Storytelling with Mapping: KnightLab StoryMap

Taught By: Chris McNulty & Dipa Desai

PPUA 5264: Energy Democracy & Climate Resilience

Prof. Liz Allen

Fall 2022

Northeastern University
NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks

Workshop Agenda

- Articulate the choices you make when telling a story using a map.
- Best practices and questions to consider before creating your StoryMap.
- Follow a step-by-step guide for creating, saving, and publishing maps using KnightLab StoryMap.
- Start building!

Slides, handouts, and data available at:

https://bit.ly/fa22-allen-storymap

Northeastern University
NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks

What is a story map?

Telling a **story** using **maps**!

"You combine authoritative maps with narrative text, images, and multimedia content. They make it easy to harness the power of maps and geography to tell your story."

- ESRI Story Maps Website

Welcome to the Fenway

Welcome to this Community Walk! The purpose of this walk is to introduce people to the history and context of one of the neighborhoods that surround Northeastern. Most importantly, this walk is designed using an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) perspective. ABCD is a philosophy that recognizes communities' abilities to achieve positive change using their own knowledge, skills, and lived experiences as well as existing resources and infrastructure.

Another way to think about it is to consider a community's strengths rather than

Fenway Community Walk

Welcome to this Community Walk! The purpose of this walk is to introduce people to the history and context of one of the neighborhoods that surround Northeastern. Most importantly, this walk is designed using an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) perspective. ABCD is a philosophy that recognizes communities' abilities to achieve positive change using their own knowledge, skills, and lived experiences as well as existing resources and infrastructure.

Another way to think about it is to consider a community's strengths rather than deficits, or problems.

For example: instead of saying, "This community has a high crime rate and it can't be fixed," we say, "This community has an organization that serves the previously incarcerated and is collaborating within the community to work towards

Northeastern University
NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks

Why use a map to tell stories?

- StoryMaps help us **render visualized, spatialized, and contextual information about spaces** in the past or today.
  - StoryMaps can be about places you've never been to. The goal is to help users "see" the spaces/places/routes as accurately as possible, and to get a sense of the people and things in the environment.
- Think about StoryMaps as **giving directions**, relating not only direction and **distance** but also **sequence**.
  - Take a moment and consider how you got to class today, using words only.
  - Without using place/building/street names, how would you describe your journey to someone who was unfamiliar with it?

What are the limits?

- Maps certainly reflect the intention of the map-maker, but maps are also **inherently limited**.
  - It is worth remembering that maps produce **shared interpretations**, and are not expressions of objective spatial relations.
  - Boston is as much a human idea as a physical space, and thus maps both *represent* and *create* reality. [Laura Herbert, "[Do Maps Create or Represent Reality?](#)"]
- The **simplicity** and **clarity** of maps is therefore deceiving, but the **artificial clarity** is necessary for the map to be **useful**. Think of the maps that are useful to you: they filter out the information that is less relevant to what you're using the map for.

Northeastern University
NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks

On Exactitude in Science

What arrondissement is this,

by Laura J. Lawson

Example Projects Using Maps to Tell Stories

- "[Boston Parks and Playgrounds: Community Scan](#)": uses a mix of textual, image, and geo-location data to tell a story about playgrounds in Boston's neighborhoods.
- "[Mapping Shared Spaces: A Visual History of Boston's Black and Jewish Communities](#)": presents the story of migration of Boston religious communities by following the changing locations of places of worship.
- "[Commonwealth: A Offshore wind hub](#)": uses textual, image, video and geo-locations data to showcase key infrastructure of Massachusetts Clean Energy Center's (MassCEC) Offshore Wind Energy Initiative.

Northeastern University
NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks

Making a StoryMap

StoryMap Best Practices

- Think carefully about the **audience** you are trying to reach with your map. This will impact your language, the order of your points, and the media that you choose.
- Think also about the **tone** of the map: the default for StoryMap can be very upbeat and informal, and that may not match the content you are sharing.
- **Test your map** after you have created it, to make sure that all the narrative points flow and that the language is clear and concise.

