

History 1952: Mapping History

Harvard University, Fall 2016

Instructor: Prof. Kelly O'Neill

Tuesdays, 1-3pm

Course Description

Mapmaking is big business these days and geospatial data is a hot commodity. The implementation of the US government's Global Positioning System revolutionized military and civilian navigation two decades ago; today we hardly think twice about tapping Google Maps or OpenStreetMap for directions to the nearest coffee shop. Our prodigious consumption of geospatial information is driving 10% annual growth in the GIS industry and enabling us to map everything from endangered habitats to public health emergencies with astonishing speed and accuracy. Indeed, in the era of big data, the map has become a crucial tool for communicating information, establishing legitimacy, and consolidating power around the globe.

This course explores the history of maps and mapping from the age of Enlightenment to the era of GIS. In the first part of the course we will examine the way states and individuals have used maps to convey information, create ideas, shape policies, and generate political and cultural capital. We will learn to speak the "language" of maps. We will learn to read them critically, decode their arguments, and connect them to the historical contexts in which they were produced. And as we pore over estate plans, boundary surveys, maps of continental empires and city squares, we will try to understand how time and space intersect in the space of the map. With that particular problem in mind, in the second part of the course we will shift from the study of historical maps to the study of maps – both print-based and digital – made by historians. How have innovations in cartographic technology, particularly GIS and web mapping, changed the way historians think and write about the past? What new insights about the past can we gain by mapping it? What new stories can we tell? Where, ultimately, does the mapmaker end and the historian begin?

Over the course of the semester you will learn to read maps and excavate their meanings. We will workshop various methods for annotating maps, and you will use these skills both to produce your own "deep map" and to make carefully curated contributions to the course gallery. Your map work will serve as the foundation for your final essay. No prior experience studying or making maps is required; a healthy obsession with maps might come in handy.

Ungraded Requirements

- Installation of Zotero (Zotero Standalone is recommended, but if you are a Firefox user, Zotero for Firefox will work fine) and join the History 1952 Group when invited to do so.
- Attendance at 2 skills workshops (October 5 & November 2, 6-8pm, CGIS 354).

Graded Requirements

(Please note that descriptions of all assignments can be found in the "Assignments" section of the course website.)

- Participation (and attendance) - 30%
- Deep Map phase 1, due at the start of class on October 4 - 10%

- Deep Map phase 2, due 5pm on Friday, October 21 - 10%
- Final Project Portfolio
 - Mini map collection, due 12:00pm on Wednesday, November 23 - 10%
 - Original interactive map, due 5:00pm on Friday, December 9 - 10%
 - Paper (3,000 words/10 pages), due 8:00am on Monday, December 12 - 30%
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Where to find the readings and assigned materials

Available for purchase at the COOP:

- J. B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*
- Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, volume 1
- (recommended) Peter Barber, *The Map Book*

All other readings are available in pdf format or via hyperlink on the interactive syllabus on the course website.

Office Hours

I will hold office hours on Tuesdays, 3:30-5:00pm. Through September and on Oct 11 & 25, and Nov 8, you will find me in CGIS S329. On Oct 4 & 18, Nov 1, 15, & 22 you will find me in the Robinson Collaboration Space (2nd floor of Robinson Hall). Meetings are also available by appointment.

Schedule¹

UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION

Week 1 (Sept 6): Beguiling, Dangerous, Game-Changing Maps

- Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book I: 1-68 (pages 1-30 in the 2010 edition of Godley's translation)
- Brian Harley, *The new nature of maps: essays in the history of cartography*, Chapter 2
- *This American Life* 110: "Mapping" (Prologue & Act 1)

Week 2 (Sept 13): Map Theory 101

- Tim Cresswell, *Place: An Introduction*: 1-12
- J. B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps*: chapters 2 & 5
- Denis Cosgrove, "Mapping New Worlds: Culture and Cartography in Sixteenth-Century Venice"
- Edward Tufte, *Envisioning Information*: chapters 1 & 2

Week 3: Map Workshop at the Map Collection (Pusey)

No reading this week. Be sure you are caught up!

¹ Full bibliographic citations of all assigned readings can be found in the course library here: https://www.zotero.org/groups/history_1952.

