Cartography, Territory, and Identity

Undergraduate Seminar
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Mondays 1:30–3:20pm

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A world map by Buckminster Fuller from 1944, designed to be respliced and reoriented to show a variety of global geographic relationships.

Description
Our modern territorial assumptions influence nearly every part of our life. They justify state-sponsored war and restrictions on immigration, and they determine an individual's chances for receiving reliable health care or attending quality schools. They even shape our own identities, from feelings of neighborhood pride to nationality and race. This course uses cartography – especially scientific cartography and its competitors – as a lens for analyzing modern territory and sovereignty. Maps help focus our attention on a number of related problems. How is territory claimed? Why do we trust maps, and should we ever regard them as “objective”? Are nations the cause or the result of the modern nation state? How do ideas about measuring and representing geographic space influence encounters between different cultures?

We will begin by thinking about how maps can be understood as instruments of power. The bulk of the course then explores how questions of territory and identity have aligned with new ways of producing, using, or challenging maps. The first half of the course looks at the relationship between maps and territorial states: the creation of boundaries, the invention of nationalism, and the tensions of internationalism and globalization. In the second half of the course we will then turn to other types of territories, other traditions of mapping, and the various ways that the scientific map has been contested.

Assignments
Every student is expected to come to class prepared to discuss all the assigned readings, and you will be required to participate in discussion. Participating in discussion isn’t just a fun thing to do, it’s also an important skill that everyone needs to learn.

The night before each class, you will also need to email analytic questions to me about the week’s readings. These emails need not be longer than a short paragraph, but they should ask interesting questions that engage with themes and arguments, not just factual material. We
will discuss how these emails should be written throughout the semester, and questions will be shared anonymously with the group.

There are three assignments due during the semester.

1: Map analysis – due October 5th; 1500–2000 words (5–8 pages). For this paper, you will pick one map and write a short, focused paper presenting and analyzing its argument. You can pick any map from any time period, culture, genre, or subject. It can be a map from medieval Italy, from a 1920s road atlas, from a video game – anything. (Some maps, however, will be easier to analyze than others.) What makes the map scientific, objective, or trustworthy? What arguments does it make about territory, sovereignty, nationality, or identity? Does it give an indication of who should use the map? Your analysis should derive primarily from visual analysis of the map itself, although some brief discussion of its historical context may also be helpful.

2: Map redesign – due October 26th. Using the map you analyzed in your short paper as a starting point, create a new map of the same area with a different argument. For example, if you concluded that a map from World War II showed Germany as a unified nation under attack from hostile outside forces, you could redraw the map to show a different kind of Germany. To make the map, you can use any methods at your disposal: construction paper and markers, Photoshop, Google Earth, xerox collage, GIS, etc. I’ll be happy to help with any technical questions, but it is up to you to acquire any skills you think you’ll need. Include a one-page explanation of your goals.

3: Final research paper – due December 22nd; 4000–6000 words (15–20 pages). Topic of your choice. This can be a continuation of your earlier analysis, or you can start fresh with a new subject. The goal will be to analyze a mapping system rather than just a single map; in addition to visual analysis, you will want to address questions of cultural context, production, use, and impact. Example topics might include U.S. census atlases, protest maps of the Vietnam War, the first maps of Ethiopia, etc.

These assignments will combine into your final grade:

- Weekly emails 15%
- Class participation 15%
- Map analysis 15%
- Map redesign 15%
- Final paper 40%
SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Books marked with an asterisk (*) will be placed on reserve, but should be purchased if possible.
Books marked with a dagger (†) are available as e-books through Orbis.
All other readings will be available on the website.

September 4: Introduction

PART I: CARTOGRAPHY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL STATES

September 14: Cartography and Power

September 21: Boundaries
* Peter Sahlins, Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), introduction, chapters 1, 2, conclusion, and epilogue.
* D. Graham Burnett, Masters of All They Surveyed: Exploration, Geography, and a British El Dorado (2000), introduction, chapter 6, and conclusion.

September 28: Nations and Nationalism

October 5: Propaganda
– MAP ANALYSIS DUE –
October 12: Placing the United States in the World

October 19: From Colonial to Post-Colonial
† Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Goddess and the Nation: Mapping Mother India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), introduction, chapters 1, 2, and conclusion.

October 26: Territory and Globalization
– MAP REDESIGN DUE –

PART II: MAPPING OTHER SPACES / MAPPING SPACES OTHERWISE

November 2: Cartography in East Asia

November 9: Mapping Sacred Geographies
November 16: American Indians and European Conquest

– THANKSGIVING BREAK –

November 30: Statistical Mapping and the Politics of Visibility

December 7: Counter-Cartographies and Indigenous Rights

– RESEARCH PAPERS DUE DECEMBER 22nd –
SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

September 4:  Introduction
September 14:  Map Library – *meet in Sterling Library room 177, the International Room*
September 21:  Finding and Manipulating Digital Maps

September 28:  Five-minute Map Presentations (half the class)
October 5:  Five-minute Map Presentations (the other half of the class)
– MAP ANALYSIS DUE –

October 12:  Nine-minute Redesign Presentations (five students)
October 19:  Nine-minute Redesign Presentations (five students)
October 26:  Nine-minute Redesign Presentations (five students)
– MAP REDESIGNS DUE –

November 2:  Fifteen-minute Research Workshopping (three students)
November 9:  Fifteen-minute Research Workshopping (three students)
November 16:  Fifteen-minute Research Workshopping (three students)
– THANKSGIVING BREAK –
November 30:  Fifteen-minute Research Workshopping (three students)
December 7:  Fifteen-minute Research Workshopping (three students)
– RESEARCH PAPERS DUE DECEMBER 22nd –