

HIST 2736: World History Methods
Digital Methods for the Spatial Analysis of the Past

Professor Ruth Mostern
University of Pittsburgh Department of History
Fall 2017

Meeting Time and Place

- Wednesdays 2:30-4:55 WWPH 3700
- Office hours Wednesdays 10-12 in WWPH 3509 and by appointment
- Email: rmostern@pitt.edu
- Blackboard site at courseweb.pitt.edu

Technical Consultant

- Ryan Horne

Course Description

Over the past two to three decades, scholars in the humanities and social sciences have increasingly referred to a “spatial turn” toward increasing attention to the place of geography and landscape in understanding society and culture. Historians have taken up the term spatial history to describe the ways in which they articulate geographical perspectives from their particular disciplinary approach. The reach of approachable desktop GIS and database design platforms, accessible satellite imagery, and online mapping has amplified these trends.

This seminar is an introduction to exemplary projects, applied methods, and techniques and tools for spatial analysis of the human past. It is also an effort to bring together several approaches that are not yet frequently joined. For instance, spatial history theory, method and exemplar are not well integrated, and we will approach the field from all three of these perspectives. Moreover, spatial history is seldom practiced at the global scale. World historians have not yet “put the world in world history.”

This class includes reading in theory and exemplars, interaction with online projects, and hands-on work with digital archives and tools. By the end of the class, you should understand the state of the art and possible future trajectories of spatial history as a field and its relationship to the field of world history. You will also have completed a spatial history project at the global scale and articulated its significance and scholarly contribution. Your work will also include reading responses and archive and website assessments throughout the semester.

This hands-on class will expose you to a range of tools, platforms and methods, but it will not involve in-depth training in GIS. I do not presume that you have any particular technical background or aspirations about using computational techniques after this semester, although it is intended to provide exposure to useful tools for those of you who intend to do so.

Required Course Texts

1. Jeremy Black et al., eds., *The Atlas of World History* (Dorling Kindersley, 2005) [ISBN:978-0756609672]
2. Martin Lewis and Kären Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (UC Press, 1997) [ISBN:978-0520207424]
3. Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Duke University Press, 2004) [ISBN:978-0822334422]
4. Ian Gregory and Paul Ell, *Historical GIS: Technologies, Methodologies and Scholarship* (Cambridge University Press, 2007) [ISBN 978-0-521-67170-5]
5. Anne Knowles ed., *Placing History: How Maps, Spatial Data and GIS are Changing Historical Scholarship* (ESRI Press, 2008) [ISBN: 978-1589480131]
6. Ian Gregory and Alistair Geddes eds., *Toward Spatial Humanities: Historical GIS and Spatial Theory* (Indiana University Press, 2014) [ISBN: 978-0253011862]
7. David Bodenhamer, John Corrigan, and Trevor Harris, eds., *Deep Maps and Spatial Narratives* (Indiana University Press, 2015) [ISBN:978-0253015600]
8. Todd Pressner, David Shepard and Yoh Kawano, *HyperCities: Deep Mapping in the Digital Humanities* (Harvard University Press, 2014) [ISBN:978-0674725348]
9. Merrick Lex Berman, Ruth Mostern, and Humphrey Southall, eds., *Placing Names: Enriching and Integrating Gazetteers* (Indiana University Press, 2016) [ISBN:978-0253022448]

Assigned Work

Assignment	Contribution to Grade
Lead Class	50%
Weekly Writing and Exercises	
Participation	
Final Project Presentation (December 6)	50%
Final Project (Due December 13)	

I will comment on your weekly submitted work and on drafts and prospectuses for your final project, but I will not assign a letter grade to these assignments. However, I will be monitoring

your effort, creativity, and timely submission. In a graduate seminar, my assumption is that you will all start out with a 100% grade on that work, which will fall only if you fail to demonstrate seriousness of effort. Please feel free to talk to me any time during the semester if you are not sure where you stand.

