Today’s city is layered with screens of all shapes and sizes and stitched together with a web of wireless networks, but woven into these modern media spaces are other, older urban media networks and infrastructures – many of which have laid the foundation for our newer media. This project-based course is dedicated to excavating and mapping – both theoretically and practically – the layers of mediation that have shaped urban forms and informed urban experiences through several key epochs in communication history, from the oral culture of ancient Athens to the television age. Each student, alone or in pairs, will conduct an urban media excavation – exploring, for example, how pneumatic tubes facilitated the delivery of mail in late-19th century New York, how the rise of the film industry shaped early 20th-century Los Angeles, or how television cables served as the nervous system of new mid-20th-century suburbs. Rather than presenting this work as atomized individual projects, however, everyone will plot their sites and networks, and post relevant archival media, to a collaboratively designed interactive media map. Part of the class will be devoted to designing the platform by analyzing which presentation format is best suited for effectively displaying these layers of urban mediation and exploring the synergies between individual students’ projects. The class will lay historical and theoretical groundwork for examining media and the urban environment, and also introduce students to the fields of media archaeology and the digital humanities. While students will participate in the creation of interactive media maps, this hybrid course will have a strong theory component.

COURSE MATERIALS

All readings will be posted as pdfs to the class website: http://www.wordsinspace.net/urban-media-archaeology/2012-fall/. You’ll be prompted to enter the user name _________ and password _________.

YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

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Attendance and Participation

We need everyone to show up regularly, on time, and prepared to ensure that we have sufficient time for discussion and that everyone is contributing meaningfully to the class mapping project. You will be permitted two excused absences ("excused" means that you must have contacted me prior to class to inform me of your absence) for the semester. Additional excused absences – and any unexcused absences – will negatively affect your grade. More than three absences, excused or unexcused, will result in failure of the course; if you anticipate needing to miss several classes, you are advised to drop the course. A pattern of late arrivals is likewise detrimental.

I do not require you to complete weekly reading responses, simply because your work on the individual and group projects should keep you plenty busy. That said, I still do encourage you to take time before class to annotate the weekly readings, abstract them, and reflect on how they contribute to your understanding of the overarching themes of the course and to your own research and making process.

Process Blogs

We’ll be thoroughly and publicly documenting our process — the break-throughs, the triumphs, the frustrations, the dead-ends. This documentation is in keeping with the Digital Humanities’ mission to promote transparency – not only for the benefit of our collaborators in this class, but also in an attempt to welcome other publics into the scholarly process. Our class will be helping to develop, in collaboration with Parsons designers and several other urban-themed classes and projects around the university, a new mapping tool, the Urban Research Toolkit; we intend for this map to serve as a platform for future urban-related faculty and student work at The New School. Therefore, we need to think of our work as laying a foundation. In our project documentation we can not only explain how we’ve developed the tool throughout the fall semester, but also make recommendations for those who come after us, encourage others to conduct new research on specific topics that will bridge existing student projects; direct our successors to promising collections we found in local archives, but just didn’t have the time to review; make recommendations for future tech developers to add new features to the platform so that it’s better able to accommodate the methods we want to employ; etc.

Each student will contribute to our collective “process blog.” If you already have your own blog, you’re welcome to post your UMA work to your own blog, but we’ll need to work out how to aggregate all relevant external blog posts to our central UMA blog. All other students are welcome to post directly to the UMA blog.

If you have an epiphany, if you stumble upon an amazing special collection or interview subject, if you find yourself questioning your topic selection or your mapping techniques, if you have a cartographic break-through, if you hit a brick wall – if anything significant happens that you think offers an occasion for “critical self-consciousness” (Johanna Drucker 2004) or an opportunity to “illuminate the shadowy process of critical thinking, encouraging readers not only to digest finished works, but also to learn from and evaluate the mechanisms of their creation” (Avi Santo and Christopher Lucas 2009) – blog it, please. Each student will be expected to post regularly – at least five times throughout the semester, starting from the date you submit your project proposal, and at least once every three weeks; at least one post should reflect on your finished, or near-finished, semester project. Your posts should be substantial (roughly 300 words) and, if appropriate, should include relevant media. Make sure to keep the tone professional – not conidential. Please make sure, too, to address the relevance of the class readings and in-class discussions and activities, where applicable. Your blog contributions are worth 20% of your final grade.
Map Critique
And Creation

Because our final project will be an interactive map, we’ll dedicate some time in most of our classes to presenting and critiquing several (canonical/ exemplary/ experimental/ overwrought/ elegant/ etc.) maps in a variety of formats, to see what they do right and wrong, what they illuminate and obfuscate, how they integrate form and content effectively and poorly, and what lessons we can take away from them and apply, or avoid, in our own projects.

