Mapping Violence in Early Modern Europe and America

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Research Hall/RRCHNM  
Office Hours (via Zoom); Tuesday, 7-9, Thursday, noon to 2pm.

About the Course

This seminar will explore the history of violence in America and Europe using spatial history as a theoretical lens. Designed for students with minimal technical expertise in mapping or spatial history, we will explore GIS and mapping as a methodological tool for examining the history of violence. We will consider the impact of space and geography on different categories of violence, including homicide, ritual violence, symbolic violence, and domestic violence; we will also be examining the geographic dimensions of more specific types of violence like infanticide and lynching. Readings will focus on key works in the field of violence studies in American and European historiography, in addition to considering datasets and looking at digital mapping projects. In conjunction with weekly responses, we will create datasets and argument-driven maps using data on violence. The final project will consist of an interactive essay focused on your own research.

Format of the Course

The course is divided into three components: readings and hybrid discussion (in class and online), theoretical approaches, and practical exercises. Most of our class periods will be divided into discussion of the readings and demonstrations; others will involve workshopping and trouble-shooting. We will also have presentations from experts in the field. The goal of this format is to provide a foundation not only in the historiography of violence and spatial history, but also to provide you with practical tools and a foundational knowledge of GIS and map creation.

Assignments

Reflections: Each week you will write 500-1000 word blogs for the upcoming week's readings that will be due Friday at 5pm.
15 % of grade

**Discussion**: Each week you will post two questions in the week's Slack channel on the readings or aspects of the course (due Monday by noon). I will be using these questions to guide that week's discussion.

10 % of grade

**Dataset**: You will be put together a violence research dataset on a topic of your choice in MS Excel. This dataset should be convertible for use in GIS or QGIS.

20 % of grade

**Map**: You will create a map that illustrates and makes an argument about an aspect of violence of your choosing

20 % of grade

**Final Essay**: Your final project in this class will consist of an interactive essay that presents your research.

25 % of grade

**Workshops**

While historical GIS is more than plugging data into a program and pressing a couple of buttons, that’s part of it too. There’s no substitution for a basic understanding of the technical skills whether or not you ever use GIS to map your data. While we will be covering some of these basic skills in class, as part of this course you will also be required to attend two GIS workshops (dates tbd).

**Required Materials for the Class**

**Software**:
ArcGIS online account and ArcGIS Pro (Mason has a software license [here](#))
QGIS
Reclaim Hosting Account (or wordpress blog)
Microsoft Excel (Google Forms works too)
Most of these are easy to install or download—let me know if you have issues doing so.

**Required Texts**

N.B. These books are available at the University bookstore, via online sellers, George Mason’s library, or available to rent. I have no preference on format or edition.


Spierenburg, Peter. *A History of Murder: Personal Violence in Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present*. 
Schedule

Week One (1/24): Intro to Course


Medieval London Murder Map

Mapping Philadelphia’s Gun Violence Crisis

Historical Violence Database

Homicide in Chicago, 1870-1930

Week Two (1/31): The History of Violence


Steven Pinker, The Better Angels of our Nature (excerpt)


Dwyer and Micale, Darker Angels of Our Nature

Week Three (2/7): GIS and Spatial History


Robertson, Stephen, and Lincoln A. Mullen. "Navigating through

Week Four (2/14): Violence and Time

Spierenburg, Peter. *A History of Murder: Personal Violence in Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present.*

[Old Bailey Online](#)

Gregory and Ell, Ch. 6

Week Five (2/21): Geographies of Violence


Gregory and Ell, Ch. 4

Week Six (2/28): Approaches to Violence in Early Modern Europe


Gregory and Ell, Ch. 3

**Week Seven (3/7): Approaches to Violence in Early America**

Randolph Roth, American Homicide

**Dataset Due**

**Week Eight (3/14) : Spring Recess--no class**

**Week Nine (3/21) : Violence and Class**


The Prosecution Project

Skills: Attribute layers
Week Ten (328): Violence and the Indigenous


“Decolonizing the Map,” Catographia special issue
https://utpjournals.press/toc/cart/55/3

Guide to Indigenous DC

Mapping Indigenous LA: Placemaking Through Digital Storytelling

Week Eleven (4/4): Violence and Gender


Map Due

Week Twelve: (4/11) Violence and Slavery


Slave Voyages

Week Thirteen (4/18): Violence and the Frontier


Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

*Darker Angels of our Nature Part 2*

Workshopping

Week Fifteen: (5/2): Reflection

Models of Argument-Driven Digital History

Tutorial Schedule and Resources

One of the goals of this class is to provide a basic introduction to spatial history, mapping, and GIS (while there are obvious overlaps, they aren’t necessarily the same thing). The objective is that you’ll gain an understanding of what tools might enable a spatial analysis of your research, whether it’s GIS or one of the many other ways to create a map for historical analysis and argument. There’s a learning curve and expertise takes a lonnnnnnggg time to obtain (and involves a lot of failure). The caveat is always that GIS projects in particular are time and resource intensive. In this class, I don’t want you to focus on creating mind-blowing maps but I do want you to focus on how you can make spatial history work for your research. These tutorials are designed to get you oriented (and know what to google!)

GIS Tutorials and Q&A Forums
There are an overwhelming number of resources out there but here are some places to start.

QGIS and Esri have a robust user community with forums, documentation, and tutorials:

**QGIS:**
- A Gentle Introduction to QGIS
- QGIS Training Manual
- QGIS StackExchange

**Esri (ArcMap, ArcGIS Pro):**
- Esri Community
- ArcGIS Lesson Gallery
- Esri Training (including some MOOCs)

**History Specific Tutorials**
- The Geospatial Historian
- The Historical GIS Research Network
- The Spatial Humanities Workshop (by our own Lincoln Mullen!)
- The Programming Historian

**Other useful sites:**
- GMU’s Humanities GIS
- MIT library’s GIS resources
- University of Waterloo’s Geospatial Center’s Tutorials
OGIS Tutorial Playlist

Textbooks:

N.B., the platforms and software in these textbooks vary but the principles are useful


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