Optional: Spreadsheet Template

Make a copy of the StoryMap template below and use it to fill in the different sites you want to map, images you want to include, and so on.

Important: make a copy, do not edit the main template!!
(Go to File > Make a copy)

[StoryMap Spreadsheet Template](#)

Template based on the StoryMap Spreadsheet Template created by Molly Brown, Reference and Outreach Archivist, Northeastern University Library.

Northeastern University
NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks

Spreadsheet data collection

fx | http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20158126

Slide #	Site Name	Site Location	Image URL/File Location	Image Credit	Image Caption	Headline	Historical Profile/First Person Narrative	Citation(s)	Additional Media	Additional Media Caption & Credit
Title Slide	n/a	n/a	http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20158126	Freedom House Records, Courtesy of Northeastern University Archives and Special Collections	Back Bay Fens, Boston, Mass.	Walking the Emerald Necklace	This is an introduction to the project that will continue on.			
Site 1	Back Bay Fens Community Gardens	42.344888, -71.093221	http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20157723	Freedom House Records, Courtesy of Northeastern University Archives and Special Collections	Community garden in Back Bay Fens.	Back Bay Community Gardens	Two men tend community garden in the Back Bay Fens. A public water building can be seen on the left. The Back Bay Fens (also called The Fens, or Fens) is a freshwater marsh and lagoon area within Boston's larger Emerald Necklace park system.			

1. The slide number can serve as the order in which your sites appear on your map and the site name can be used to label sites on your map.

2. The site location is used to identify a point on your map where the site is physically located (address or coordinates).
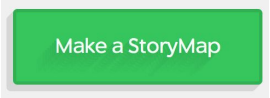
3. The image URL/File location is useful in keeping track of images of sites. Always credit your images to indicate their origin. Also include a caption describing your image.
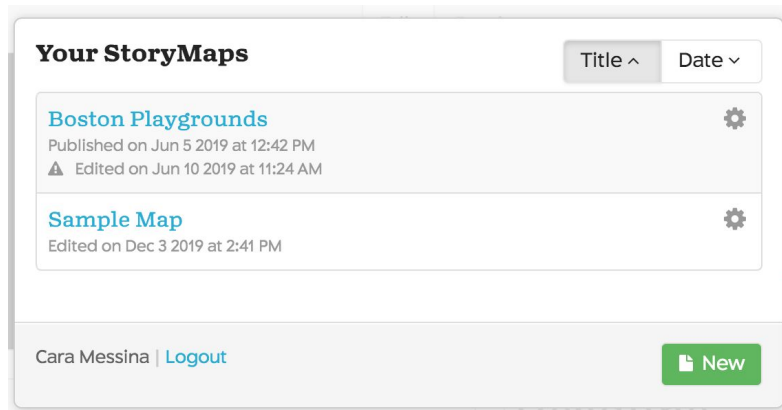
4. The headline can serve as the official title or label of your site. Including a narrative provides more context as to why your site is important.

5. Don't forget to cite your sources! Also, you may want to include additional media related to your site (e.g. newspaper clippings, additional photos, etc.).

Northeastern University
NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks

Create a StoryMap

- Go to https://storymap.knightlab.com/
- Click "Make a StoryMap" **Make a StoryMap**
- Either create a new account or sign in through Google
- Once you're signed in,
  click "New Map" (once you have
  created your map, it will be there
  for you to work on)
- Name your project

Your StoryMaps | Title ^ | Date ⌄

Boston Playgrounds
Published on Jun 5 2019 at 12:42 PM
⚠ Edited on Jun 10 2019 at 11:24 AM

Sample Map
Edited on Dec 3 2019 at 2:41 PM

Cara Messina | Logout   📄 New

Northeastern University
NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks

Your StoryMap

Overall options (like changing map layout)

SAVE OFFEN!