On the course website we’ll maintain an “atlas” of relevant mapping projects, from which you can choose one project to critique. You’re also welcome to propose additions to the collection. You’re encouraged to choose a map that both pertains to the critical issues raised in the week’s readings and raises practical questions that we’ll need to address as we create our own map(s). Please consult with the other presenters for the week to work out who’s chosen which projects.

Your ten-minute presentation should consist of two parts: (1) a critique and (2) a critical-creative application prototype. The critique should focus on a single mapping project and should address some of these issues. As the weeks progress, and as we explore more and more mapping projects and hone our methods for critical evaluation, we’ll generate a list of “best practices” or an evaluation rubric with which we can critique and refine our own project at the end of the semester. Your application is a critical-creative attempt to apply to your own research project the same effective and/or ineffective techniques used in the map you’ve critiqued. You might choose to exaggerate the failures of that map by creating a parody — or you might choose to blend in helpful features from some of the other maps in the atlas in order to generate mapping techniques that might aid in your own work. Be sure to identify what projects inspired you and why, and how and where we can see those projects’ influence in your map. Your application can take virtually any form and format — from a quilted map to a hand-dissected map to an audio map. Keep in mind that this is only a prototype — a rough sketch, a maquette, a “napkin drawing”; we’re more concerned in this context with the ideas behind your project than with your execution.

Before class begins, post your 600- to 900-word text — which should encompass both your critique and the explanation of your application exercise — along with documentation of your application, to our class blog. In class, you’ll have 10 to 12 minutes for your presentation; please save five of those minutes for discussion. And please be sure to have presentation media loaded/booted/hung/distributed before class begins so we can start on time. Your review is worth 15% of your final grade.

Individual Project Proposals

Everyone will be responsible for completing an individual research/production project — but you should frame and execute your project in light of how it might eventually “speak to” the others. We’re building a group map, not a platform hosting 15 atomized mapping projects. In the end, we’re looking for synergies, for convergences and divergences, between the projects; for projects to form into thematic clusters; and for a “larger story” that the collective class project can tell. You’ll also need to choose and frame your project in lights of how it will lend itself to presentation not in a traditional typewritten text, but in a multimodal, online, spatial format. Ask yourself: what kind of arguments can an interactive map help me make, that I couldn’t make in another format?

You should begin thinking about potential topics early in the semester. You’re welcome to explore project ideas on the UMA website or in conversation with me and your classmates. Before our class on October 3 I’d like for you to submit via Google Drive a formal 600- to 900-word project proposal (you’ll then post your revised proposal to our course blog). This proposal must include (1) a topic description, problem statement, or research question; (2) a discussion of your topic’s relevance, significance, and/or timeliness (in other words, why is it worth studying, and why now?); (3) a discussion of why your project lends itself to spatial argumentation (i.e., why map it?); (4) a tentative bibliography containing at least ten sources, half of which must be scholarly sources; and (5) types and formats of media or
Individual Research Dossier & Draft Map

Don’t think of these two components as separate responsibilities. Instead, consider the dossier the collection of secondary and primary research material from which you’ve drawn to construct your map. It’s essentially your “multimodal” notebook or research database; it evidences all the “behind-the-scenes” work you’ve done that either has or hasn’t manifested itself on your map. The dossier could contain abstracts of relevant secondary sources you’ve read/viewed/listened to; scans of original documents you’ve discovered; clips of relevant photos, videos, audio recordings, etc., you’ve either collected or created; etc. It’s up to you to determine, depending upon the types of material you’ve been collecting and what system you’ve been using to collect it, how to best share this dossier with me. The dossier you submit need not be comprehensive; you can choose a representative sample of material that demonstrates the breadth of your research and that illustrates the emerging themes in your critical understanding of your research topics.