UNIT 2: MAPS IN HISTORY

Week 4 (Sept 27): New Lands, New Maps

- John Akerman, "The Structuring of Political Territory in Early Printed Atlases"
- Brian Harley, *The new nature of maps: essays in the history of cartography*, Chapters 3 & 4
- Neil Safier, "The Confines of the Colony: boundaries, ethnographic landscapes, and imperial cartography in Ibero America," in *The Imperial Map*
- Matthew Edney, "The Mitchell Map, 1755-1782: An Irony of Empire"
- Matthew Edney, "John Mitchell's Map of North America"
- John Mitchell, "A Map of the British Colonies in North America [...]," 1775 (*Note that you should treat this as you would any other assigned source: read it, and be ready to discuss it.*)

Map Focus: AfricaMap (see Assignments)

Week 5 (Oct 4): The Golden Age of Geographies & Gazetteers

- Humphrey Southall, Ruth Mostern, and Lex Berman, "On Historical Gazetteers"
- Ruth Mostern, "Historical Gazetteers: An Experiential Perspective, with Examples from Chinese History"
- Mark Graham and Stefano Sabbata, "Mapping information wealth and poverty: the geography of gazetteers"
- David Bodenhamer, "An Exploration of Deep Maps"

Map Focus: Gazetteers (see Assignments)

Deep Map, phase 1 due

Oct 5, 6pm: Skills Workshop #1 in CGIS S-354

Week 6 (Oct 11): How Cadastral Surveys Changed the World

**We will meet in Widener 240 rather than Sever 307.*

- James Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, chapter 1 "Nature and Space"
- Valerie Kivelson, "Cartography, Autocracy and State Powerlessness: The Uses of Maps in Early Modern Russia"
- C. F. Close, "The Ideal Topographical Map"

Map Focus: Cadastral Surveys (see Assignments)

Week 7 (Oct 18): Nooks and Crannies of Urban Space

- Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Collection at the Library of Congress: read the 3 essays here (Introduction to the Collection, Sanborn Samplers, and Sanborn Time Series)

Focus: Boulder, Colorado series (November 1883, July 1886, December 1890, September 1895; see Assignments)

Deep Map phase 2 due Friday, October 21 at 5pm

Week 8 (Oct 25): The Cold War & the Rise of the Topo Map

- Timothy Barney, *Mapping the Cold War*: chapter 3
- John Davies, "Uncle Joe knew where you lived, part 1" and "Uncle Joe knew where you lived, part 2" in *Sheetlines* 72 and 73 (2005)
- Greg Miller, "Inside the Secret World of Russia's Cold War Mapmakers"

Focus: Soviet Topographic Map Symbols (Department of the Army Technical Manual, 1958; see Assignments)

UNIT 3: HISTORIANS AS MAPMAKERS AND SPATIAL THINKERS

Week 9 (Nov 1): The Mediterranean World

- Richard White, "What is Spatial History?"
- Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean, vol.1*: chapters TBD
- *Digital Atlas of Roman and Medieval Civilizations*
- *ORBIS: the Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World*

Nov. 2, 6pm: Skills Workshop #2 in CGIS S-354

Week 10 (Nov 8): Slaughterhouses and Railcars of the American West

- William Cronin, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (1992): chapters 1, 2, 4, 5
- Richard White, *Shaping the West* (Stanford Spatial History Project). *This is a born-digital research project rather than a traditional text. It consists of 27 related projects.*

Week 11 (Nov 15): Hunger and Historical GIS

Required for everyone:

- Anne Kelly Knowles, "GIS and History" in *Placing History*
- Ian Gregory, "'A Map is Just a Bad Graph': Why Spatial Statistics Are Important in Historical GIS" in *Placing History*

You are welcome to cover both, but you will be assigned to read and evaluate one of the following (see Assignments):

- Ian Gregory, et al., *Troubled Geographies: a spatial history of religion and society in Ireland* (2013): chapters 1-4 & 9-12. This is a Project Muse book. You can access the entire work in pdf format via this [HOLLIS permalink](#) (be sure to sign in to HOLLIS).
- The Great Famine (Holodomor). Be sure to read Prof. Plokhi's article "Mapping the Great Famine".

Week 12 (Nov 22): Visualizing History

Choose 2 of the following. Explore the sites, and fill out a brief review form for each (see Assignments).

- Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States
- American Panorama: at atlas of United States history
- Visualizing Emancipation
- Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database

Week 13 (Nov 29): The Reinvention of History(?)

- Nicholas Bauch, *Enchanting the Desert*
- Vincent Brown, *Slave Revolt in Jamaica, 1760-1761*
- Natalie Zacek, "Reading the Rebels and Mining the Maps: Digital Humanities and Cartographic Narratives"
- Vincent Brown, "Narrative Interface for New Media History"