Preview your slides

Preview the geographic points in all of your slides

Title and content of your text box

Check out and add new slides here

Uploading photos or other media! Document what you upload
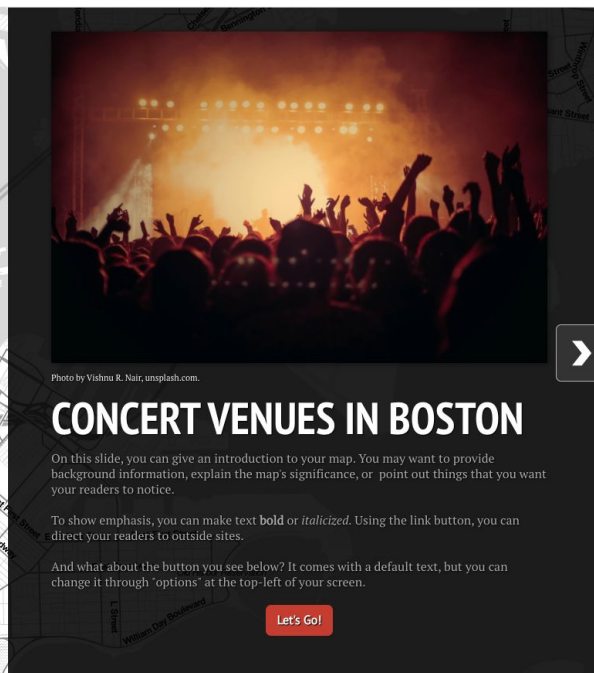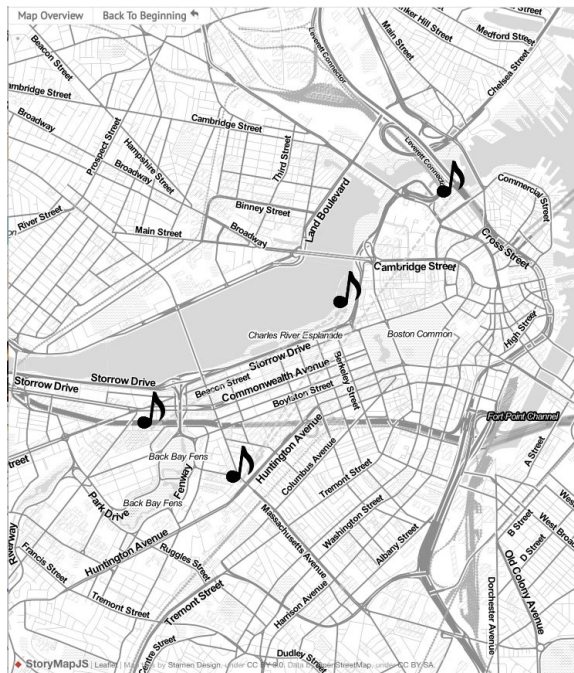
Color or image for text box background

Slides, or map markers

Each slide is a different marker point on your map/image. Each slide contains:

- Title and text. The text box reads basic HTML.
- A background image/color.
- A map marker, which can be placed using Google Maps locations or by placing the marker manually.
- Media: images, videos, and sound files can be uploaded. Since only *one* media file can be uploaded per slide, you can use the text box's HTML to integrate an image or another media type.
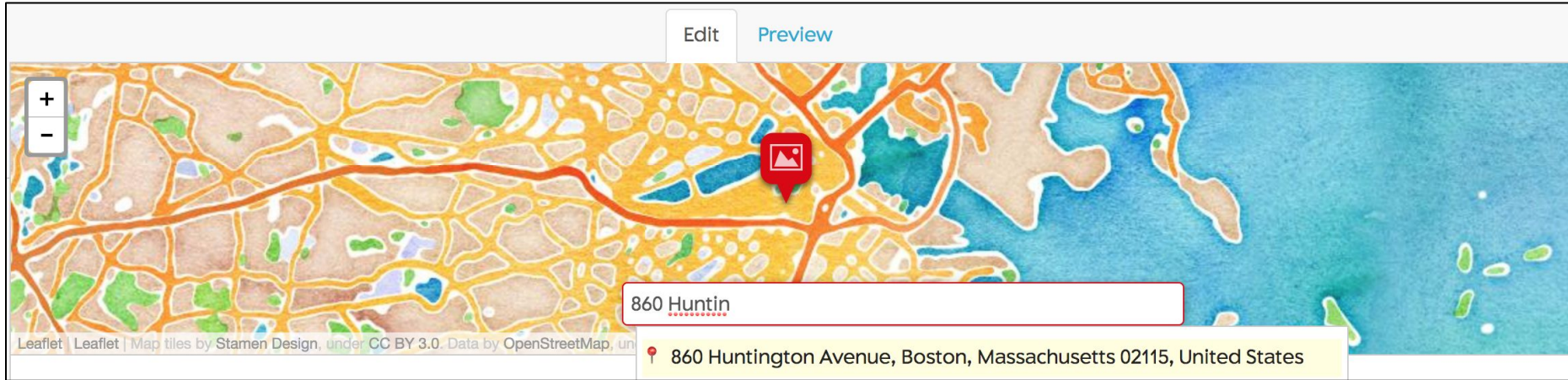
Northeastern University
NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks

