Maps as Media
Fall 2017 | NMDS 5223 | CRN 4173 [GR] 6937 [UG]
Wednesdays 4 to 6:45pm | 66 5th Ave, Room 005 (Lower Level)

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Maps reveal, delineate, verify, orient, navigate, anticipate, historicize, conceal, persuade, and, on occasion, even lie. From the earliest maps in cave paintings and on clay tablets, to the predictive climate visualizations and crime maps and mobile cartographic apps of today and tomorrow, maps have offered far more than an objective representation of a stable reality. In this hybrid theory-practice studio we’ll examine the past, present, and future – across myriad geographic and cultural contexts – of our techniques and technologies for mapping space and time. In the process, we’ll address various critical frameworks for analyzing the rhetorics, poetics, politics, and epistemologies of spatial and temporal maps. Throughout the semester we’ll also experiment with a variety of critical mapping tools and methods, from techniques of critical cartography to sensory mapping to time-lining, using both analog and digital approaches. Course requirements include: individual map critiques; lab exercises; and individual research-based, critical-creative “atlases” composed of at least five maps in a variety of formats.

Course Materials

All readings will be posted to our class website: http://www.wordsinspace.net/mapsmedia/fall2017/

To access password-protected readings, you’ll be prompted to enter the user name <student> and password <secretfilee>. Not so secret, eh?

That said, you’re invited (though not required!) to purchase copies of the following, since we’ll be using significant portions of these resources:


A few notes about the weekly readings/screenings/listening exercises:

• I believe we can better appreciate the complexity, relevance, and resonance of each of our weekly themes by approaching them from multiple theoretical, historical, practical, and creative directions. That’s why, for each week, I’ve put together a mini “anthology” rather than assigning a single definitive text. Yes, sometimes those reading lists might look intimidatingly long – but the total number of pages hardly ever exceeds 150 (and a lot of those pages are illustrated!), which is a more-than-reasonable workload for a graduate student. Plus, each text on that list is there because it has the potential to add a distinctive voice to our conversation (you should see the ridiculously long lists of readings that didn’t make the cut!).

• That said, my selection of a particular text does not constitute an endorsement of it. Sometimes I choose texts that annoy me, or with which I disagree, for a few reasons: because they’re widely cited and I think it’d behoove you to be aware of them, because I want to allow you to exercise your own judgment, and because I’m pretty sure they’ll make for good conversation.

• We will not address all the readings in our in-class discussions. Some readings are primarily factual, some are self-explanatory, some simply present interesting illustrations or case studies; we needn’t discuss these sorts of texts in-depth – but they’re still worth your time. They provide valuable nuance and color that will inform our discussions, shape your own understanding, and, ideally, inspire ideas for your own projects.
Your Contributions

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

We want to make sure we get the most out of our discussions, and that we benefit from one another’s expertise and experience in developing our individual projects. Thus, we need everyone to show up regularly, on time, and prepared – i.e., having both completed the assigned reading and any mapping exercises. 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. Your consistent presence and regular, constructive contributions – including your participation in our in-class labs – account for **20% of your final grade**.

READING RESPONSES + DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Because this is a praxis-oriented course blending critical discussions with critical making exercises, we have to use our class time efficiently. We won’t always have the luxury of engaging in leisurely, seminar-style discussions of our readings (see below, under “Required Texts,” for more about my reading selections). Nevertheless, I do want to ensure that we make time to address particular passages from the readings that resonate strongly for you, that we grapple with any burning questions they raise for you, that we address any frustrations or excitement or discomfort they generate for you. So, if there are particular texts or topics or questions – or themes that extend across various readings or weekly themes – that you find especially compelling, you’re invited to “flag” those items for our in-class agenda. (Your predecessors in previous sections of “Maps as Media” have asked that I implement this requirement.)

On at least three occasions over the course of the semester – on any three weeks of your choosing (ideally, not the last three weeks!) – you’ll offer a brief (~200 word) response to the week’s readings and their significance within the broader context of the class. If a particular week’s readings riled you up or moved you, that’s your cue to post. Describe what resonated for you or troubled you or confused you; share a passage or quotation you’d like us to unpack together; pose some questions you want us to take up in our discussion. Please **post your responses as comments to the appropriate day’s page on our class website**. Your three posts are **due by noon on Wednesdays before class**, and altogether they’re worth **10% of your final grade**.

