

*FYS/CBL: Mapping American History*  
*University of Richmond*  
*Spring 2011*  
*Edward L. Ayers and Scott Nesbit*

Introduction:

Mapping American History, a First Year Seminar, will challenge you to write, research, and analyze historical sources in increasingly sophisticated ways. You will constantly be writing and receiving feedback on your work from your peers, writing specialists, and your professors. The class project is designed to focus your attention on a single place, using that focus to see how that place has changed over time using a variety of sources and methods.

This course will also give you a coherent sense of the history of Richmond. You will learn about the city's history and geography both through your readings and through our class project, in which you will write the history of a city street. This project fits within the University of Richmond's Community Based Learning program: it arises out of our belief that we are at our best when we engage course material and the world around us together.

We bring writing, analysis, and the community in which we live together through mapping. Maps have given men and women ways of seeing patterns that are otherwise difficult, of simplifying the complexities of history and geography. We will be looking at old maps and creating our own in order to consider how Richmonders and the places they built were connected, both internally and to places far removed. You will come away from the course with knowledge of the history of your adopted home and the ability to interpret texts, maps, and images so that you can build stories from these sources and critically examine the stories others tell.

This course is designed to serve as a broad introduction to the University of Richmond and to the tools of research and writing. *Mapping American History* is a First-Year Seminar, and so carries with it five specific goals common to all FYS courses.

- 1. expand and deepen students' understanding of the world and of themselves*
- 2. enhance their ability to read and think critically*
- 3. enhance their ability to communicate effectively, in writing, speech, and other appropriate forms*
- 4. develop the fundamentals of information literacy and library research*
- 5. provide the opportunity for students to work closely with a faculty mentor*

## Our Partners:

### At UR:

Digital Scholarship Lab  
Bonner Center for Civic Engagement  
First-Year Seminar Program  
Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology

### Outside UR:

Valentine Richmond History Center  
T. Tyler Potterfield, Historic Preservation Planner, City of Richmond

## Assessment:

The course grade will be based on the following:

### Participation: 20%

Your discussion grade will be based on the quality of your contributions to our discussion, both online and in the classroom. In order to participate fully, you must be present in class. If you cannot come to a class meeting, please let one of the professors know ahead of time. When in class, you should attempt to contribute insight to the overall conversation, move the conversation along by referring back to the points made by your classmates, and do so without monopolizing a discussion. Your comments and smaller posts on our class blog will also be evaluated for their insight into the readings and your classmates' work.

### Mapping and Writing Projects: 60%

You will produce four written assignments this semester to be posted on our class blog. Each of these assignments is worth 15% of your grade. Each assignment will be evaluated on the clarity and creativity with which you make a point about the history of your assigned area.

### Final Project: 20%

Your final project will bring together your research and readings from this semester to tell the long history of your block in the context of the history of Richmond and its place in the larger world. You will be evaluated both on the written essay you produce and the way that you are able to distill your arguments and evidence orally during our final tour of the sites at the end of the semester.

## Assignments Overview:

This semester you will write four essays linked by their focus on a single street in Richmond's past and the changing connections between that place and the wider world. Each essay will be drafted, revised after meeting with a writing consultant, and turned in as a post to the course blog. You will close the course with a final, two-part assignment

**Assignment #1:** The first written assignment, due January 23, will be a short, reflective essay on a place in Richmond based on observations of a single site that interested you during our tour. In this essay, you will raise questions informed by your readings in weeks 1 and 2: how did this place come to be the way that it is? How does it compare to other places in this city? What happens in this place, and how might that activity be related to what has happened there before? You will set up a meeting with our writing associate for the week of January 17 and then revise this essay with her help. You will turn in your essay by posting it to the class blog by 5pm, Sunday, January 23. This way, you will have a chance to read through your classmates' posts. You are each required to comment on at least two of these posts by the start of class on Monday, January 24.

**Assignment #2:** The second essay, due February 14, will answer the question, who used this street and how during the American Civil War? You will answer this question in a five-page essay based on newspaper accounts from the Richmond Daily Dispatch, <http://dlxs.richmond.edu/d/ddr/> and your reading of pertinent secondary sources, especially Gregg Kimball, *American City, Southern Place*. You will post one document on our class blog and write a paragraph describing your preliminary research for this paper by 5pm February 6. Be prepared to discuss your preliminary research in class February 7.