StoryMap Demo

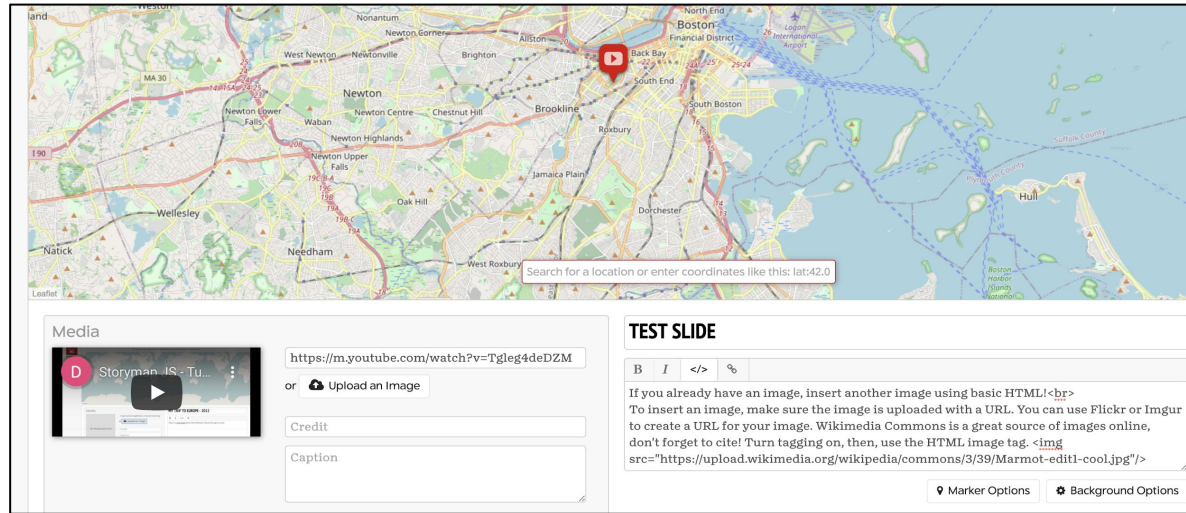—Sample Map Link

Add A Location

KnightLab StoryMap uses **Google Maps** to locate addresses

StoryMap, however, does **not** always recognize place names; you might need to know the **address** or location of particular structures

You can also **drag and drop the map markers** to the specific location

Northeastern University
NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks

Add Media and Images to a Slide

Use "media" to upload files. You can upload an image or put a **URL** of an image OR a video (like a YouTube video). If you want to include your own video, you will first have to upload it to YouTube or other online publisher and copy that link.

If you have an image or a video in the "media" section, but want to include an image **in the text**, you can! The text box reads basic HTML.

1. Click the </> button (turn on HTML)
2. Get a URL of your image. Use Wikimedia Commons to search images by content, and filter by license type and image size. Make sure to use the embed file code, and don't forget to cite the source!
3. Use the HTML tag to insert the image.
4. Check the "Preview" to see the image. Smaller image sizes may appear as a thumbnail, so stick to larger image sizes and preview your end result!

