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Brother Hathaway,

Throughout the course of the semester, I have gained a far greater understanding of the principles of good graphics—and I’ve decided to care about them. Previously I mostly loved graphics because they made me happy, I’m discovering that if I make them right, they will make others happy too. These principles of good graphics and overall happiness about them and the data they’re made of have been greatly useful as I’ve gained other insights throughout this course. These include: an ability to effectively use the Tidyverse, general scripting skills, understanding the importance of domain knowledge, and effectively plotting especially with simple spatial data.

The Tidyverse package in R has become invaluable to me for its streamline functions and elegant structure. This class has given me the skillset I need to delve deeper into it, finding more functions that will be of use to me. I will do this by continuing to learn R programming on my own and utilize it wherever possible.

I have gained a better understanding of the principles of effective general scripting for cleaning data. I had some experience with this prior to the class—as you know—but my scripts have become more focused on streamlined and quick code. I am able to draw on functionalities such as for loops and functions that I previously had not understood. These will be simpler to continue learning as they are general programming principles that will be useful in other languages as well as R.

I now grasp the importance of domain knowledge when working with a data set. Previously, I found myself annoyed by it and thought of it only as a roadblock in my way of getting to the data. Now I see that it is an opportunity for me to gain greater knowledge and communicate the data and graphics effectively to a client.

Finally, I have learned how to plot more effectively using the principles of effective plotting that have to do with the way that the human eye perceives a graphic. I have learned to apply this to all data—especially to spatial data—and have learned key principles related to spatial data specifically. I will apply these principles to any plot I create in the future, and I will continue to search on my own for new and exciting ways to plot spatial data.

As a final note, my grade request is an “A.” As you know, I shoot for no less in any of my classes and sincerely believe I deserve no less to this point. I’ve given exceptional effort to this class—many times seeking to learn more than required—and I know I have reaped the rewards of my efforts. This is evident in my entirely different coding style and significantly amped up graphics.

-McKay Davis