

**History 399 (Winter 2023)**  
**History and Geography: Global Cartography and Visual Studies of Science**  
**FISK 410**

Instructor: Ying Jia Tan  
Class Meetings: MTWRF 10-12am, 1-3pm  
Office: 110 Mt Vernon, Room 202  
Office Hours: By appointment  
Email: [ytan@wesleyan.edu](mailto:ytan@wesleyan.edu)



Vermeer, *The Geographer*

**Course Description:**

Why did mapping take off after the sixteenth century around the world? How did maps become an integral part of our lives? We will start with questions like “What is a Map?” and “What is a continent?” We will look towards theoretical works in science and technology studies and visual epistemologies for new insights into these questions we take for granted. We will trace the role of maps through the age of maritime exploration, age of empires and the rise of nationalism. We will then look at our present age of electronic navigation systems and Geographical Information Systems. Have we moved beyond the map? Or did new mapping methods transform our life-worlds?

We will learn that maps are not just receptacles of geographical information, but are part of a broader family of value-laden images. Just as paintings are deposits of social relations, maps played an integral role in the accumulation of political power, the creation of geographical imagination, production of knowledge, and communication of ideas.

The class assumes no prior background and no knowledge of any foreign languages. That said, students are encouraged to use historical scholarship and primary sources in languages other than English, if they wish to.

### Learning Objectives

This is a research seminar that aims to prepare undergraduates for their capstone research. The course will take the students through several stages: defining a topic and locating primary materials, crafting proposals, writing drafts, and the final write up.

Students will become familiar with the major collection of maps in the libraries on campus and online databases. They will also learn about the major intellectual debates in the history of cartography, historical geography, and area studies.

### Assignments

Every student will be required to complete the assigned readings and weekly assignments. The seminar requires the active contribution of each and every seminar member. Besides speaking up in class, pay attention to what other colleagues have to say. Students will keep a reading journal throughout the semester. These entries will serve as building blocks for the final assignment, which can take the form of a literature review essay, GIS story map, lesson plan for K-12 social studies unit, or a feature article for a magazine or newspaper.

There are two major assignments for this class:

- a. Map Analysis Paper (1,000 words, approximately 4 pp.) You will be asked to bring a map to class and relate it to the theoretical readings assigned for the first two days of class. By the middle of the semester, you should have developed new insights into this map. Write an essay to present your original analysis of the map.
- b. Final project

Final grades will be determined on the following basis:

Map Analysis Paper (4pp.)	20%
Class participation	20%
Reading Journal	30%
Final Project	30%
-----	
Final grade	100%

Required Texts (Marked with \* on syllabus, on reserve and for sale at RJ Julia Bookstore)

Teng, Emma. *Taiwan's Imagined Geography*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Winichakul, Thongchai. *Siam Mapped: The History of the Geo-body of a Nation*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997.

---

Meeting Schedule and Assignments

**Jan 10<sup>th</sup> What is a Map? Telling Stories with Maps (a.m. class)**

Readings to be completed before Day One:

Andrews, J. H. "What Was a Map? The Lexicographers Reply." *Cartographica* 33, no. 4 (1996): pp. 1-11.

Wood, Denis and John Krygier. "Maps." In *The Encyclopedia of Human Geography*. New York: Elsevier, 2009. [Download from: [http://makingmaps.owu.edu/elsevier\\_geog\\_maps.pdf](http://makingmaps.owu.edu/elsevier_geog_maps.pdf)]

In-class activity:

Bring a map to class. Find out about the historical context of the map. When was it made? What does it tell us about the time period when it was made? Explain how the map relates to one or more of the readings. Do not worry if you do not fully grasp the readings. You will have a chance to revisit them when you do the first assignment for the next class.

---

**Jan 11<sup>th</sup> Maps and Power**

Andrews, J.H. "Introduction: Meaning, Knowledge and Power in the Map Philosophy of J.B. Harley." In *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*. 1-32. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

Harley, J. B. "Deconstructing the Map." *Cartographica* 26 (1989): pp. 1-20.

Journal Entry:

Choose a map. You can use the map from the first class meeting. Write a short passage of about 300 to 400 words to explain how this map functions as an instrument of power by applying the insights of Harley, Andrews, or Edney. This exercise is a springboard for subsequent research assignments.

---

### **Jan 12<sup>th</sup> Are Maps Scientific? Are Maps a Work of Art?**

Latour, Bruno. "Visualization and Cognition: Drawing things together." *Representation in Scientific Practice* (1990): pp. 19-68.

Alpers, Svetlana. "The Mapping Impulse of Dutch Art." In *The Art of Describing*. Chicago; Chicago University Press, 1983.

#### **Journal Entry:**

Why is the history of cartography an integral part of the history of science? Why is the study of maps a crucial part of art history? Why are inter-disciplinary scholars interested in maps?

---

### **Jan 13<sup>th</sup> Maps and Exploration**

Gómez, Nicolás Wey. *The Tropics of Empire: Why Columbus Sailed South to the Indies*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2008. Introduction.

Seed, Patricia. *Ceremonies of Possession*. Chapter 4.

#### **Journal Entry:**

How do the following readings challenge the conventional narrative on the age of exploration? How would you redesign a world history class on the age of exploration that places another part of the world other than Europe in the center of the historical narrative?

**<Map Analysis Paper Due Jan 13<sup>th</sup>, 11.59pm>**

---

### **Jan 16<sup>th</sup> Maps and the Rise of Empires**

Buisseret, David, ed. *Monarchs, Ministers, and Maps: The Emergence of Cartography as a Tool of Government in Early Modern Europe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992 <One selected chapter>

Perdue, Peter C. "Moving Through the Land." In *China Marches West*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 2010. pp.407-463.

#### **Journal Entry:**

What are the key differences between French and Qing mapping conventions? What do these differences reveal about European and Asian Empires?

**Visit to Special Collections and Archives (p.m.) Pick out one important detail from the maps. Investigate the detail and bring your observation to our next class.**

### **Jan 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Maps and Frontier Exploration**

Emma Teng, *Taiwan's Imagined Geography*\*

#### **Journal Entry:**

Maps do not exist in isolation. The assigned reading for the next two days use a wide range of sources. Make a list of the type of sources that the author uses in this book. Think about broadening the source base of your final project. What other primary sources can you incorporate to enrich the analysis of your map or geographical writing? List two additional primary sources that you thought about incorporating after reading both books in the past two weeks. Revise the literature review and resubmit it by April 5.

### **Jan 19<sup>th</sup> Maps as Scientific Inscriptions**

Rudwick, Martin. "The Emergence of a Visual Language for Geological Science 1760-1840." In *History of Science* 14 (1976).

#### **Journal Entry:**

How did the study of geology shape our understanding of time? Illustrate your argument with a picture of an artifact from the hallways of Exley Science Center, Olin Library, or the Science Library.

### **Jan 20<sup>th</sup> Will You Die For a Map?**

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), pp.1-8; 39-49.

Winichakul, Thongchai. *Siam Mapped: The History of the Geo-body of a Nation*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997. (First four chapters)

No Journal Entry: Afternoon sessions devoted to project workshops

### **Jan 23<sup>rd</sup> One More Time! Will You Die For a Map?**

Winichakul, Thongchai. *Siam Mapped: The History of the Geo-body of a Nation*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997.\* (Remaining chapters)

Journal Entry:

Revisit a history textbook that you used in grade school. Discuss how maps and propaganda posters are used to foster a sense of patriotism and sense of belonging.

---

**Jan 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>**

**Final Project presentations will be held during reading “week” and final exam day.**