Northeastern University
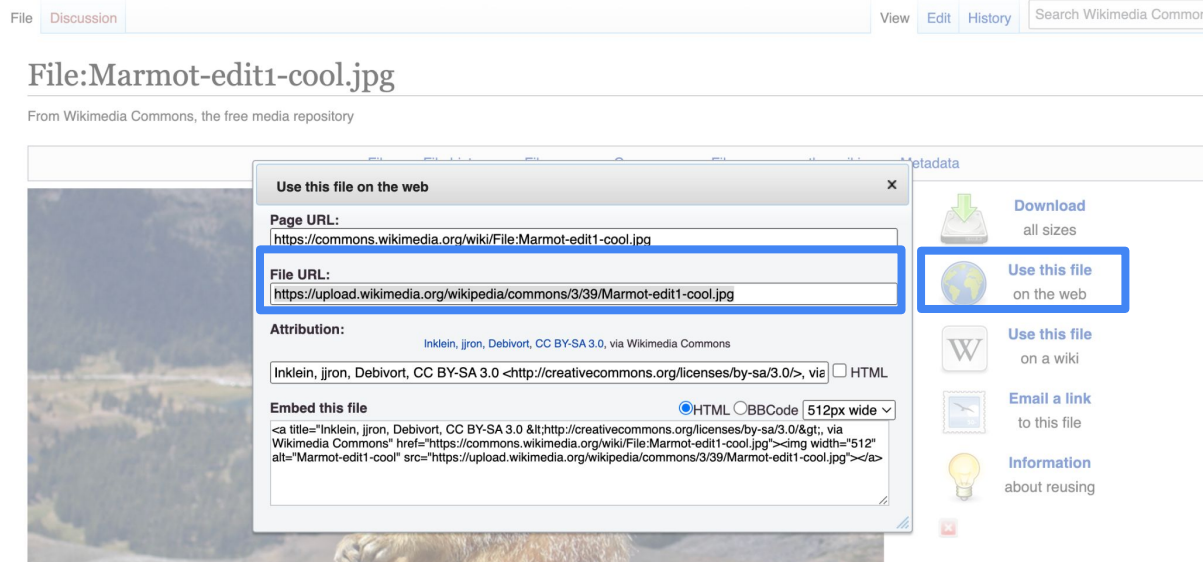NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks

Embed codes and image files

If you are adding an image via its URL, make sure that you select the link with **the image file itself,** not just a page with the image on it.

For example, to add an image from Wikimedia Commons, follow these steps:
1. Go to "More Details" and choose "Use this file on the web," or just choose "Use this file on the web" if you see that option.
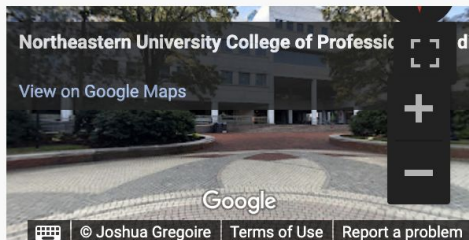2. Copy the "File URL."

Add Google Street View to a Slide

As with other media, you can insert a Google street view map into a slide by entering its **URL**.

- Click "Share or embed image" from the menu, and copy the **HTML** link from the "Embed a map" tab.
  - Make sure the link has the <iframe src:"URL"></iframe> code (it should automatically, but the map won't work without it!).
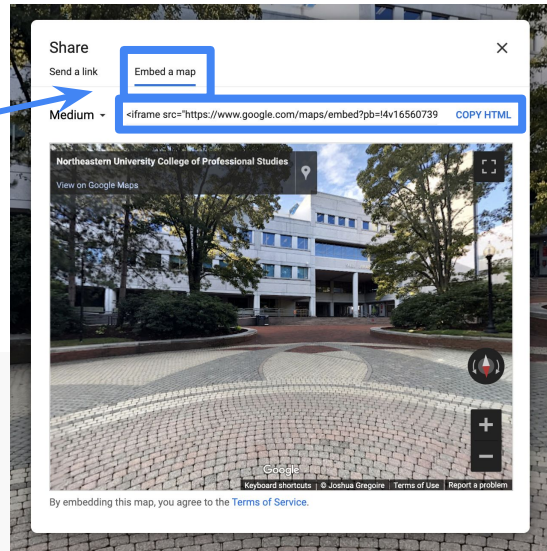- Enter the URL into the "URL to your media" box.