MAP CRITIQUE

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.

Each of you will post and publicly present one map critique – ideally, of a map that both addresses (in a direct or tangential way) the week’s theme and pertains to your semester project. Don’t think of this exercise as an additional assignment; instead, use it to advance your own agenda. To identify a map for review, you might look through the websites I list below, and the books I’ll be previewing in Week One. You could also simply Google “your project topic” + “map”; I’ll bet you a dollar you’ll find a few options. Please consult with the other presenters for the week to work out who’s chosen which projects. You’re welcome to double- or triple-up on a particular map, provided you each offer a distinctive perspective.

Your **fifteen-minute presentation-and-discussion** 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 employ some of the critical tools and criteria we discuss in Week 3. 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 try out some helpful features from your critique subject in order to generate mapping techniques that might aid in your own work. Be sure to identify what elements inspired you and why, and how and where we can see those elements’ influence in your map. Your application can take virtually any form and format – from a drawing to a paper prototype, from a quilt to a sound 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 on your presentation day, please post your text and images (~900 words for grads, ~600 words for undergrads) – which should encompass both your critique and the explanation of your application exercise, along with documentation of your application – to our class website. You should aim to wrap up your formal presentation in seven or eight minutes (I’ll cut you off after ten), so we have time for discussion. And please be sure to have your presentation media loaded on the classroom computer before class begins so we can start on time. Your review is worth 15% of your final grade.

You can view Class of 2015 critiques here, and 2016 critiques here.

MAP LABS + ATLAS

At the beginning of the semester you should begin to think about a fluid, capacious research topic that you’d like to explore through the maps you create over the course of the semester. Ideally, this topic will pertain to projects you’re exploring in your other classes or your thesis, to a “through-line” you’ve pursued throughout your academic program, or to work you’re doing in your extracurricular life. You’ll need to submit a 600-word proposal for this project, via Google Drive, by Monday, 9/18, at 7pm. This proposal should include:

1. a topic description, thematic overview, problem statement, or research question;
2. a discussion of your topic’s personal relevance, larger critical or political significance, timeliness, etc.;
3. a preliminary discussion of how your topic might lend itself to spatial/cartographic investigation (i.e., what can you learn by mapping it?);
4. a description of the geographic area(s) and scale(s) you plan to focus on in your maps; and
5. a tentative bibliography of at least seven sources (some scholarly publications, some popular publications, some precedent maps, etc.) that will likely prove useful in your research and practice.

You’ll share your proposal in class, in an informal three-minute presentation, on September 20. The proposal is worth 15% of your final grade.

You can read about 2015 final projects here, and 2016 projects here.

Each of the maps you then create over the course of the semester should pertain to this topic and cumulatively represent myriad ways of illustrating or investigating your subject. You’ll begin exploring a few mapping strategies in for our in-class labs. You can then continue to develop these prototypes independency, or generate map ideas of your own. By the end of the semester, you should have a minimum of five (for grads) or four (for undergrads) completed maps, in a variety of “media formats” (e.g., hand-drawn, photographic, audio-based, online-interactive, etc.). You’ll then need to compile those maps into an atlas, which you can present in whatever format you choose (e.g., a book, a website, an installation, etc.), as long as you frame the contents as a cartographic set – as five “spatial variations on a theme.” You should make sure to:

• offer some means of narratively or argumentatively navigating through your collection;
• generate connective threads between your individual maps; and
• Provide critical/descriptive commentary reflecting on the unique medial qualities of each piece in the set (see, for example, how Annette Kim addresses the distinctive features of each map in her “Critical Cartography Primer,” on pp. 113-145 of Sidewalk City).

As you peruse your atlas, ask yourself: Do my maps stand on their own? Do they speak for themselves? Perhaps they don’t. Consider integrating prefaces, captions, legends, citations (i.e., where do the data come from?), disclaimers, etc., where appropriate. You’re also encouraged to integrate some of our class readings – or
supplemental cartographic history and theory texts you’ve read on your own – into your atlas text (or, consider how Nick Sousanis graphically integrates theoretical material in his Unflattening).

Please do not email me five separate files or five separate links, or hand me five separate documents; your final submission should be one integrated collection, with all components synthesized and contextualized. If your work consists of analog, performative, or ephemeral media that doesn’t readily lend itself to submission, you’ll need to share with me some coherent form of documentation.

