

MAPS AS MEDIA

Shannon Mattern, New School Graduate Studio, Fall 2015

<http://www.wordsinspace.net/mapsmedia/fall2015/requirements-assignments/>

MAP LABS + ATLAS

At the beginning of the semester you should begin to think about a fluid, capacious research topic that you'd like to explore through the maps you create over the course of the semester. Ideally, this topic will pertain to projects you're exploring in your other classes or a thesis project, to a "through-line" you've pursued throughout the program, or to work you're doing in your extracurricular life. You'll need to submit a **600-word proposal for this project**, via **Google Drive**, before class on **September 15**. This proposal should include (1) a topic description, thematic overview, problem statement, or research question; (2) a discussion of your topic's personal relevance, larger critical significance, timeliness, etc.; (3) a preliminary discussion of how your topic might lend itself to *spatial/cartographic* investigation (i.e., what can you learn by *mapping* it?); (4) a description of the geographic area(s) and scale(s) you plan to focus on in your maps; and (5) a tentative bibliography of at least seven sources (some scholarly publications, some popular publications, some precedent maps, etc.) that will likely prove useful in your research and practice. You'll share your proposal in class, in an **informal 5-minute presentation**, on **September 22**. The proposal is worth **15% of your final grade**.

Each of the maps you then create over the course of the semester should pertain to this topic and cumulatively represent myriad ways of illustrating or investigating your subject. You'll begin developing three of these maps in our in-class labs, and your **presentation of this work-in-progress** during our in-class review sessions, which typically take place two weeks after each in-class lab, will account for **15% of your final grade**.

You can then continue to develop these prototypes, or generate map ideas of your own. By the end of the semester, you should have a minimum of **five completed maps**, in at least three different "media formats" (e.g., hand-drawn, photographic, audio-based, online-interactive, etc.). You'll then need to compile those maps into an **atlas, which you can present in whatever format you choose** (e.g., a book, a website, an installation, etc.), as long as you frame the contents as a cartographic set – as five "spatial variations on a theme." You should make sure to offer some means of narratively or argumentatively navigating through your collection; generate connective threads between your individual maps; and provide critical/descriptive commentary reflecting on the unique medial qualities of each piece in the set (see, for example, how Annette Kim addresses the distinctive features of each map in her "Critical Cartography Primer," pp. 113-145 of *Sidewalk City*). You'll submit your project at the start of class on **December 15**, and during that class each student will deliver a **10- to 15-minute presentation** of his/her work (details to come). Your final atlas is worth **40% of your final grade**.