be on time.