

Oxford Award for Excellence in Social Entrepreneurship and Digital Humanities

Dr Amna Umer Cheema is a PhD in Modern American poetry from the University of Leeds, UK. She is an Elizabeth Bishop scholar. Her cross-disciplinary research in Elizabeth Bishop's studies led her to her rather recent fascination for Digital Humanities (DH). In 2019, for the first time in any Pakistani University, she introduced the subject of Digital Humanities at the Institute of English Studies, University of the Punjab. Before this time, the subject was never included in any curriculum at a Pakistani university, both state and private.

Since 2019, she has been teaching the course titled "Introduction to Digital Humanities" to MPhil students and supervising humble research in this field due to the shortage of hi-tech facilities in a state university. During these years, she has received mixed responses from her students and colleagues. The general distaste came from those who feared losing the traditional landscape of humanities or saw it as a way of surveilling the colored people in the Global South.

Through teaching this course, she has tried to address these problems. By introducing interesting debates about DH, she tried to change the lens of her students, and members of her fraternity. She reached out to the champions of individualism who were unable to visualize the concept of sharing knowledge and collaborating on research.

By exposing university students to international projects in humanities and English literature, she inspired them to develop their own research projects that are meaningful for her society and the global community. She made them think beyond their bounds to have a cross-disciplinary approach so that they could reach out to the people working in STEM subjects and contribute to public humanities. Largely, her DH class encouraged students to be humane all the time and indulge in constructive discourse among peers by practicing honesty and building trust.

Through DH, she introduced convergent practices that lead to multidisciplinary research within areas of digital poetics, material sciences, discovery sciences, and social sciences. Due to DH, her literature students have started engaging with laws of thermodynamics, manifestations of entropy, literary video games, etcetera. Identifying DH as a transdisciplinary area of computationally engaged teaching and research, she stimulated her Institute's first Digital Humanities thesis project in modern American poetry.

Currently, she has supervised research on Europa Universalis IV games as a method of reinterpreting history. In 2022, she initiated the Institute of English Studies' personalized website (www.instituteofenglishstudies.asia). With this, she launched the Institute of English Studies' official podcast on digital storytelling – 'A Room with a View' (2022), and 'The Stories We Are: Excursions to Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Baluchistan and Sindh' (2023). Her vision is to keep encouraging students of humanities to look beyond traditional options and develop skills that can expand their career opportunities in a competitive job market.