For roughly twenty-five years, scholars have spoken of a “spatial turn” in history – or of “spatial history” as a new methodological sub-field – that promises to use new sources, new tools, and new theoretical commitments to ask new historical questions. Now with the recent spread of GIS software and historical GIS data, the spatialization of history has come to seem even more urgent. But how does one actually do spatial history? And what does it mean to think geographically? This seminar is an attempt to zoom out from the rhetoric of the “new,” the “turn,” or any particular research tool in order to investigate the broader intellectual intersection of history and geography. Our approach will be optimistic but circumspect; we will explore the history of geography as a discipline, dive into recent spatial theory, take a critical stance towards maps, atlases, and GIS, and spend a lot of time helping each other with our own research in progress.

The course is divided into three parts. It begins with theoretical approaches to space and spatial history by both geographers and historians. Second is a more practical methodological analysis of the uses (and abuses) of maps, including various case studies of historical GIS. The course then ends with several weeks of round-table workshopping.

ASSIGNMENTS

Even though our topic is primarily methodological and historiographic, this is indeed a research seminar. Besides just being a good citizen – participating in discussion, leading discussions as necessary, etc. – the only graded assignment for this course is a research paper. The length, style, and argument should approximate a published journal article. (If you’re not sure what this entails, spend some time going through journals online or in the library; also be sure to look at your favorite journals’ submission guidelines.) You’ll be required to submit a written proposal before spring break. Details about the proposal will be given in class, but your overall goal should be to get feedback on your ideas in order to avoid problems later on. After the break, all students will also give an in-class presentation of their work in progress, with plenty of time for feedback.

Final papers are due the last day of reading period: April 30th, 2015.
SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Books marked with an asterisk (*) are on reserve at Bass. All other readings are available on the website. I recommend purchasing whatever books you can. The best prices can be found through bookfinder.com.

January 14 – Introduction

PART I: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

January 21 – Academic Geography and its Discontents

January 28 – French Possibilism and the Annales School
* Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (orig. 1949). Online you’ll find a translation of the preface to the first edition, the table of contents, the introduction to part 1, and “Geohistory and Determinism.” You should also look at the book itself (on reserve) and skim all of part 1 – aggressively!
February 4 – Neo-Marxism and Postmodern Geographical Theory
David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), introduction and conclusion. NOTE: This is also available as an e-book through Orbis.

February 11: The Long Shadow of the Spatial Turn (Where Do We Go From Here?)

PART II: VISUAL COMMUNICATION AND SPATIAL ARGUMENT

February 18 – The Rhetoric of Maps
* Peruse the maps, charts, diagrams, and captions in these well-known books (on reserve):

**NOTE:** Come to class with a digital copy of your favorite map from this week’s material.

**February 25 – Historical Atlases (Or, Let’s Analyze a Lot of Maps!)**


Read the foreword and preface for each volume, acquaint yourself with the overall historical and cartographic approach, then pick a topic or theme relevant to your own research and study how it has been treated.

* Compare the following pairs of historical atlases (on reserve) and come prepared to discuss some of their differences – and your own preferences:

**NOTE:** Come to class with a digital copy of your favorite map from this week’s material.

**March 4 – Historical GIS**

– PAPER PROPOSAL DUE –


Browse the “Current Projects” (and their associated visualizations) at the Stanford Spatial History Project: http://www.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory

NOTE: During the second half of class everyone will give a three-minute summary of their paper proposal.

– SPRING BREAK –

PART III: RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

March 25 – Bill Lays Down His Cards

During the second half of class I will give a quick tutorial about how I made some of the illustrations for my book.

April 1 – Research Presentations and Discussion
April 8 – Research Presentations and Discussion
April 15 – Research Presentations and Discussion
April 22 – Research Presentations and Discussion

– RESEARCH PAPERS DUE APRIL 30th –