Ideally, you will have been maintaining your dossier throughout your research process. You should be thoroughly citing and annotating all your material. And you should be experimenting with various organizational schemes (thematic, formal, chronological, etc. – whichever schemes make most sense for your particular project and advance the “spatial argument” [you think] you want to make on the map).

With your dossier, you’ll be presenting a draft of your individual project map. We’ll decide in class how to best provide feedback on your work so that you can both refine your individual project and create possibilities for connection with other students’ projects.

We’ll be meeting to talk about your dossiers in-person. You should be prepared to (1) briefly summarize and critically reflect on what you’ve discovered through your research— in particular, how your research topic(s) pertain to the themes of our class — and how you’ve sifted through and organized your research material; and (2) how that research informed the cartographic arguments you’ll be making. You’ll be signing up for 20-minute meetings during the week of November 14. The dossier and map are worth 20% of your final grade.

Final Map

As we learn more about one another’s projects, and as we add more material to URT, patterns, we hope, will start to emerge, and opportunities for synergy will present themselves.

If all goes well, we’ll form “clusters” based on shared topical (e.g., locations of mass entertainment, telecommunications infrastructures, paper-based media networks, sites of public gathering and protest), geographic (e.g., various media networks’ histories in the East Village or the Bronx, the mediation of Times Square) or theoretical (e.g., uneven distribution of media resources, alternative media and grassroots politics, the “remediation” of communication infrastructure) interests. We’ll then work collectively to link together our individual projects, to explain their convergences and divergences, to tell the “larger story” of New York’s media history that our individual maps, considered altogether, show. Again, we’ll need to consider what kinds of arguments a map platform allows us to make, and what modes of argumentation would best serve our purposes. How can we use the map’s form and functions to support our intellectual “content”?

You should make sure to document your decision-making process — and apply our collectively designed “evaluation rubric” — on our course blog. (Please make sure to label or tag your posts appropriately, so we can associate them with your project.) The map will be presented in our next-to-last class on December 5. All students are expected to be present and to participate. I will provide more details on the final presentation as the end of the semester draws near. The final map is worth 30% of your final grade.
In addition, by December 12, at 5pm, you are expected to submit, either by posting to our class website or submitting via Google Drive, a 300- to 600-word self-(and, if applicable, group) final assessment. You should assess your own and the class-at-large’s success in meeting our evaluative criteria, discuss your work process, and, if applicable, address the contributions of classmates with whom you worked closely. Your assessment is worth 5% of your final grade. These may seem like small stakes, but remember that 5% can make the difference between a B+ and an A-.

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**Submitting Work Via Google Drive**

Please give all your assignments a filename that helps me identify you and the assignment (e.g., Mattern_ProjectProposal.doc).

I’ll email you with summary comments, and when necessary, I’ll provide editorial and margin comments on the document itself. Depending upon your level of comfort with Google and “the cloud,” you could either (1) create your work as a Google Doc, in which case I’ll simply use GD’s own commenting features; or (2) upload your work as a Word doc and not convert it to a Google Doc, in which case I’ll add comments via Word’s “track changes” and email your edited work back to you.

To share your work with me, simply click the “share” button in the top-right corner of Google Docs. Make sure the “sharing settings” are set to “Private,” so “only people explicitly granted permission can access,” and under “Add People,” type my email address. That’s it.

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**Academic Dishonesty**

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the University’s academic honesty policy; see “Academic Honesty” on the Media Studies department website. Because our semester project is a collective one, any acts of academic dishonesty reflect poorly not only on the perpetrator(s), but also on the class and the instructor. Academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure of the course.

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**Late Work**

All assignment deadlines are listed on the syllabus. Because we are working collaboratively this semester, it is important that we all move at the same pace. Late work will be penalized, and extensions will be granted only rarely, and only after consulting with me well in advance of the assignment deadline.

