IDS2438 Why Maps Matter (Quest 2)

Spring 2026
Hybrid Course Structure, 3 Credits

Class # 25965, Fridays 8:30 – 9:20 am, Weil Hall 408E

Class # 25966, Fridays 8:30 – 9:20 am, Weil Hall 408D

Class # 25967, Fridays 9:35 – 10:25 am, Weil Hall 408E

Class # 25968, Fridays 9:35 – 10:25 am, Weil Hall 408D

Class # 25969, Fridays 10:40 – 11:30 am, Weil Hall 408E

Class # 25970, Fridays 11:45 am – 12:35 pm, Weil Hall 408E

Instructor

Dr. Ryan Good

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Office Land Line Phone: 352-294-6348

Email: ryangood@ufl.edu

Office Hours (in-person and Zoom, link on Canvas): Wednesdays 9 –10 am, Thursdays 1 – 2:30pm, or by appointment

Teaching Assistants

Akshay Vinod Anand (Classes 25965, 25967, and 25969)

Office Location: McCarty Hall D, 2053

Email: akshayvinodanand@ufl.edu

Office Hours (in-person): Thursdays 3 – 4 pm, Fridays 11:45 am – 12:45 pm, or by appointment

Morgan Manning (Classes 25966, 25968, and 25970)

Office Location: McCarty Hall D, 2053

Email: morgan.manning@ufl.edu

Office Hours (in-person): Wednesdays 1 – 2 pm, Fridays 12:45 – 1:45 pm, or by appointment

Course Description

This course explores maps as a communication and social science tool, asking students to evaluate the role of maps in their own lives. Coursework considers the economic, political, social, and other factors influencing the content appearing on maps, building to more critical consumption of maps and mapped information.

Course Learning Objectives

- Recall and discuss key principles of cartography and communication related to mapping
- Explain how maps can be used as communication tools and the historical contexts they exist within
- Analyze and interpret the impact of maps in multiple case study contexts
- Articulate personal opinions and beliefs related to the role of maps in lived experiences and predict future uses of evolving technologies

Course Overview and Purpose

Maps have played a central role in human societies since the beginning of time. As you will learn in this course, maps are not neutral representations of reality but powerful tools of communication, central to understanding the environments in which we live. Like all tools, they can be used for good and evil. Maps exert an enormous amount of influence on a society's political structure, economic system, and imagination of the larger world. Maps are often used to highlight spatial data in informative ways or to help people get from work to the nearest bar. They are also used daily for more extreme goals. This semester we will be studying maps and analyzing their myriad roles in society.

This online-hybrid course includes two hours of asynchronous contact paired with one hour of synchronous class in smaller discussion sections. Attendance in the weekly discussion section is vital, as this meeting is the chance to engage meaningfully with both the instructional team and the class concepts.

Course Prerequisites

Quest 1 course with a minimum grade of C.

Textbooks, Learning Materials, and Supply Fees

Mark Monmonier. *How to Lie with Maps*, 3rd Edition. 2020.

All other readings and works are available in Canvas.

Materials and Supplies Fees: n/a

Student Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the Quest and General Education learning outcomes as follows:

Quest and General Education Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Skills	**Social & Behavioral Sciences SLOs** Students will be able to…	**Quest 2 SLOs** Students will be able to…	**SLO Assessment/Assignments**
Content: Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and	**Identify, describe, and explain** key themes, principles, and terminology; the history, theory and/or	**Identify, describe, and explain** the cross-disciplinary dimensions of a pressing societal	Three exams, in-class discussion activities, video quizzes

methodologies used within the discipline(s).	methodologies used; and social institutions, structures and processes.	issue or challenge as represented by the social sciences and/or biophysical sciences incorporated into the course.	
Critical Thinking: Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the discipline(s).	**Apply** formal and informal qualitative or quantitative analysis effectively to examine the processes and means by which individuals make personal and group decisions. **Assess and analyze** ethical perspectives in individual and societal decisions.	**Critically analyze** quantitative or qualitative data appropriate for informing an approach, policy, or praxis that addresses some dimension of an important societal issue or challenge.	Five applied homework activities, final reflection, essay questions on three exams
Communication: Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline(s).	**Communicate** knowledge, thoughts and reasoning clearly and effectively.	**Develop and present** clear and effective responses to essential questions in oral and written forms as appropriate to the relevant humanities disciplines incorporated into the course.	Five applied homework activities, in-class discussion activities
Connection: Students connect course content with meaningful critical reflection on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond.	n/a	**Connect** course content with critical **reflection** on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond.	Reflection, essay questions on three exams, in-class discussion activities.

