

Appendix 12.1
OpenValley Syllabus
Ken Cooper

This interdisciplinary course is built upon three premises: a focus on environmental sustainability, a bioregionally defined area of inquiry (roughly, the Genesee River and its watershed), and a meaningful use of primary research. Toward what ends? Rebecca Solnit writes, "Every place deserves an atlas, an atlas is at least implicit in every place, and to say that is to ask first of all what a place is." Since you live in the Genesee Valley, the idea will be to more fully understand and write about that place. Increasingly, our knowledge of place is mediated through digital technologies—including, for the purposes of this course, sophisticated mapping programs called geographic information systems (GIS). *OpenValley* is a digital project that seeks to engage with this technology while using as-yet underutilized methods from the humanities: creative writing, historical research, literary analysis, and "structures of feeling." Our collaborative work will result in something that doesn't look like Google Maps and should develop some new skills on your part. A significant portion of this course will entail your collaborative work on a project that takes you off campus, both physically and conceptually.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this course students should demonstrate the following:

1. A basic understanding of spatial humanities and the role of GIS in that emerging field
2. A critical understanding of literary studies in relation to spatial humanities
3. The ability to undertake original research and fieldwork for a spatial humanities project
4. The ability to work collaboratively on a spatial humanities project

Required Texts

Bodenhamer/Corrigan/Harris, *Deep Maps and Spatial Narratives* and selected readings below

Evaluation

This course is structured around collaborative work; you aren't competing against each other for grades (à la reality television) but rather are attempting to bring out the best in each other. In exchange for my promise not to expect unremitting peppiness on your part, I am hoping you'll conceive your role during the semester as something more than an individual student. Course grades will be evaluated like this:

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| Collective grade based upon the completed enterprise | 35% |
| Active participation and facilitation | 20% |
| Midterm status reports (two to three pages) and practical exam | 15% |
| End-of-semester reflection essay (five pages) | 15% |
| Final exam incorporating assigned readings | 15% |

Schedule

Week One

The Spatial Turn (*Deep Maps and Spatial Narratives*, 1–53)
Deep Maps (Moon, from *PrairyErth: A Deep Map*; Smithson, "A Provisional Theory of Non-Sites"); enterprise preference survey

Week Two

Working Groups
Case Study: Conceptualizing a Deep Map (Hosmer, "The Pioneers of Western New York")

Week Three

Researching Local Materials (library)
Using the *OpenValley* Website (library)

Week Four

Project-Specific Readings; response papers

ArcGIS I: Creating a Basic Map (Esri, "Get Started with ArcGIS Online"), library

Week Five

Working Groups

Week Six

Maps and Aesthetics (Solnit, from *Infinite City*; Solnit/Snedeker, from *Unfathomable City*)

ArcGIS II: Story Maps (Esri, Story Map gallery; "Telling Your Story with Story Maps"); Omeka items due

Week Seven

Case Study: Cartographic Sandbox (Drucker, "Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display")

Midterm exam: status reports due; bring laptop to class

Week Eight

Working groups; conferences

Week Nine

History and Ghost Maps (*Deep Maps and Spatial Narratives*, 72–101)

ArcGIS III: Georeferencing Maps and Raster Layers (library)

Week Ten

Working groups; first version of enterprise due

Week Eleven

Presentations; reader's reports

Week Twelve

Working groups

Week Thirteen

Final version of enterprise due

Deep Maps and Ecology: Thoreau, from *Walden*; Williams, "Yellowstone: The Erotics of Place"; London, "The Politics of Place: An Interview with Terry Tempest Williams"

Week Fourteen

Launch party; reflection essays due

Final exam