A student who has not submitted all assigned work by the end of the semester does not receive an “Incomplete” by default. “Incompletes” are assigned only in extreme circumstances, and require that the student consult with me before the end of the semester and sign a contract obligating him or her to complete all outstanding work by a date that we agree upon.
PUNCH LIST

Please note that we will not discuss all assigned readings in depth in class. This does not mean it is not worth your while to read them. These texts have been chosen because of their potential utility in your projects – so even if we don’t debate the reading in-class, these texts can, and should, still inform the work you’re doing throughout the semester.

Week 1: August 29

**Introductions & Course Overview**

**CASE STUDIES**
Shawn Micallef, “Toronto’s Corridor of Power” Spacing Toronto (26 October 2008).
Nicole Starosielkski, “Surfacing”
Helki Frantzen & Center for Urban Pedagogy, “The Internet is Serious Business” [video] m.ammoth blog
Brian McGrath, Mark Watkins, Akiko Hattori & Lucy Lai Wong, Manhattan Timeformations

Week 2: September 5

**Tubes & Wires, Cables & Waves**

**FIELD TRIP**
Tour of “where the Internet lives” with Tubes author Andrew Blum. We’ll meet in the class for roughly , then head downtown to meet Andrew at 195 Broadway at 8:30pm, for a “spooky” nighttime infrastructure walk. In case inclement weather or babies (Andrew and his wife are expecting) fail(s) our plans, we’ll reschedule for 9/19.

**READINGS**
Andrew Blum, Excerpt from Tubes: A Journey to the Center of the Internet (New York: Ecco, 2012): 105-146.
Shannon Mattern, “Infrastructural Tourism” Words In Space [blog post] (20 July 2012).

Week 3: September 12

**Putting the Urban into Media Archaeology**

**ACTIVITY**
Looking at Past Student Projects

**GUESTS**
Fall 2011 UMA Students Farah Momin (“Independent Bookstores: Past & Present”) & Danielle Fichera (“The History of Artists & Art Production in Soho”) visit to discuss the front end and behind-the-scenes elements – e.g., record types, fields, etc. – of their projects.

**READINGS**
Jussi Parikka, Interview with Garnet Hertz, “Archaeologies of Media Art” CTheory (April 1, 2010).
Kazys Varnelis, “Centripetal City” Cabinet 17 (Spring 2004/2005): 27-33 [To reinforce the historical layering of the infrastructures we explored in our field trip.]
Week 4: September 19

**Digital Humanities & Assessment Rubrics**

**READINGS**
- Shannon Mattern, “Critiquing Maps” *Words In Space* [blog post] (August 29, 2010).

**IN-CLASS CRITIQUE**
- Group critiques of multimodal projects, TBD – likely to include examples from *Vectors*, *Kairos*, *Sensate*.

Quad 26

**NO CLASS: ROSH HASHANAH**

Week 5: October 3

**Research Approaches**

**ACTIVITY**
- Presentations of Project Proposals

**READINGS**
- Kellen Archives, “Introduction to Archival Research.”
- Browse through Bobst Library’s “Using Archives & Manuscripts” Guide [use the brown tabs near the top of the page]
- Shannon Mattern, “From Post Offices to Radiograms: Local Primary Resources on Urban Media History” *Words In Space* [blog post] (20 July 2010).
- Shannon Mattern, “Cartographic Excess” *Words In Space* [blog post] (27 December 2011) [to help frame your expectations as you go forward.]

Week 6: October 10

**Mapping Along X, Y, and Z Axes**

**URT: Creating Your Subprojects**

**IN-CLASS CRITIQUE**
- HyperCities + Stanford Spatial History Project

**FILM**
- Charles and Ray Eames, *Powers of Ten*

**READINGS**
- Scan through some of my other bookmarked sites on mapping.
The second half of the semester is dedicated primarily to (1) map critiques, (2) self-directed reading and research, and (3) hands-on work. We may need to make changes to the syllabus so our in-class time can best support your individual and collaborative work. I ask that you please be flexible and responsive.

