This seminar will examine social and environmental issues from a spatial perspective. Students will learn the use of geospatial technology as a methodological technique and apply it to a topic of their choosing for a final paper. Weekly readings and discussions will explore the use, and potential abuse, of geospatial methods in social science research, policy and communication.

Spring 2019
meets Tuesdays 3-5 pm

Instructor: Jill Kelly
(jill_kelly@fas.harvard.edu)

Office Hours:
Tuesday 11-12 and 2-3
in GCIS S310

Prerequisite: This course will not teach the technical use of GIS at an introductory level, but will rather support students’ independent use of whatever tools for geospatial analysis are interesting or familiar to them.

Course Format: The course will meet as a seminar to discuss weekly readings. Part of the class sessions will be structured for individual and collaborative project planning and support.

Grading: Course grades will be assigned 25% for weekly participation and collaboration, 10% for project plan, 25% for in-class presentation, and 40% for the final project.

Textbook: How to Lie with Maps by Mark Monomier; other readings distributed weekly. Students are encouraged to seek textbooks and online sources to support their practical use of GIS software.


Facilities: ArcGIS and QGIS are installed on computers in the labs listed at http://gis.harvard.edu/resources/labs/gis-labs-campus. You may install a copy on your own computer following the instructions at http://gis.harvard.edu/tools. CGA (Center for Geographic Analysis) can help with installation. We will use piazza.com to host materials, discussion, and technical Q&A.
On Exactitude in Science

... In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that that vast Map was Useless, and not without some Pitylessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in all the Land there is no other Relic of the Disciplines of Geography.

Suárez Miranda, Viajes de varones prudentes, Libro IV, Cap. XLV, Lérida, 1658


“I have a map of the United States, actual size. It says ‘scale: 1 mile = 1 mile.’ I spent last summer folding it. I hardly ever unroll it. People ask me where I live and I say E6.” -- Steven Wright

The fine print:

Collaboration Policy: Students are strongly encouraged to work together and support one another’s use of GIS and other software on piazza. You may freely share data sources, problem-solving techniques, and any other methodological approaches. However, the final project must be the independent work of each individual student, properly quoting and citing all material used.

First Week’s Assignment: Register for our GOV 94DN site at piazza.com (you will receive an invitation at the email address you provide) and read the materials posted under Week 1.