Technical Support

UF Computing Help Desk & Ticket Number: All technical issues require a UF Helpdesk Ticket Number. The UF Helpdesk is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/ | 352-392-4357

While technical difficulties are not generally an acceptable excuse, any requests for make-ups (assignments, exams, etc.) due to technical issues should be accompanied by the ticket number received from the UF Computing Help Desk when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You should email your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

Weekly Course Schedule

Adjustments to our schedule may be necessary during the semester due to unforeseen circumstances. Any changes will be announced on Canvas.

Week	Topic	Assessment	Due Dates
	Unit 1: How we think about maps		
Jan 12-16	**Module 1**: Introduction to course & What are Maps **Summary**: This week orients students to the course and the Quest objectives, and introduces maps as a communication tool. **Required Readings/Works:** • Video: Why all world maps are wrong [6:00]	Syllabus Quiz Introductory PlayPosit M1 PlayPosit Videos	January 15 January 15 January 15
Jan 20-23	**Module 2**: Cognitive Mapping, Wayfinding, & Geospatial Intelligence **Summary**: This week introduces two primary way humans interact with maps – as cognitive tools and as information caches to help guide decisions, using approaches informed by both psychology and data science. Students will also complete their first homework activity, evaluating the psychological implications of their own daily mental mapping process. **Required Readings/Works:** • Kitchin, R. M. (1994). Cognitive maps: What are they and why study them? Journal of environmental psychology, 14(1), 1-19. • Intelligence, G. Basic Doctrine, National System for Geospatial Intelligence, Publication 1-0, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, September 2005. [Chapter 1, pp 7-18] • Video: Geospatial Revolution, Episode 3 [15:01]	M2 PlayPosit Videos Homework Activity 1: Wayfinding & Navigation Introspective	January 23 January 24
Jan 26-30	**Module 3**: Symbology Interpretation & Special Thematic Maps **Summary**: This week builds on last week by discussing symbology on maps, and how that can be used to create thematic maps – a type of map most people regularly encounter. We introduce thematic cartography and analyze the roles that artistic and design choices, and who makes those choices, play in understanding visually communicated information.	M3 PlayPosit Videos	January 29

Week	Topic	Assessment	Due Dates
	Required Readings/Works: • Monmonier Textbook pp 19-26, 165-174 • Slocum, T. A., McMaster, R. M., Kessler, F. C., Howard, H. H., & Mc Master, R. B. (2008). Thematic cartography and geographic visualization. [pp 2-12] • Video: Danny Dorling TED Talk [13:57] • Video: What Earth in 2050 could look like [4:39]		
	Unit 2: History of mapmaking		
Feb 2-6	**Module 4**: Age of Exploration, Colonial Mapping, and Modern Mapmaking **Summary**: This week helps students place maps in a deep historical context, starting with the first known maps created by humans through to today's mapping. Discussion will focus on the ways historical developments are reflected in contemporary maps. We will visit the UF Map & Imagery Library. **Required Readings/Works:** • Harwood, J., & Bendall, A. S. (2006). To the ends of the earth: 100 maps that changed the world. David & Charles. [pp 59-100]	M4 PlayPosit Videos	February 5
Feb 9-13	**Module 5**: Terrain Mapping & Network Mapping **Summary**: This week complements last week's historical context with an examination of more modernized methods of mapping: terrain mapping and network mapping. We will complete the second homework activity, which asks students to critique how historical events inform today's maps by selecting maps from an archived collection and discussing environmental contrasts. **Required Readings/Works:** • The Great Trigonometrical Survey Livelystories [6 pp.] • Putrill, C. (2015). Behold, the Geographically Accurate Tube Map. The Atlantic. [2 pp.] • Video: Aris Venetikids TED Talk [16:19]	M5 PlayPosit Videos Homework Activity 2: Old Map vs. New Map	February 12 February 13
Feb 16-20	Exam Week – Exam taken in class on Friday	Exam 1	February 20
	Unit 3: Mapping Technology		
Feb 23-27	**Module 6**: Introduction to Mapping Technologies **Summary**: This week includes an expansion on module 2's historical context, introducing contemporary technologies used to create, edit, and interact with maps. Emphasis will be on technology as a problem-solving tool, and discussion will introduce the capacities and limitations of GIS as such a tool. **Required Readings/Works:** • National Geographic Society. (2012). GIS (Geographic Information System). [4 pp.] • Video: Geospatial Revolution, Episode 1 [13:45]	M6 PlayPosit Videos	February 26

