For more than 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 at 5:30pm on Wednesday, May 10th.
SCHEDULE OF DEMONSTRATIONS
Each week before spring break, I will spend the first ten minutes of class giving brief demonstrations of basic
graphics and mapping skills. These are not meant as full tutorials! The goal is simply to show you enough so
that you can learn on your own (or meet with the DH or GIS librarian), as you please.

January 23 – Basic Image Editing: from scanner to usable illustration
January 30 – Intermediate Image Editing: analytic shading
February 6 – Basic GIS: adding data, choosing symbology, picking a projection
February 13 – When to Stop Using GIS: finishing graphics in Illustrator or Inkscape
February 20 – Your Own Data in GIS: from a spreadsheet to points and lines
February 27 – Historical Maps in GIS: adding raster images and georeferencing
March 6 – Strategies of Visual Evidence: bringing it all together

–SPRING BREAK–
March 27 – Visit to the Digital Humanities Lab (class will meet in the lab, SML 315)

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.

PART I: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

January 23 – 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
Neil Smith, “Academic War over the Field of Geography: The Elimination of Geography
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
Ellen Semple, Influences of Geographic Environment on the Basis of Ratzel’s System of Anthropo-
Geographers 13 (March 1923), pp. 1–14.
H. C. Darby, “The Problem of Geographical Description,” Transactions and Papers (Institute of
pp. 497–506.

January 30 – French Possibilism and the Annales School
* Peter Burke, The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School 1929–1989 (Cambridge UK:
Lynn Hunt, “French History in the Last Twenty Years: The Rise and Fall of the Annales

* 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 6 – 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 13: The Long Shadow of the Spatial Turn (Where Do We Go From Here?)**

Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (University of Minnesota Press, 1994), introduction and “Politics and Space/Time.”


**PART II: VISUAL COMMUNICATION AND SPATIAL ARGUMENT**

**February 20 – 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 27 – 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 6 – 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: Come to class with a digital copy of your favorite map from this week’s material.
ALSO: 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 27 – Bill Lays Down His Cards
We’ll meet at the Digital Humanities Lab in Sterling Library (room 315). We’ll start with our own class discussion, then we’ll take a tour of the lab.

April 3 – Research Presentations and Feedback
April 10 – Research Presentations and Feedback
April 17 – Research Presentations and Feedback
April 24 – Research Presentations and Feedback

– RESEARCH PAPERS DUE AT 5:30 PM ON MAY 10th –