

## Geography and History

Graduate Seminar  
Bill Rankin  
Spring 2015  
Wednesdays 9:25–11:15am

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*Epistolary networks of Locke, Swift, Voltaire, Rousseau, Comper, and Bentham (from the “Republic of Letters” project at Stanford).*

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](http://bookfinder.com).

### January 14 – Introduction

#### PART I: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

### January 21 – Academic Geography and its Discontents

- \* Susan Schulten, *The Geographical Imagination in America, 1880–1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), introduction, chapters 4 and 5.
- Martin Lewis review of Schulten, *The Geographical Imagination*, in *The American Historical Review* 107 (Feb 2002), p. 226.
- Neil Smith, “Academic War over the Field of Geography’: The Elimination of Geography at Harvard, 1947–1951,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 77 (June 1987), pp. 155–172.
- Geoffrey J. Martin, “Geography, Geographers, and Yale University, c. 1770–1970,” in *Geography in New England*, edited by John E. Harmon and Timothy J. Rickard (New England/St. Lawrence Valley Geographical Society, 1988), pp. 2–9.
- Ellen Semple, *Influences of Geographic Environment on the Basis of Ratzel’s System of Anthropo-Geographie* (New York: Henry Holt, 1911), preface, table of contents, and chapter 1.
- Harlan H. Barrows, “Geography as Human Ecology,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 13 (March 1923), pp. 1–14.
- H. C. Darby, “The Problem of Geographical Description,” *Transactions and Papers (Institute of British Geographers)* 30 (1962), pp. 1–14.
- Felix Driver, “The Historicity of Human Geography,” *Progress in Human Geography* 12 (1988), pp. 497–506.

### January 28 – French Possibilism and the Annales School

- \* Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School 1929–1989* (Cambridge UK: Polity, 1990). Feel free to skim chapter 4.
- Lynn Hunt, “French History in the Last Twenty Years: The Rise and Fall of the Annales Paradigm,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 21 (April 1986), pp. 209–224.
- Lucien Febvre, *A Geographical Introduction to History*, translated by E. G. Mountford and J. H. Paxton (New York: Knopf, 1925; orig. 1922), table of contents, introduction, chapter 1, and conclusion.
- \* 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!
- Fernand Braudel, “History and the Social Sciences: The *Longue Durée*” (1958), in *On History*, translated by Sarah Matthews (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 25–54.

## February 4 – Neo-Marxism and Postmodern Geographical Theory

- Richard Peet, "The Social Origins of Environmental Determinism," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 75 (September 1985), pp. 309–333.
- Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (Verso, 1989), chapter 2.
- Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991; orig. 1974), chapter 1.
- Henri Lefebvre, "Space: Social Product and Use Value," in *State, Space, World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009; orig. 1979), pp. 185–195.
- 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?)

- Gwendolyn Wright, "Cultural History: Europeans, Americans, and the Meanings of Space" *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 64 (December 2005), pp. 436–440.
- Richard White, "What is Spatial History?" (2010).
- Patricia Cohen, "Digital Maps Are Giving Scholars the Historical Lay of the Land," *New York Times*, 26 July 2011. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/27/arts/geographic-information-systems-help-scholars-see-history.html>
- Gary Wilder, "From Optic to Topic: The Foreclosure Effect of Historiographic Turns," *American Historical Review* 117 (June 2012), pp. 723–745.
- Philip Ethington, "Placing the Past" (with comments), *Rethinking History* 11 (December 2007), pp. 465–530.

## PART II: VISUAL COMMUNICATION AND SPATIAL ARGUMENT

### February 18 – The Rhetoric of Maps

- Mark Monmonier, *How to Lie with Maps* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), introduction, chapter 10, and epilogue.
- Edward Tufte, "The Fundamental Principles of Analytical Design," in *Beautiful Evidence* (Cheshire: Graphics Press, 2006), pp. 122–139.
- Jacques Bertin, *Semiology of Graphics*, translated by William Berg (Redlands, CA: ESRI Press, 2010; orig. 1967), epilogue (2004) and "The Basic Graphic Problem."
- Monica L. Smith, "Networks, Territories, and the Cartography of Ancient States," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95 (2005), pp. 832–849.
- J. B. Harley, "Historical Geography and the Cartographic Illusion," *Journal of Historical Geography* 15 (1989), pp. 80–91.
- Bill Rankin, "Cartography and the Reality of Boundaries," *Perspecta* 42 (2010), pp. 42–45.
- Bill Rankin, "Urban Legends," *Boston Review* 35 (Nov–Dec 2010), pp. 5–6.
- \* Peruse the maps, charts, diagrams, and captions in these well-known books (on reserve):
- H. C. Darby, *The Domesday Geography of Eastern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952).
- Fernand Braudel, *The Identity of France* (London: Collins, 1988; orig. 1986).

Bernard Lepetit, *The Pre-Industrial Urban System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; orig. 1988).

William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991).

Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011).

Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs* (Harvard University Press, 1962).

Colin Gordon, *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

**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!)**

Jeremy Black, "Historical Atlases," *The Historical Journal* 37 (September 1994), pp. 643–667.

Barbara Petchenik, "The Natural History of the Atlas: Evolution and Extinction,"

*Cartographica* 22 (Autumn 1985), pp. 43–59.

*Historical Atlas of Canada*, three volumes (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987–1993).

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:

┌ William R. Shepherd, *Historical Atlas* (New York: Henry Holt, 1911).

└ John Haywood, *The New Atlas of World History* (Princeton University Press, 2011).

┌ Charles O. Paulin, *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States* (Carnegie Institution and the American Geographical Society, 1932).

└ Ron Fisher, *National Geographic Historical Atlas of the United States* (Washington: National Geographic, 2004).

┌ Colin McEvedy, *The Penguin Atlas of Medieval History* (Harmoundsworth: Penguin, 1961).

└ Andrew Jotischky and Caroline Hull, *The Penguin Historical Atlas of the Medieval World* (London: Penguin, 2005).

┌ Hugh Kennedy, *An Historical Atlas of Islam*, second edition (Brill: Leiden, 2002).

└ Malise Ruthven, *Historical Atlas of the Islamic World* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

┌ Warren A. Beck and Ynez D. Haase, *Historical Atlas of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989).

└ Andrew K. Frank, *The Routledge Historical Atlas of the American South* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

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### **March 4 – Historical GIS**

– PAPER PROPOSAL DUE –

Ian Gregory and Paul Ell, *Historical GIS: Technologies, Methodologies, and Scholarship* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), chapters 1 and 9. For the graphics from many of the projects

- \* discussed in chapter 9, see also Anne Kelly Knowles, ed., *Past Time, Past Place: GIS for History* (Redlands, CA: ESRI Press, 2002), various chapters.
- \* Anne Kelly Knowles, ed., *Placing History: How Maps, Spatial Data, and GIS Are Changing Historical Scholarship* (Redlands, CA: ESRI Press, 2008), foreword, preface, and chapters by Anne Kelly Knowles, Ian Gregory, Michael Goodchild, and David Bodenhamer.

John Pickles, "Arguments, Debates, and Dialogues: The GIS–Social Theory Debate and the Concern for Alternatives," in *Geographical Information Systems*, second edition, edited by Paul Longley et al. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1999), pp. 49–60.

Kenneth Stamp, introduction to *Reckoning with Slavery: A Critical Study of the Quantitative History of American Negro Slavery* by Paul David, et al. (Oxford University Press, 1976).

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**

William Rankin, *After the Map: Cartography, Navigation, and the Transformation of Territory in the Twentieth Century* (forthcoming).

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 –