Week	Topic	Assessment	Due Dates
Mar 2-6	**Module 7**: GIS, Geovisualization, & Photogrammetry **Summary**: Building on last week's discussion, this week dives deeper into one of the most notable mapping technologies used across many fields and economies: GIS. The third homework activity will require students to create their own map to visualize the relationships between variables. Work will also investigate one of the key sources of data for GIS and digital mapping – remotely sensed data, such as satellite imagery. Discussion will reflect on the impact of satellite imagery on human understanding of the earth and of other societies in the 20th and 21st centuries. **Required Readings/Works:** • Slocum, T. A., McMaster, R. M., Kessler, F. C., Howard, H. H., & Mc Master, R. B. (2008). Thematic cartography and geographic visualization. [pp 18-24] • Video: Geospatial Intelligence in WWII [1:59]	M7 PlayPosit Videos Homework Activity 3: Create thematic map using ArcGIS online	March 5 March 6
Mar 9-13	**Module 8**: Satellite Mapping and GPS **Summary**: This week complements last week by exploring the applications of the photogrammetry material, with an explicit focus on GPS and its impacts on modern life. Discussion will link these technologies to political contexts, exploring the policy and privacy ramifications of an ever-increasing amount of spatial data. **Required Readings/Works:** • National Academy of Sciences. (1997). The Global Positioning System: The Role of Atomic Clocks. [8 pp.]	M8 PlayPosit Videos	March 12
Mar 16-20	Spring Break		
Mar 23-27	**Module 9**: Volunteered Geographic Information **Summary**: This week completes our journey through modern mapping technologies by exploring data sources for modern mapping, notably volunteered information. Students will be tasked to evaluate how data is used for specific communication goals for the fourth homework assignment, using disease mapping and epidemiology as a focus. Discussion will explore the capacity for open-access mapping technologies to impact physical science research as well as the communication of that research to the public. **Required Readings/Works:** • Goodchild, M. F. (2007). Citizens as sensors: the world of volunteered geography. GeoJournal, 69(4), 211-221.	M9 PlayPosit Videos Homework Activity 4: Mapping infectious disease	March 26 March 27
Mar 30-Apr 3	Exam Week – Exam taken in class on Friday	Exam 2	April 3
	Unit 4: Use of maps in society		
Apr 6-10	**Module 10**: Maps as propaganda **Summary**: This week pulls from the three previous modules of Unit 3 by exploring how maps can be and are used as propaganda tools, both historically and in contemporary	M10 PlayPosit Videos	April 9

Week	Topic	Assessment	Due Dates
	times. Discussion will use political science and psychology frameworks to draw connections across disciplinary lines. **Required Readings/Works:** • Monmonier Textbook pp 87-122 • Video: Mapping the World – Spirit of the Age [23:03]		
Apr 13-17	**Module 11**: Mapping denied territory & Conflicted Maps **Summary**: This week expands on the previous exploration of propaganda, touching on specific examples of mapping contested and denied territories. The final homework assignment requires students to map environmental impacts of contemporary or historical conflicts, connecting and contrasting environmental changes with political ones. **Required Readings/Works:** • Taylor, A. (2015). Say goodbye to the weirdest border dispute in the world. The Washington Post. [3 pp.] • Miller, G. (2015). Inside the secret world of Russia's cold war mapmakers. Wired. [7 pp.] • Lewis, D. (2010). The Geopolitical Babushka Doll. Now I Know. [2 pp.]	M11 PlayPosit Videos Homework Activity 5: Mapping Environmental Science	April 16 April 17
Apr 20-22	**Module 12**: Maps that advertise **Summary**: This week explores maps as advertising tools and the ways this trend influences larger understandings and uses of maps by society. Utilizing both business and journalism perspectives on maps as advertising, this week's discussion asks students to explore their daily exposure to this phenomenon. This week also includes submission of the semester-long reflection assignment, in which students critique their own beliefs and biases about maps and the information appearing on them, focusing on two or more modules' content in their discussion. NOTE: there is no discussion meeting this week due to the Reading Days. **Required Readings/Works:** • Monmonier Textbook pp. 58-70. • Denil, M. (2011). The search for a radical cartography. Cartographic Perspectives, (68), 7-28.	M12 PlayPosit Videos Reflection Essay	April 21 April 22
Apr 27-May 1	Exam Week – Exam will be taken in class during your assigned final exam session	Exam 3	8:30 sections: April 30, 7:30am 9:35 sections: April 29, 3pm 10:40 section: May 1, 7:30am 11:45 section: April 29, 10am