Lead Class

You will each present material and guide discussion once during the semester. A good seminar leader's presentation:

- Occupies the first 15 minutes or so of class time.
- Includes an overview of the assigned material and its main conclusions or positions, draws connections between multiple assigned readings, provides an overview of the argument and conclusions of each reading, and relates the readings to the goals and themes of the course as a whole.
- Poses questions or examples, grounded in the readings and exercises, that spark lively discussion about significant ideas.
- Often includes a limited quantity of well-designed visual material that helps to make your presentation more comprehensible.

Weekly Responses and Exercises

Each week, in addition to finishing all of the assigned reading, you will complete some activity prior to class as detailed on the weekly schedule. This will be a combination of reading responses, lab exercises, and preparatory work toward your final project. All of your work will be due on Wednesdays at 9:00 AM so that I have time to review it before class. Since your work is intended to inform class discussion, no late assignments will be accepted without prior approval.

Participation

This part of your grade is meant to remind you that your performance here has ramifications for our whole intellectual community and for your career beyond the classroom. To participate successfully, you must be consistently involved in all aspects of class, which means that you attend class every week, complete work when it is assigned, and actively join in insightful discussion of course concepts. Students who participate successfully are those for whom I would agree to sit on a committee, write a letter of recommendation or be willing to serve as a reference at the end of class. It is okay to come to class without having understood everything. One of the best ways to participate is to draw attention to something that you find confusing and to request clarification of it.

Seminar discussion is one of the most important practices of the humanities and social sciences. Through discussion you gain practice in thinking through problems and organizing concepts, formulating arguments and counterarguments, testing your ideas in a public setting, evaluating the evidence for your own and others' positions, and responding thoughtfully and critically to diverse points of view. For that reason, we must be able to explore difficult and complex ideas together – to test ideas, rethink assumptions, and react to new perspectives. I expect everybody to participate in ways that enhance and enrich discussion and intellectual exchange. In particular:

- Be specific and focus on particular passages and concepts.
- Keep your remarks succinct so that all students can join the conversation.
- Assume that everybody is acting with an open mind and in good faith.
- Identify what you do not know and rethink your convictions when appropriate.
- Ask questions that enhance dialogue and deepen understanding.

Final Project

Your final assignment for this class is an individual or group spatial history project. I will accept a wide variety of approaches so long as your work reflects spatial thinking, it is about an era in the past or about change over time, and it touches on a global or transnational theme. Your project should include a written component, a mapping component, and illustration. Group projects must include a document that clearly identifies the specific contributions of each group member. I will not accept raw data such as an ArcMap project or an Access database - you need to contextualize and communicate about your spatial information. Some examples of genres you may pursue are: 1) interactive digital publications using Google Earth, Neatline, StoryMap or another platform of your choice. 2) Printed and bound atlases or well-designed static maps. 3) Term papers that reflect significant spatial analysis and include maps for illustration.

Weekly Schedule

INTRODUCTION

Week 1 - August 30: Introduction – What is Spatial History and How do we Know it When We See It?

- **Read:** Ruth Mostern and Elana Gainor, “Traveling the Silk Road on a Virtual Globe: Pedagogy, Technology and Evaluation for Spatial History,” *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 7.2 (2013) <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/7/2/000116/000116.html>.
- **Read:** Ruth Mostern, “Putting the World in World History,” *Journal of the Association for History and Computing* 13.1 (2010) <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jahc/3310410.0013.103/--putting-the-world-in-world-history?rgn=main;view=fulltext>
- **Read:** Jo Guldi, “What is the Spatial Turn?” (<http://spatial.scholarslab.org/spatial-turn/what-is-the-spatial-turn>), and “The Spatial Turn in History” (<http://spatial.scholarslab.org/spatial-turn/the-spatial-turn-in-history/index.html>)