Media

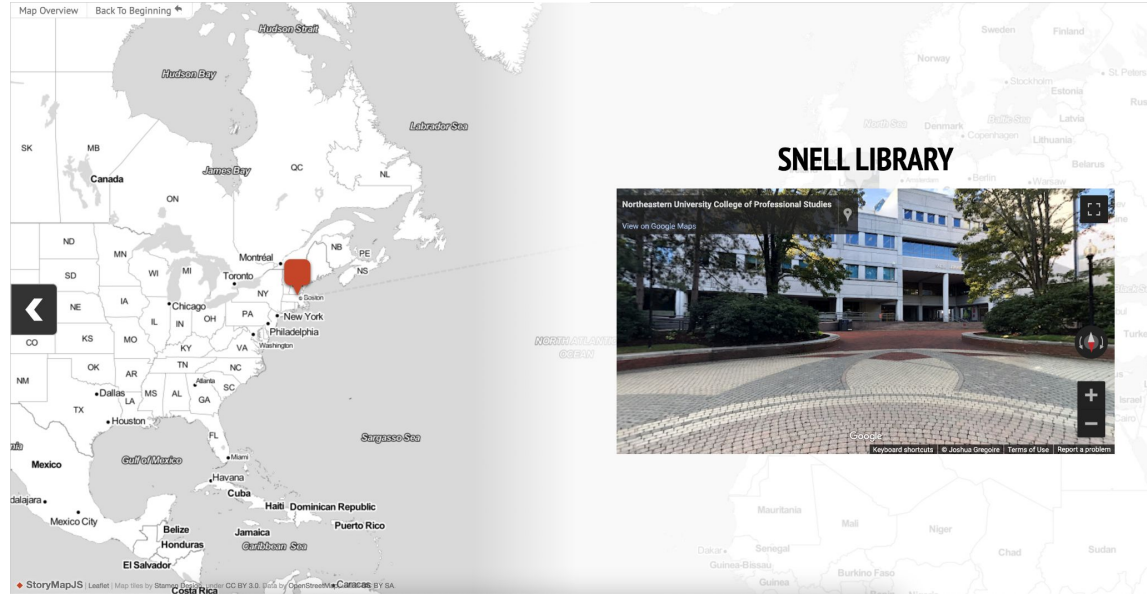<iframe src="https://www.google.com/maps/embed?

or ☁ Upload an Image

Credit

Caption

Accepts HTML

A Note on Zoom Levels

Unfortunately, StoryMap does not let you set how far zoomed in or out your slides will be. The zoom level is determined automatically according to the distance between your locations: the closer the locations are to each other, the closer the zoom.

Northeastern University
NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks

A Note on Save States

StoryMap does not keep older versions of your project, so once you make and save changes, **you cannot retrieve a previous version**. You can also write over new content if you have your StoryMap open in multiple browser tabs or windows at once.

This is one reason why it is a good idea to plan out your StoryMap in a separate document: if you lose progress, you will have your content saved somewhere else.

Northeastern University
NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks

Hands-On Demo: Black Heritage Trail

Identify **your** hands-on practice and troubleshooting needs—this practice time should work for **you**!

1. Select the **handout** "Black Heritage Trail [demo]" and **create a new map**.
2. Practice setting up **map markers**.
3. Practice adding **video or images** to your markers.
4. Try using HTML to embed an image to your map.

Northeastern University
NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks

Thank you!

Taught by Chris McNulty
Digital Integration Teaching Initiative
Research Fellow

Dipa Desai
Digital Integration Teaching Initiative
Research Fellow

– – – – –

- If you have any questions, contact us at **nulab.info@gmail.com**
- Have questions? Schedule an appointment with us!
  https://calendly.com/diti-nu
- Link to Online Materials: **https://bit.ly/fa22-allen-storymap**
- We'd love your feedback! Please fill out a short survey here:
  https://bit.ly/diti-feedback