Grading Policy

Course grading is consistent with UF grading policies.

Course Grading Structure

Assignment Type and Description	Point Value	Percent of Final Grade
Exams (3 x 140 points)	420	42.0%
PlayPosit Videos (12 x 10 points)	120	12.0%
Homework Activities (5 x 50 points)	250	25.0%
Reflection Essay	50	5.0%
Class Participation	120	12.0%
Course Orientation	40	4.0%
Total	**1000 points**	**100.0%**

Exams: We will have three non-cumulative exams during the semester covering the readings and videos. The course exams will be conducted as a Canvas Quiz. They will consist of a combination of true/false, multiple choice, and short essay questions on material from class presentations and readings.

PlayPosit Videos: Each module will have pre-recorded lecture videos and/or a small number of short outside videos (such as TED talks) that you will watch while answering pop-up questions. These quiz-style questions will be aimed at testing understanding of the key points of the videos and will be completed using the PlayPosit Canvas tool.

Homework Activities: Every few weeks, we will have one extended out-of-class activity to engage the class content in detail. These activities include analytical exercises which task you with identifying and explaining social and environmental processes informed by maps, as well as reflective engagements with your own lived experiences learning from and consuming maps. Assessment rubrics for each individual activity are available on the course Canvas site.

Reflection Essay: You will conclude the course by composing a short reflection essay about course themes and your personal beliefs and biases. You will be required to discuss two module topics in comparison to each other, drawing out contrasts in the various social science approaches presented during class with your own evolving understanding of maps. An assessment rubric for the essay is available on the course Canvas site.

Class Participation: You will attend a live weekly breakout discussion meeting with a small number of classmates each Friday. During these class sessions the instructional team will guide students through an examination of the module topic in a Socratic-style discussion. You are expected to actively participate in class discussions per course guidelines. Participation activities will be scored based on guidelines provided in class during the activities on a weekly basis.

Course Orientation: You will complete first week activities to orient yourself to the class, including a multiple choice quiz over the syllabus content and policies as well as a practice PlayPosit assignment.

Grading Scale

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/

Grade	Points	Percentage
A	930.0 to 1000.0	93.0 to 100.0%
A-	900.0 to < 930.0	90.0 to < 93.0%
B+	870.0 to < 900.0	87.0 to < 90.0%
B	830.0 to < 870.0	83.0 to < 87.0%
B-	800.0 to < 830.0	80.0 to < 83.0%
C+	770.0 to < 800.0	77.0 to < 80.0%
C	730.0 to < 770.0	73.0 to < 77.0%
C-	700.0 to < 730.0	70.0 to < 73.0%
D+	670.0 to < 700.0	67.0 to < 70.0%
D	630.0 to < 670.0	63.0 to < 67.0%
D-	600.0 to < 630.0	60.0 to < 63.0%
E	< 600.0	< 60.0%

Academic Policies and Resources

Academic policies for this course are consistent with university policies. See https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/

Campus Health and Wellness Resources

Visit https://one.uf.edu/whole-gator/topics for resources that are designed to help you thrive physically, mentally, and emotionally at UF.

Please contact UMatterWeCare for additional and immediate support.