**Assignment #3:** In the third essay, due March 21, you will look at two changes in your block that marked the New South: how did the racial and ethnic makeup of your block change in the early twentieth century, and how did the material infrastructure change during the same period? Using fire insurance maps and city directories, you will build two maps to accompany your essay that will demonstrate your findings. Be sure to relate your research to the course readings. By February 28, you should bring to class Sanborn maps of your street and be able to show how a section changed (or remained the same) over time. By March 14, you should have completed your research in city directories. Bring a draft map to class to demonstrate your preliminary results. If you can, relate them back to the material changes you talked about in our last meeting.

**Assignment #4:** Your goal in the fourth essay, due April 18, is to tell your readers about Richmonders' use of space—particularly your assigned street section—in the middle of the twentieth century. You are to base your essay on a

close reading of images taken from collection of the Valentine Richmond History Center.

The Valentine has generously agreed to scan the images you select. In turn, you will help the Valentine test the possibilities of using mobile technology to help Richmond residents interact with their city in place. You will upload these photographs onto our course website and tag them according to the subject of the photograph. The images, like the essay based on them, are due April 18.

#### Readings:

Reserve readings can be found online through Boatwright Library. A number of books on Richmond history are on reserve for your individual research projects.

You will also purchase two books:

Gregg Kimball, *American City, Southern Place*  
Tyler Potterfield, *Nonesuch Place*

#### Schedule of readings and class topics

January 10, Week 1, *Visualizing Place*

Reading to be discussed today:

Peter Turchi, *Maps of the Imagination*, 73-98

Karen Haltunnen, "Groundwork," *American Quarterly* (2006)

Guest: Terry Dolson, the Center for Civic Engagement (UR)

Work to be turned in today:

Research to be done this week:

This week you will be assigned a single street of Richmond. For the rest of the semester, you will be working to think about this street and the spaces of which it is a part. On January 15, we will tour the city, making sure that we point out your assigned streets along the way. You will use these observations to begin thinking about Richmond's history in Assignment #1. Come to class January 17 with a draft reflection on the tour and ready to talk about your street.

January 17, Week 2, *Context*

Reading to be discussed today:

T. Tyler Potterfield, *Nonesuch Place*

Guest: Kenneth Warren, Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology (UR)

Work to be turned in today: See Assignment #1. Come to class January 17 with a draft reflection on the tour and ready to talk about your street.

Research to be done this week:

Assignment #1 due January 24.

January 24, Week 3, *Landscapes, local and imagined*

Readings to be discussed today:

Earl Swift, excerpts from *Journey on the James*

Rhys Isaac, "Traveling Through the Landscape," in *Transformation of Virginia*, 52-7

Nathaniel Ayers, *The James River: A Pre-History*

Guest: Jim Gwin, Special Collections, Boatwright Library.

After a discussion of the texts, we will walk together to Boatwright Library for a session on information literacy.

Work to be turned in today:

Assignment #1.

Research to be completed this week:

Post on our blog a question that arises from your reading for Week 4.

January 31, Week 4, *Early Virginia*

Reading to be discussed today:

D. W. Meinig, "Greater Virginia" in *The Shaping of American History, Vol. I: Atlantic America* 144-160

Edward Ayers and Peter Onuf, "Introduction" in *All Over the Map*, 1-10

Work to be turned in today:

Post on our blog one question based on your readings for Week 4.

Research to be completed this week:

See Assignment #2. You will post one document on our class blog and write a paragraph describing your preliminary research for this paper by 5pm February 6. Be prepared to discuss your preliminary research in class February 7.

February 7, Week 5, *American City, Southern Place*

Reading to be discussed today:

Gregg Kimball, *American City, Southern Place*, selections.

Maurie McInnis, *Visualizing the Southern Slave Trade*, Chapter 3.

Work to be turned in today:

See Assignment #3. You will post one article from the *Daily Dispatch* on our class blog and write a paragraph describing your preliminary research for this paper by 5pm February 6. Be prepared to discuss your preliminary research in class February 7.

Research to be completed this week:

Assignment #2 due next week.

February 14, Week 6, *Richmond & War*

Reading to be discussed today:

Gregg Kimball, *American City, Southern Place*, 183-262

Work to be turned in today:

Assignment #2 due today.

Research to be completed this week:

February 21, Week 7, *Mapping Slavery & Emancipation*

Reading to be discussed today:

Susan Schulten, "Cartography of Slavery and the Authority of Statistics" *Civil War History*, (March 2010)

Edward L. Ayers and Scott Nesbit, "Seeing American Emancipation" *Journal for the Civil War Era* (March 2011)

Work to be turned in today:

Research to be completed this week:

Begin work on Assignment #3. By February 28, you should bring to class Sanborn maps of your street and be able to show how a section changed (or remained the same) over time.