UNIT 1: HISTORICAL SPATIAL DYNAMICS AT THE GLOBAL SCALE

Week 2 - September 6: World History in Atlases

- **Peruse:** Jeremy Black et al., eds., *The Atlas of World History* (Dorling Kindersley, 2005).
 - Do not read the atlas cover to cover. Familiarize yourself with its organizational structure and its approach to presenting information about spatial organization in the past using maps, timelines, images, and text.
- **Write:** A 2-3 page informal paper about how the atlas represents space at the global scale and about the affordances and limitations of its approach.
- **Visitor:** World Historical Gazetteer Developer Karl Grossner (<http://kgeographer.org>)

Week 3 - September 13: Modeling History in Space (I)

- **Read:** Martin Lewis and Kären Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (UC Press, 1997)
- **Read:** Julia Flanders and Fotis Jannidis, “Knowledge Organization and Data Modeling in the Humanities (2015) (http://www.wwp.northeastern.edu/outreach/conference/kodm2012/flanders_jannidis_datamodeling.pdf)
- **Peruse:** Center for Spatially Integrated Social Science CSISS Classics and choose three articles to read carefully (escholarship.org/uc/search?entity=spatial_ucsb_csiss_classics)

- **Write:** a) A formal model of some spatial phenomenon. What spatial entities does it include, how do you express the relationships among them, and what information do you want to capture about each of your entities? b) A 1-2 page paper about your model. How does it allow you to think differently about the phenomenon in question than a narrative paper would? Think of this as a preliminary brainstorm for your final project for this class.

Week 4 - September 20: Modeling History in Space (II)

- **Read:** Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Duke University Press, 2004)
- **Write:** A one to two page prospectus for your final project. What topic will you pursue? Referencing the reading you have completed so far, explain what makes it a project in spatial history and in world history. Where will you find the spatial information for your project? What form will the project take (web map, paper map, essay, database, etc.)?

Week 5 - September 27: Modeling History in Space (III)

- **Peruse and Play With:** Spatial projects at global scale (these are not all historical):
 - Gapminder (gapminder.org) – explore the site and visit “Play With the Data”
 - Worldmap (worldmap.harvard.edu) – explore the site, visit “View a Map” and search for historical data in your area of interest
 - D-Place (d-place.org) – explore the site, visit “Search” and select “Map” as your viewing mode
 - Glottolog (glottology.org) – explore the site, visit “Families” and select a family to see a map
 - Pelagios (pelagios.org) – explore the site and visit “Explore Data” – this will take you to the Peripleo interface
 - Search for additional spatial data portals and webmaps in your area of interest
- **Do:** Annotations of maps and texts in Recogito (details TBD)
- **Write:** A 2-3 page informal paper that: 1) evaluates the spatial projects you have looked at and relates them to the Black atlas and to the books you have read so far, and 2) reports back about your work in Recogito.

UNIT 2: SPATIAL HISTORY METHODS AND PLATFORMS

Week 6 - October 4: Publishing Spatial Data and Working With Historical Maps

- **Peruse and Play With:** Tools and platforms for publishing spatial data:
 - ESRI Story Maps (storymaps.arcgis.com)
 - Storymap JS (storymap.knilab.com)

- Neatline (neatline.org)
- Historypin (historypin.org)
- Google Earth (google.com/earth)
- Palladio (hdlab.stanford.edu/palladio)
- Carto (carto.com)
- **Peruse and Play With:** Sites and tools for finding and working with historical maps:
 - NYPL Map Warper (maps.nypl.org/warper)
 - Old Maps Online (oldmapsonline.org)
 - David Rumsey Map Collection (davidrumsey.com)
 - Library of Congress Sanborn Maps Collection (www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps)
- **Reference and Do:** Lincoln Mullin, “Spatial Humanities Workshop” (2015) (lincolnmullen.com/projects/spatial-workshop)
 - Complete one lesson from this workshop that utilizes a tool that you are interested in.
- **Write:** A 2-3 page informal paper that roughly organizes these resources into a taxonomy, discusses which ones you are interested in pursuing further, and reports back about your lesson from the Workshop.
- **In Class:** Ryan to demo JavaScript and Leaflet

Week 7 – October 11: GIS for History I

- **Read:** Ian Gregory and Paul Ell, *Historical GIS: Technologies, Methodologies and Scholarship* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), Chapters 1-5
- **Do:** Introduction to GIS Lab I TBD
- **Write:** A 2-3 page lab report and reflection about this work.

