Urban Media Archaeology
Shannon Mattern + Rory Solomon
Revised Syllabus
October 19, 2010

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 exhibition project. You will be permitted **one excused absence** ("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. **[abbreviated from original syllabus]**

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 pilot-testing a new mapping tool, the Urban Research Tool, that we're developing in concert with the Parsons "URTingNYC" class; 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.

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, 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 *con*fessional. Please make sure, too, to **address the relevance of the class readings and in-class discussions and activities**. 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** (see this) 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 productively consider 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	**COMPLETE**. Your proposal is worth **10% of your final grade**.

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 shows me 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).

Because we'll be meeting and talking about your dossiers in-person, **you needn't prepare any introductory or explanatory text** – but 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 "argumentative" or "contextualizing" text you've included in the exhibition itself.

With your dossier, you'll be presenting a **full 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.

Dossiers are due **before/in class on November 17**, and are worth **25% of your final grade**. Format TBD.

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. 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 infrastructures) 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 maps 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; this documentation work should be shared by all members of your cluster. (Please make sure to label or tag your posts appropriately, so we can associate them with your project; we'll decide on this tagging system together.) The map will be **presented in our final class, on December 20**, and all students are expected to be present and to participate. Because our class will have been a "pilot test" for the grant-funded Urban Research Tool and an application of pedagogical strategies explored through the Provost's office's Applied Think Tank, we will be inviting **distinguished outside guests** to this presentation. I will provide more details on the final presentation as the end of the semester draws near. The exhibition is worth **25% of your final grade**.

In addition, by Friday, December 17, at 5pm, you are expected to submit, ==**via Google Docs**==, a **300- to 600-word group and self assessment**. You should assess your cluster's and the class's success in meeting our evaluative criteria; discuss your work process, and address the contributions of each member of your cluster; including yourself. Your assessment is worth **5% of your final grade**.

Much of your outside-of-class time for our final eight weeks will be spent conducting research on, and collecting materials for, your individual projects; creating process blog posts, and reading and responding to your classmates' blog posts; and consulting with your classmates regarding how to connect your projects and construct "bridging arguments." Please also make sure to use URT to **map your *research sites***.

Each week will begin with a Trac update

Week 8: October 27	**Maps + URT Demo + Individual/Group Conferences**
MAPS	See Website for Line-up
IN-CLASS TECHWORK	Work through instruction sheet, covering such areas as subprojects, record groups, records: text, image, sound, video, points, routes, areas
	Using URT to map our research *sites*.
INDIVID. APPT.	Rory is available only through 8:45; Shannon is available until 10:30

Week 9: November 3	**Maps + Pecha Kucha & Design Feedback**
MAPS	See Website for Line-up
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.
GUESTS	TBD: Jane Pirone + Jessica Irish + Scott Pobiner or Others?

Week 10: November 10	**Maps + Concept Mapping / Networking + URT Work**
MAPS	See Website for Line-up
RECOM'D READING	"Supporting Data Management Infrastructure for the Humanities" *Arts-Humanities.net* (2009-10).
IN-CLASS TECHWORK	With our remaining time in class, you can work individually on URT and consult w/ Rory about technical issues

Week 11: November 17	**Discuss Individual Dossiers + Draft Maps** (Format TBD)

November 24	**No Class: Thanksgiving**

Week 12: December 1	**Group Work + Connecting Projects & Repurposing Your Own**
MAPS	See Website for Line-up
IN-CLASS TECHWORK	Argumentative Clustering

Week 13: December 8	**Group Work + Individual Consultations**

Week 14: December 15	**Dress Rehearsal for Final Presentation + Critique & Polishing**

Week 15: December 20	**Final Exhibition Presentation + Discussion of Project & Process**