LMC 6650 PROJECT STUDIO | FALL 2016

DATA DOCUMENTARY

Wednesdays, 2:05PM-4:55PM, TSRB 209
(meets with Span 4813, led by Juan Carlos Rodríguez)

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Office Hours: Tues/Wed 11:00am-12:00pm, TSRB 318A

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This project studio will introduce students to data documentary. An emergent form of digital storytelling, data documentary combines data visualization with complimentary video, audio and/or text-based narratives. The course will be part seminar, part studio. Early in the term, we will discuss theories and examples of data visualization and documentary film/video. Thereafter, we will collaborate with students in Professor Juan Carlos Rodríguez's course, Span 4813: *Latino Immigrants in Documentary*, to develop a series of data documentaries focused on Buford Highway, an area of northeast Atlanta.

Buford Highway is a corridor that connects various cities in Metro Atlanta (Brookhaven, Chamblee, Doraville). But it is also one of the most multicultural, ethnically and linguistically diverse areas in the city—known for its Latino, Asian, and African restaurants. Since 2012, with the creation of the neighboring city of Brookhaven, Buford Highway has been experiencing rapid change. These changes have coincided with shifts in immigration policy at the state, regional, and national level, all of which have impacted the communities in Buford Highway. Our data documentaries will explore how residents deal with these urban and policy changes while living in a place that is the product of conflicting meanings and competing visions.

The course will equip students with the skills and experiences necessary to tell stories with (and about) data in an urban context. Prior experience with visual design and computer programming (Java or JavaScript) is encouraged. Enrollment will be limited to 12.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will learn to examine data as cultural artifacts, inextricably tied to information infrastructures and the details of their social, historical and material context.

- Students will learn to speak effectively about the ethics, aesthetics and epistemology of data.
- Students will develop skills for creating and critiquing visualizations of large data sets for public audiences.
- Students will learn about the opportunities and pitfalls in using visualization as a means of illuminating large data sets.
- Students will learn to frame questions about data and develop their own answers through a combination of design and social science methods.

ASSIGNMENTS

There are two types of assignments in this course:

Readings will structure the theoretical portion of the course. Each student should complete readings before class and submit a written response online. Clear instructions will be given at the time the reading assignment is made. All reading selections listed on the syllabus are tentative. Additional readings may be assigned as supporting material along with projects and written assignments.

Projects are substantial efforts meant to develop your capacity to conceptualize and execute creative works in data visualization. This requires the merger of technical expertise and creative vision. Projects also demand that you identify and describe a creative goal, such that I can evaluate your work against your stated objective. Attention to detail in execution is appreciated, but rougher-edged well-conceived work is encouraged over very polished, unimaginative work.

GRADING

Grades will be given based on completeness and excellence, distributed as follows:

25% Participation
25% Preliminary project
50% Final project

Grades for projects will be distributed A-F with +/- modifiers used sparingly. Roughly speaking, an assignment will be excellent (A), good (B), satisfactory (C), unsatisfactory (D), or failing (F). Submissions that meet only the basic requirements of the assignment will receive a "C". C means "satisfactory." Submissions that meet all the requirements of the assignment and are executed with additional care, creativity, and coherence will receive a "B." To receive an "A" on assignments (and therefore, in the course), submissions must go above and beyond the basic requirements, showing exceptional care, creativity, and coherence. Submissions that fail to meet the requirements of the assignment or whose execution is incomplete or inadequate will receive a "D" or below.

Deadlines All assignments will include submission instructions and a due date. Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade per day. Assignments turned in on the due date, but after the specified deadline will be penalized half a letter grade. Extensions will only be granted in extreme circumstances (i.e. serious illness, family emergency). Failure to complete any of the projects may be grounds for a failing grade.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

Students are encouraged to bring their laptops to class. It is important to keep in mind that this class focuses on the principles and processes of visualization, not on technical skills; it is therefore up to you to develop and/or hone your facility with any tools required to complete assignments.

Attendance Students are required to attend and actively participate in all classes. Failing to attend 4 or more classes is grounds for a failing grade.

Readings and Materials will be distributed electronically via T-Square, email, or another readily available means. Some readings will be linked directly from the syllabus. Any materials not linked here can be found in the T-Square resources. Additional materials for projects will be distributed electronically. You will need your own laptop computer (Windows or Mac).