You’ll submit your project before the start of class on December 13, and during that class each student will deliver a 10- to 15-minute presentation of his/her work (details to come). Your final atlas is worth 40% of your final grade.

Other Resources

You’ll find the website for our Fall 2015 class (including examples of the students’ work) here, and our 2016 class here.

The following web resources are worth consulting regularly, too:

- The Atlantic’s CityLab posts on maps
- The Library of Congress’s Worlds Revealed: Geography and Maps Blog
- Making Maps: DIY Cartography (John Krygier + Denis Wood)
- Maps Mania
- Dee Morris & Stephen Voyce’s series of posts on Jacket2
- Penn State’s online Cartography and Visualization course
- David Rumsey Map Collection
- LivingMaps Review [a potential venue for those you who aspire to publish your writing and creative work on maps?]
- Mapzen’s Blog
- Stamen Design
- Strange Maps
- Territory Journal
- Wired Map Lab
- Andy Woodruff’s Blog
- My own mapping links
Policies and Procedures:

SUBMITTING WORK VIA GOOGLE DRIVE

You'll occasionally be asked to submit your work via Google Drive. Because I prefer to insert margin comments and propose revisions directly in/on your text, I need to work with an editable document (e.g., not a pdf). For this reason, I ask that you please either (1) create your documents in Google Drive; (2) convert them to Google Doc format when you upload them; or (3) upload documents in .doc format, which I can then download and annotate using “track changes,” and return to you via email. You can share your material with me by clicking on the “Share” button in the upper-right corner of Google Drive/Docs, and inserting my email address.

POSTING WORK ONLINE

We’ll all create accounts for our class’s blog, and we'll briefly review how to post. You’re invited to post any class-related material – events, exhibitions, news, etc. – at any time, and you’ll occasionally be asked to share your work online. If you’re not comfortable posting your work, please don’t hesitate to talk to me.

DEADLINES

Assignment deadlines are noted on the syllabus. 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. Sorry – I know some other faculty are a bit more lenient with deadlines, but I tend to set aside big blocks of time for assignment review, and I provide substantial feedback – so missing deadlines means you miss your “window of opportunity” for review, which is an essential part of your learning in this course (and any course, for that matter).

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 well 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.

CHANGES TO THE SYLLABUS

I make every effort to map out the entire semester before the semester begins, so we both know what we’re in for. Yet we may need to make a few small alterations to our schedule: we might host a guest who’s passing through town, I might decide to cut a couple of our readings or substitute new material that’s published over the course of the semester, etc. Any changes will be noted, with plenty of advance notice, on our class website, which will always be the most the most accurate, up-to-date “control center” for our class. This printed syllabus is really just an administrative document.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the University’s academic honesty policy. Plagiarism or cheating of any form will result in immediate failure of the course. No joke. If you have any questions regarding proper citation of sources or other academic integrity matters, consult the University Learning Center.
AUGUST 30: CALIBRATING THE COMPASS
Introductions
Syllabus Review

Getting our Bearings: I’ll be referring to these texts in class; you’re welcome to read them, but you’re not obligated to do so!

- Aaron Reiss, “My 5 Favorite Maps: Bill Rankin,” The Atlantic CityLab (September 26, 2014). See also Bill’s top-10 list.

References & Inspiration: I’ll bring these books to class so we can look through them. I’ve also requested that copies of (almost) all of these titles be placed on reserve in the List Center Library @ 6 East 16th St.; I encourage you to reference them throughout the semester.

- Katharine Harmon, You Are Here: Personal Geographies and Other Maps of the Imagination (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004): maps of the body and spirit, maps of emotion and memory, maps of fictional places and cosmology, maps of air routes and stereotypes
- Nato Thompson, Experimental Geography: Radical Approaches to Landscape, Cartography, and Urbanism (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2008).
The Old

- Read about the amazingly ambitious *History of Cartography* project, some of which is available to you freely online: “*The History of Cartography, the ‘Most Ambitious Overview of Map Making Ever,’ Now Free Online,*” *Open Culture* (September 3, 2015). Now, you’ll read a few small samples from that collection:
- Just for fun: check out the [maps released by the CIA](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factsbook/) in November 2016, in honor of the agency’s 75th anniversary.