Week 8 - October 18: GIS for History II

- **Read:** Ian Gregory and Paul Ell, *Historical GIS: Technologies, Methodologies and Scholarship* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), Chapters 6-9
- **Do:** Introduction to GIS Lab II TBD
- **Write:** A 2-3 page lab report and a reading response to Gregory and Ell. Do you anticipate using full-scale GIS in your own historical research and in your project for this class? Why or why not?

UNIT 3: SPATIAL HISTORY THEORY AND EXEMPLARS

Week 9 - October 25: Spatial History Projects I

- **Read:** Anne Knowles, *Placing History: How Maps, Spatial Data and GIS are Changing Historical Scholarship* (ESRI Press, 2008)
- **Read:** Ian Gregory and Alistair Geddes, *Toward Spatial Humanities: Historical GIS and Spatial Theory* (Indiana University Press, 2014)
- **Peruse:** Websites of the spatial history projects discussed in the two books you have read. Also explore sites linked from the following portals:
 - Stanford University Spatial History Project (spatialhistory.stanford.edu)
 - University of Richmond Digital Scholarship Lab (dsl.richmond.edu)
 - AAG Historical GIS Clearinghouse and Forum (http://www.aag.org/cs/projects_and_programs/historical_gis_clearinghouse/hgis_projects_programs)
- **Write:** A 2-3 page reading response that evaluates the books and websites. Can you come up with a taxonomy of these projects? What are their various purposes and accomplishments? Which questions seem to be settled, and which are still open? Would any of these projects be feasible at a global scale?

Week 10 - November 1: Spatial History Projects II

- **Read:** David Bodenhamer, John Corrigan, and Trevor Harris, eds., *Deep Maps and Spatial Narratives* (Indiana University Press, 2015)
- **Read:** Todd Pressner, David Shepard and Yoh Kawano, *HyperCities: Deep Mapping in the Digital Humanities* (Harvard University Press, 2014)
- **Write:** A literature review that situates your project for this class relative to the state of the field. What existing projects and approaches does it emulate, and what does it do that is unique?

Week 11 - November 8: INSTRUCTOR OUT OF TOWN. Project Practicum with Ryan Horne

- **Work on:** your final project
- **Submit:** a draft version of your project
- **In Class:** Present of work in progress. Focus on challenges, questions, and roadblocks. Ryan may present a showcase of UNC undergraduate spatial history projects.

Week 12 - November 15: Gazetteers and Linked Open Data

- **Read:** Merrick Lex Berman, Ruth Mostern and Humphrey Southall, eds., *Placing Names: Enriching and Integrating Gazetteers* (Indiana University Press, 2016)
- **Read:** NEH World-Historical Gazetteer grant application
- **Peruse:** Projects referenced in *Placing Names* and online gazetteers of global scope:
 - Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names Online (www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/tgn)

- Geonames (geonames.org)
- Wikidata (wikidata.org)
- **Write:** A reading response about this material and an evaluation of the relationship between gazetteers and GIS in the trajectory of spatial history as a field.

UNIT 4: WRAP UP

Week 13 - November 22: CLASS DOES NOT MEET – THANKSGIVING

Eat well, relax, and talk to your loved ones about your project. See whether they are more interested in your interactive and visual work than the term papers you usually write!

Week 14 - November 29: Revisiting the Global Scale

- **Reread:** *The Atlas of World History*
- **Troubleshoot:** Your final project
- **Write:** A 2-3 page informal paper about: 1) What are your thoughts about this printed and published paper atlas now that we have spent the semester on digital spatial history? 2) Do you have any concerns about your final projects that you would like to workshop with the whole class?

Week 15 - December 6: Final Presentations

- **Prepare:** A presentation of your final project

FINAL PROJECT DUE DECEMBER 13