Software Use

All faculty, staff and students of the university are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

Privacy and Accessibility Policies

- Adobe
    - Adobe Privacy Policy
    - Adobe Accessibility

- Honorlock
  - Honorlock Privacy Policy
  - Honorlock Accessibility
- Instructure (Canvas)
  - Instructure Privacy Policy
  - Instructure Accessibility
- Microsoft
  - Microsoft Privacy Policy
  - Microsoft Accessibility
- PlayPosit
  - PlayPosit Privacy Policy
  - PlayPosit Accessibility
- YouTube (Google)
  - YouTube (Google) Privacy Policy
  - YouTube (Google) Accessibility
- Zoom
  - Zoom Privacy Policy
  - Zoom Accessibility

Late Work

You are responsible for turning assignments in on time unless an extension has been requested via email prior to the deadline. In case of true documented emergencies, we may waive this requirement. Technical difficulties are not an excuse for missing an assessment or assignment; you should have contingency plans in case any such issues arise. We recommend storing your documents on a cloud service that can be accessed from any device (Dropbox and OneDrive are free to UF students) and having a plan for internet outages (such as identifying a source for public WiFi near you or tethering through your cell phone). Try not to wait until the last minute to submit assignments!

Assignments submitted late will incur a penalty of 10% of the possible points per day.

Finally, please do not wait until the end of the semester to discuss problems with the course material or performance in class. Your performance and success are important to the instructional team, the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, and University of Florida, so please contact us to discuss your concerns as soon as they arise.

Grading Disputes

Grading is based on how well you were able to apply the learned material as outlined by assignment-specific rubrics and the student learning objectives listed in the syllabus. In case of a grading dispute, you should notify your instructor via email within one week of the date the grade is posted to Canvas. Please include an explanation of what aspect of your grade you disagree with.

End-of-semester requests for grade bumps, assignment do-overs, additional extra credit, etc. will be denied.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Statement

Artificial Intelligence is an amazing new technology that is revolutionizing the way we access and process information, just like computers, the internet, and mobile phones did in prior decades. AI can be a useful tool to aid (but NOT replace) writers when brainstorming, spellchecking, and editing. **However, all work submitted for credit in this class must be your own. Using AI to generate content for you, including but not limited to copying & pasting AI output in whole or part into work submitted for this class** (even if you subsequently edit or paraphrase the AI output), **constitutes academic dishonesty unless explicitly permitted by the instructor as part of the written assignment instructions.**

If you use any AI application for any part of an assignment (including brainstorming ideas or editing), you must state so as part of your submission and include the entire prompt(s) that you used with the AI tool(s) as part of your submission (below your list of references); **failure to do so will be considered academic dishonesty.**

Students should be cognizant that large language models (LLMs) and similar AI applications are not credible sources and should not be used as such. They are also ill-suited for finding scholarly sources. Further, many web sites, online services, and software packages (e.g. Grammarly, Canva, many word processors) now feature AI integrations. These policies apply to these services the same way that they do for LLMs. It is your responsibility to determine if any tools you use contain AI components, and if so, disclose use of that AI. AI-generated images may not be used unless expressly approved in writing by your instructor for a specific assignment.

Drop-In Office Hours

Please take advantage of office hours to discuss any questions or concerns. Contact your teaching assistant for basic questions, help with assignments, and clarifications regarding grades and feedback. Contact your instructor regarding absences, grading disputes, concerns about other students, and any other issues. If you cannot be present for the regularly scheduled office hours, we will attempt to accommodate you at an alternate time.

Course Communications

The preferred way to get in touch with your instructor or TA outside of office hours is via Canvas message or direct email from your official UF email account. Emails from outside providers, like Gmail, are not considered secure and will be ignored to protect student privacy. University policy dictates that grades cannot be discussed via email, so if you have a grade-specific question, you should ask it during office hours or via Canvas message. You can expect a response within 24-48 hours on weekdays. All students are expected to check the course web site on Canvas (http://elearning.ufl.edu) each weekday. In addition, we may send specific communications directly to your UF email, which you should check daily as well. **You should enable Canvas notifications for this class, so that you are notified immediately about grading, assignment feedback, due date changes, announcements, etc.**

You may use GroupMe or similar tools to communicate with other students about the class and environmental science-related topics. **You may not, however, discuss exam questions/answers with others, including exams from the current or prior semesters, or collaborate on any assignments intended to be worked on individually**. Doing so constitutes academic dishonesty.