Government 94 DN – Modeling Social and Environmental Space

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 2021
meets Tuesdays 3-5 pm

https://harvard.zoom.us/my/meeting.jkelly
Password 1111444222

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

Office Hours TBA

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 remotely 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 Momonier; other readings distributed weekly. Students are encouraged to seek textbooks and online sources to support their practical use of GIS software.


Slack: Most class discussion and technical Q&A will take place on Slack. We will also use Slack for hosting materials and recorded lectures. Please join our Slack right away.
“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

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 Pitiessess 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