Title: Visualizing the City: Digital Prague in the Classroom
Author: Martina F. Kerlova, Northwestern University

Abstract:
Digital Humanities have become part of our teaching. Yet, the intellectual satisfaction from using such tools often doesn't match the intensity of learning experience stemming from traditional literary teaching methods. In my paper, I attempt to examine ways how teaching Literature and Culture could successfully include a digital component. I'll use examples from my course, "Prague: City of Cultures, City of Conflict."

I'll demonstrate how a digital component can make a foreign locus more visually present in the classroom. Further I'll present how students' interest in the topic increases if given the opportunity to work with a new method. I work together with my students on a website/data holder/platform that grows as the course moves along. For example, we discuss events in the German Casino, which was once the cultural center of Prague Germans, but was renamed the Slavic House after they were ethnically cleansed at the end of the Second World War. For that section of the course we work with images of the building, clips depicting related events, and maps that indicate where Germans lived, worked, and assembled. For Kafka we map his favorite cafés, his homes, his workplaces, and those of his acquaintances (Max Brod, Milena Jesenská). As we move through time we can keep updated the images and maps to show the changes that transformed Prague. There are many dramatic images to choose from.

These materials create a panorama for the course. It should be created primarily by the students who research the assigned and elective topics prior to each discussion. They research the material and present it in class. Students have already been required to present about various topics in other classes, but when asked, they have universally used PowerPoint to do so. I believe that we can develop a much more flexible, realistic, as well as a more dynamic and inclusive platform to enhance the students' learning experience and thus increase their satisfaction with their research. Ultimately the goal is to ensure a multi-dimensional understanding of the material discussed in class.