The New and Timeless: these two pieces foreshadow many of the themes and critical questions we’ll be discussing throughout the semester

- Shannon Mattern, “*Mapping’s Intelligent Agents*” *Places Journal* (forthcoming mid-September 2017) [This piece will be published online in a week or two; please don’t circulate it! You can find corresponding images here].

What new cartographic developments – humanitarian or ecological applications, business opportunities, creative experiments, political or ethical threats, areas of critical study, etc. – are most compelling to you? You might draw from inspiration from the two essays above, or you might consider how mapping aids in predictive policing and military combat; how new geolocative technologies make it possible for online retailers to deliver to remote, henceforth “un-addressed” parts of the world; how real-time mapping opens up new potential in the worlds of gaming or performance; how artists find creative fodder in geomedia glitches; or how smartphones could be compromising our “spatial thinking”; or any of the other ways mapping is transforming transportation, trade, culture, climate, and realms beyond. Your task is to choose a cartographic issue or application of personal interest; do a little digging online for relevant news, recent scholarship, and illuminating “think pieces”; then come to class prepared to briefly report on one “future of mapping” story that interests you and seems ripe for investigation. You’ll each have one minute to present!

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Tools & Techniques for Critique: Yes, there’s some redundancy in the readings below! We’re aiming to map the overlaps and discrepancies in various critical rubrics.

- Mike Foster, “The Lost Art of Critical Map Reading,” Graphicarto [blog post] (February 27, 2014).
- Shannon Mattern, “Maps as Media,” Words In Space (September 15, 2015).
- Please start preparing your **semester project proposal** – due Monday 9/18 @ 7pm!
- And while you’re developing ideas for your final project, think about which week you’d like to present your map critique. Ideally, this assignment will feed into your final project. Reserve your slot here.

**Lab**: Small-Group In-Class Map Critiques

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Reminder: Your semester project proposals are due, via Google Drive, by Monday, 9/18, at 7pm, so I'll have plenty of time to read, respond, and organize you into presentation groups for class on 9/20. For more information, see the first paragraph under “Map Labs and Atlas” in “Your Contributions.”

SEPTEMBER 20: CARTOGRAPHIC EPISTEMOLOGIES & BLIND SPOTS
Rosh Hashanah begins this evening at sundown, at 6:56pm. If necessary, we’ll end class early.
Guest: Skype 4-5pm: Bill Rankin (pending baby’s arrival)
Discuss Individual Project Proposals

Yes, this looks like a long reading list. But it’s really only two substantial texts (Pickles and Vertesi, the latter of which has lots of images), plus several short, digestible excerpts and posts. In all, about 75 pages. You can do it.

Epistemology
- “Japanese Designers May Have Created the Most Accurate Map of Our World: See the AuthaGraph,” Open Culture (February 17, 2017).
- Bill Rankin: After the Map, American Slavery, Slavery in the North, Slave Insurance

Frames, Borders, Gaps, Cuts & Boundaries


SEPTEMBER 27: COGNITIVE MAPPING, DISSONANCE & RESISTANCE

Lab #2

- Lily Bui On, “Dragons, Memory & Navigating the Globe Using Only Your Wits,” Nautilus (October 13, 2014) [a preface to our indigenous mapping discussion in three weeks].
- Check out the Hand Drawn Map Association.
- Tim Wallace, “Kevin Lynch & The Imageable Boston,” Bostonography (December 15, 2010) [and follow Wallace’s link to the “Perceptual Forms of the City” material in the MIT Archives].

Lab: Discuss methods for cognitive and participatory mapping.

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OCTOBER 4: CRITICAL CARTOGRAPHY & COUNTER-MAPPING

Map Critiques: up to three students present their map critiques

- Annette Kim, “Mapping the Unmapped” in *Sidewalk City: Remapping Public Space in Ho Chi Minh City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015): 84-149. See also [http://slab.today](http://slab.today/)
OCTOBER 11: INDIGENOUS MAPS, SPATIAL ONTOLOGIES & EPSEMOTOLOGIES

Map Critiques: up to two students present their map critiques

Guest: 4:30pm: Amir Sheikh, ORISE Research Fellow, US Forest Service Environmental Anthropologist, University of Washington

- Margaret Wickens Pearce and Renee Pualani Louis, “Mapping Indigenous Depth of Place,” American Indian Culture and Research Journal 32:3 (2008): 107-26 [you'll find some repetition with Peluso's piece, from last week, but the major part of this article focuses on applications]


- Explore some sample projects:
  - The Aboriginal Mapping Network: See in particular the “About” page, the “Mapping Resources” and “The Living Atlas”
  - Check out LandMark: Global Platform of Indigenous and Community Lands, Pan Inuit Trails, and the Ground Truth Initiative.


