

Suggestions for Developing a Mapping Course

This guide is designed to help those interested in teaching a course whose primary mode of storytelling is the creation and annotation of maps and images.

Timeline

Developing a Digital Maine (DM) project proposal

1. Contact DM Steering Committee well in advance of the course's delivery (for example, Fall 2016 for a course to be taught in academic year 2016-17). See the *Digital Maine Project Guide*.
2. Submit a project proposal to the DM Steering Committee by February 1 of the academic year before the course is taught.

Preparing a DM course syllabus

1. If you haven't already, develop a basic understanding of your technical toolbox. For DM mapping courses, we suggest Story Maps for the storytelling interface and WordPress for the archive (though you can use earlier conversations with the DM Steering Committee to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of these and other tools).
2. Revise your project proposal, considering how your perspective of the final goals might have changed as you have become more familiar with your toolbox.
3. Revisit how projects will be developed and assessed. For example, are these individual projects, team projects, or a mixture of the two? Will you define the project research questions and parameters? Will students define their own projects? Will they collectively define group projects? Will you design the grading rubrics, or will they be collaboratively defined by the class as a whole?
4. Write a project charter, using the DM project management guide.
5. Write and revise your syllabus. Here's a rough outline of how you might structure a mapping course

Weeks 1-3

- Review project charter with class, ensuring that students have a clear sense of the course and project objectives.
- Introduce and discuss Digital Humanities as a field (see suggested readings).
- Begin developing subject competence.
- Connect with local resources (e.g. Special Collections, the museum, the Waterville Historical Society), so that students identify archivists and librarians as project collaborators and resources from the outset.
- Connect to Academic ITS, so that students identify technologists as project collaborators and resources from the outset.
- Begin developing technical competence through a series of exercises (e.g. digitization, metadata, mapping tools).

Weeks 4-6

- Provide guidelines on working as a team (e.g. project management, team writing and editing), journaling and self-assessment, and writing horizontal and upward feedback.
- Read/discuss writing for an online audience.
- Get students to build a gallery of DH storytelling and mapping best practices, identifying models for possible projects.
- Continue developing subject competence.
- Continue developing technical competence through exercises.
- Continue archive building via digitization and metadata (if necessary).

Weeks 7-11

- Commit course time to workshopping projects (as teams and/or individuals): encourage questions and collaborative (class-wide) suggestions/solutions to team technical and conceptual issues.
- Schedule project draft due dates and peer review sessions.

Weeks 12-13

- Practice quality control, in anticipation of project launch.
- Develop a project logo (see logo design guidesheet).

Other logistical concerns

1. Contact possible collaborators — both inside and outside the college — well in advance of the semester (e.g. for a fall course, contact collaborators early in the summer). Schedule class visits, materials acquisition and hosting, field visits, etc.
2. Schedule a project launch/exhibition early in semester (e.g. sherry with Sherry in Special Collections). Note: it violates college rules to schedule events during reading days. Organize publicity for the event and the project (the Center for the Arts and Humanities to produce posters might sponsor posters or food).

Suggestions

- Don't be afraid to re-boot the syllabus if something isn't working or the timeline has expanded or contracted.
- Give yourself a break when it comes to evaluation. You won't be able to individualize assessment as tidily in a collaborative class like this. Have students self-assess, as well as provide horizontal feedback on team members. You might also build in upward feedback, in which students assess your role as an overall project manager.