Week 7: October 17  **URT: Spatialized Data Modeling; Plotting Points, Routes & Areas**  
**MAPS**  
Student Presentations  
**ACTIVITY**  
We’ll collaboratively data model our field trip w/ Andrew Blum.  
**READINGS**  
Excerpts from Raghu Ramakrishnan and Johannes Gehrke, *Database Management Systems*, 2nd Ed. (McGraw Hill, 2003). [Remember: you're reading not to develop expertise -- some of this might be difficult to digest -- but to familiarize yourself with some of the key terms, and to help you begin to “think like a database.”]  
Johanna Drucker & Bethany Nowviskie, Read Section A, [Skim B/C], Read D/E/F  
“Temporal Modeling: Conceptualization and Visualization of Temporal Relations for Humanities Scholarship” *Temporal Modeling Project Report*, University of Virginia (probably early 2000s): 1-3, [3-11], 11-17 [This report’s probably close to ten years old, and it focuses on a design problem that’s rather different than our own – but it models how you might think through the translation of theoretical concepts central to your own project into (carto)graphic design, and how to reconceive your conceptual model as a data model.]

Week 8: October 24  **Mapping Platforms, Aesthetics & Politics**  
**MAPS**  
Student Presentations  
**GUEST**  
Lize Mogel, interdisciplinary artist working btw art + cartography  
**READINGS**  
Browse through Lize’s website + the *website for the Atlas of Radical Cartography*  
*We may not discuss the following, but they’re still worth your time!*  
Section 2 of the [OpenStreetMap Wiki] + [OpenStreetMap]

Week 9: October 31  **Pecha Kucha & Conceptual Design Feedback**  
**PREP: Pecha Kucha**  
Learn about PechaKuchas [here]. See also Olivia Mitchell’s “Five Presentation Tips for Pecha Kucha or Ignite Presentation,” *Speaking About Presenting* [blog post], and check out some videos of *Ignite presentations*. As you’ll see, PechaKucha presentations typically involve presentations consisting of 20 slides, with 20 seconds dedicated to each. In the interest of time, we’re going to limit our presentations to 12 slides at 20 seconds each.  
**GUEST CRITICS**  
Brian McGrath, Parsons Architecture; Anne Balsamo, Dean of the School of Media; others to be confirmed
Week 10: November 7  **User Scenarios & Paper Prototyping**

**URT: Record Types & Fields**

**MAPS**  Student Presentations

**READINGS**
- “Use Case / User Scenario” *Fat Purple* (February 2007).
- Paul Andrew, “10 Effective Video Examples of Paper Prototyping” *Speckboy Design Magazine* (June 24, 2010).

**PREP FOR CLASS**
Think about what major arguments you hope to make through your project, or what stories you hope to tell. How could users navigate through your finished project (yes, this involves some projection into the future!) and come away having comprehended your argument or story, and achieved your desired user experience? Now, write or sketch two or three brief (one page max) user scenarios that tell the story of how different users might navigate through your project to achieve a particular goal. Finally, consider how you’d actualize that scenario on a paper prototype – a prototype not of the overall URT interface, but of a user’s concrete interaction with your particular project. We’ll be constructing our prototypes in class – e.g., using yarn to represent paths, scraps of paper to represent photos or other media – but if you have a particular preference for how you’d like to materially prototype your project on a paper map, you’re welcome to bring your own “crafty” materials.

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Week 11: November 14  **URT: Cartographic Arguments – Short Class This Week**

**MAPS**  Student Presentations

**ACTIVITY**
Drawing again on our beginning-of-semester field trip, we’ll collaboratively consider how we might create a cartographic argument for “where the Internet lives.”

**INDIVID. MTGS**
Sign up for an individual 20-minute meeting to review your research dossier and draft map.

*Please note that because of the holiday schedule, this week’s class meets on a **TUESDAY**

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Week 12: November 20  **Networking Nodes**

**MAPS**  Student Presentations

Through various group exercises (e.g., interviewing one another, “speed dating,” etc.) students will explore possible connections between their own projects and their classmates’. We’ll discuss what we might learn by layering or networking these projects on the map — and what modes of presentation can help us to convey these larger, multi-project arguments.

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Week 13: November 28  **Tech Workshops as Needed and/or Independent/Group Work**

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Week 14: December 5  **Independent/Group Work & Individual Consultations**
Shannon Away in Sweden

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Week 15: December 12  **Final Map Presentations**

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