- Sam Sturgis, “Kids in India are Sparking Urban Planning Changes by Mapping Slums,” The Atlantic’s CityLab (February 19, 2015).

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OCTOBER 18: LAB #3: MAPPING PLATFORMS

Map Critiques: up to three students present their map critiques

What follows is only a tentative list of readings. Our final list will depend on how we structure this lab – which itself depends on the nature of your projects. We'll update the list at least a week before 10/18.

Please, try to find data sources related to your project. If you bring your own sources to class, we'll have an opportunity to test them out with the various platforms listed below.

MAPPING PLATFORMS

- Maptime Resources + Tutorials
- Mapbox
- Mapzen
- CARTO Academy
- Google My Maps
- Social Explorer
- Open GTS Project (phone device app)

DATA SETS

NYC

- NYC Open Data portal
- NYC Dept of City Planning Open Data page
- NYC Dept of Education: Data About Schools
- WNYC’s Data News Team’s GitHub page
- NYC planimetrics list

More data sets will be listed on the website….
OCTOBER 25: THE TECHNO-CARTOGRAPHIC/ MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL/ CAPITALIST GAZE / LAB #4

Lab: Map Workshop: Share your work in progress and get some feedback! We’ll split the class into thirds, and each of you will have roughly ten minutes to do two things: present one prototype map in development for your final atlas, and solicit and receive feedback.

- And a variety of short applications:
  - Check out Terrapattern.

Friday, October 27: 5-6:30pm
Optional (but highly recommended!) Field Trip
SITU Research | Brooklyn Navy Yard

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NOVEMBER 1: MULTIMODALITY, MULTIVOCALITY & DEEP MAPPING

Map Critiques: up to three students present their map critiques

- Shannon Mattern, Deep Mapping the Media City (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

NOVEMBER 8: THE MAPPING ARTS

Exhibition Walk-Through: We’ll meet Carin Kuoni and/or Amanda Parmer at Aronson Gallery, on the ground floor of 66 5th Ave, for a guided tour of the Maria Thereza Alves exhibition (4-4:45)

Map Critique: we have time for one presenter today!

Guest: Nina Katchadourian (5:30-6:45)

- Daniel Rosenberg, “Against Infographics,” Art Journal OPEN (March 11, 2016) [on aesthetics & epistemology].
- Bellerby & Co Globemakers
- See Nina Katchadourian’s map-based work
- Read about Maria Thereza Alves, the 2016-18 Vera List Prize Winner

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NOVEMBER 15: MAPPING SENSATION & AFFECT\textsuperscript{10} / LAB #5

\textbf{Map Critiques}: up to two students present their map critiques

- Christian Nold, \textit{biomapping} [leaflet]
- Check out the various sound maps at \textit{Cities and Memory} and \textit{London Sound Survey}, and explore the affective maps at \textit{Good City Life}.
- Optional [about representing affect and sensation beyond the map]: Shannon Mattern, “\textit{Infrastructural Tourism},” \textit{Places} (July 2013).
- Think about relevant affective/sensory dimensions of, and mapping strategies for, your own projects.

\textbf{Lab}: Sensory Mapping – more info TBA

NOVEMBER 22: NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING

NOVEMBER 29: MAPPING TIME

**Guest:** Bert Spaan, NYPL Space/Time Directory Engineer

**Map Critiques:** up to three students present their map critiques

- Topotime
- Space/Time Directory

DECEMBER 6: PLUG-IN WEEK

This week, for the first half of class, we can explore topics or practice skills of your choosing. We’ll dedicate the remainder of our time either to (1) an open lab, during which you can work on your final projects and solicit feedback from your classmates and instructors; or (2) our first few final presentations.

DECEMBER 13: FINAL PRESENTATIONS

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11 Speculative Timelines research group | Rethinking Timelines Project @ University of Sydney