February 28, Week 8, *Reconfiguring Regions*

Reading to be discussed today:

D. W. Meinig, "A Re-United States," *Transcontinental America*, 187-226

D. W. Meinig, "Populations and Peoples," *Transcontinental America*, 265-280

Edward Ayers, "What We Talk About When We Talk About the South" in

*All Over the Map*, 62-82

Work to be turned in today:

See Assignment #3. February 28, you should bring to class Sanborn maps of your street and be able to show how a section changed (or remained the same) over time.

Research to be completed this week:

See Assignment #3. By March 14, you should have completed your research in city directories. Bring a draft map to class to demonstrate your preliminary results. If you can, relate them back to the material changes you talked about in our last meeting.

March 7, Spring Break

March 14, Week 9, *Richmond's Hidden Histories I*

Reading to be discussed today:

Elsa Barkley Brown and Gregg Kimball, "Mapping the Terrain of Black Richmond," *Journal of Urban History*, 296-346;

Work to be turned in today:

See Assignment #3. By March 14, you should have completed your research in city directories. Bring a draft map to class to demonstrate your preliminary results. If you can, relate them back to the material changes you talked about in our last meeting.

Research to be completed this week:

See Assignment #3. Prepare a draft in time to meet with our writing consultant!

March 21, Week 10, *Hidden Richmond II*

Reading to be discussed today:

Beth Marschak and Alex Lorch, *Lesbian and Gay Richmond*, Selections

Work to be turned in today:

Assignment #3 due.

Research to be completed this week:

See Assignment # 4. To start with, look in the Valentine Richmond History Center's photo archive for images of Richmond to get a sense of their collection of photographs. Select one photograph from their site, dealing with the your street, if possible, and post it to the blog along with a brief (one or two paragraphs) analysis of what the image tells us about Richmond, its citizens, and the spaces they created.

March 28, Week 11, *Mapping Richmond's Streets*

Reading to be discussed today:

Marie Tyler-McGraw, "Tollbooths and the Costs of Change," *At the Falls*, 276-297

Robert K. Nelson et al., *Redlining Richmond*

Work to be turned in today:

Look in the Valentine Richmond History Center's photo archive for images of Richmond to get a sense of their collection of photographs. Select one photograph from their site, dealing with the your street, if possible, and post it to the blog along with a brief (one or two paragraphs) analysis of what the image tells us about Richmond, its citizens, and the spaces they created.

Research to be completed this week:

See Assignment #4. This week, you will set aside time to visit the Valentine during its normal business hours. While there, you will identify two or three photographs that you can use as primary sources for your essay and ask the Valentine staff to scan the images. You will come to class April 4 able to discuss these images, point out where they are on a map, and if they have been scanned in time, show them to the class. Be prepared to present a preliminary thesis for your essay on your slice of mid-century Richmond.

April 4, Week 12, Suburbs and the City

Reading to be discussed today:

Kenneth T. Jackson, "Federal Subsidy and the Suburban Dream: How Washington Changed the American Housing Market" *Crabgrass Frontier*, 190-218.

Matthew D. Lassiter, “De Jure/De Facto Segregation: The Long Shadow of a National Myth” in *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism*.

Research to be completed this week:  
Work on Assignment #4.

April 11, Week 13, The Future of Richmond’s Landscapes (class will not meet this week)  
Civil War and Emancipation Days, April 15-17. Finish assignment #4, due April 18.

April 18, Week 14,

Reading to be discussed:

New York Times, Mapping America.

<http://projects.nytimes.com/census/2010/explorer>

Becky Nicolaides, “How hell moved from the city to the suburbs: urban scholars and changing perceptions of authentic community” in Kevin Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue, eds., *The New Suburban History*

Work to be turned in today:

Assignment #4.

Research to be completed for the final exam:

In lieu of a final exam, we will look at Richmond’s history in place. We will take a walking tour of our streets, led by you, with the help of the images you have uploaded to our course website. Each student will have three minutes to digest for us the long history of their street as we tour Richmond, starting at UR Downtown and eventually ending up there again. You will also prepare a 7-10 page essay synthesizing your research this semester to give a long history of your street.

Final Presentations:

In lieu of a final exam, we will look at Richmond’s history in place. We will take a walking tour of our streets, led by you, with the help of the images you have uploaded to our course website. Each student will have three minutes to digest for us the long history of their street as we tour Richmond, starting at UR Downtown and eventually ending up there again.