DEBATE, DIVERSITY, AND RESPECT

In this class, we will present and discuss a diversity of perspectives. Although you may not always agree with others' perspectives, you are required to be respectful of others' values and beliefs. Repeated inappropriate or abusive comments and/or behavior will be cause for disciplinary action. If you feel that your perspectives are being ignored or slighted, or you in anyway feel uncomfortable in the classroom, please contact me immediately.

THE COMMUNICATION CENTER

The Communication Center is located in Clough Commons, Suite 447. It is an excellent resource for any student (undergraduate or graduate) who wants help with a communication-related project. You can visit the center for help at any stage of the process for any project in any discipline. The knowledgeable and friendly tutors are available to help you develop and revise your projects. They are not available to "fix" your projects. Please do not ask the tutors to proofread or edit your work. For information on making an appointment please visit http://communicationcenter.gatech.edu/content/makeappointment. If you need assistance with the appointment system, you can call 404-385-3612 or stop by the center. All services are free and confidential.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students should self-report to the Access Disabled Assistance Program for Tech Students at: 220 Student Services Building Atlanta, GA 30332-0285 404.894.2564 (voice) or 404.894.1664 (voice/TDD) www.adapts.gatech.edu/guidebook.html

PLAGIARISM WARNING

Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated, and will result in a failing grade for the course. Plagiarism is not only the uncredited copying of text from another's work but also copying ideas or code from other digital artifacts. Adaptation of code samples (provided or found online) is not necessarily plagiarism. To facilitate your success on projects, I will try to provide sample code or links to other samples. However, explicitly copying entire algorithms or sample applications and representing them as your own is not permitted. Use sample code and online resources as tutorials to help you write your own original code. Copying more than 10% of a code sample will be considered plagiarism.

Having said that, students are encouraged to share and critique each others' work. You are allowed (and encouraged!) to work together with other students, but collaboration is only permitted on group projects. On all other assignments, you are expected to complete and turn in your own work. Students may not submit work on another's behalf. Unauthorized use of any previous semester course materials is prohibited. Violating these terms will be considered a direct violation of academic policy and will be dealt with according to the GT Academic Honor Code.

SCHEDULE

Details about forthcoming assignments will be added to this syllabus weekly, so you will need to check it regularly. This schedule is subject to change at any time. Updates and changes will be announced in class or by email to students.

WK 1 |August 24   What is Data Documentary?   (with Span 4813)

    2:00-4:00   Welcome and Introductions

    4:00-5:00   Breakout: Discuss Syllabus and Course Requirements

WK 2 | August 31   Documentary and US Latino Culture   (with Span 4813)

    2:00-3:00   No Breakout Session

    3:00-4:00   Overview of Documentary

Due: [Watch] *Harvest of Empire*
directed by Peter Getzels and Eduardo López
Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6AQ2mOaG7Q

[Watch] *Sin País*
directed by Theo Rigby
Link: https://vimeo.com/12434551

WK 3 | September 7 Visualization and Urban Data (with Span 4813)

2:00-4:00   Overview of Visualization

Due: [Watch] The Anti-Eviction Mapping Project
http://www.antievictionmap.com/

[Read] Documentary and Data Visualization
PDF on T-Square

[Read] Critical Visualization by Peter Hall
PDF on T-Square

Guest Visit: Mike Carnathan (Atlanta Regional Commission)

4:00-5:00   Breakout: Working with urban data

WK 4 | September 14: Buford Highway Field Trip (with Span 4813)

2:00   Meet in front of TSRB

2:30-3:30   Latino American Association visit

3:30-4:30   Plaza Fiesta visit

Due: [Read] Overlapping Ethnicities and Negotiated Space:
Atlanta's Buford Highway by Susan M. Walcott
PDF on T-Square

[Read] Imagine our Norcross:
Planning for Immigrant Integration by Anna Joo Kim, et. al.
PDF on T-Square

WK 5 | September 21: Buford Highway Panel Discussion (with Span 4813)

      2:00-4:00   Panel Discussion

      4:00-5:00   Breakout Activity: How to choose precedents

            Due: [Read] Timescape, by Lauren Klein
                           PDF on T-Square

WK 6 | September 28: Prelim Project Introduction

            Due: Precedent Analysis

WK 7 | October 5: Prelim Project Critique

            Due: Preliminary Project First Iteration

WK 8 | October 12: Prelim Project Critique

            Due: Preliminary Project Second Iteration

WK 9 | October 19: Prelim Project Review   (with Span 4813)

            Due: Preliminary Project Third Iteration

WK 10 | October 26: Final Project Introduction   (with Span 4813)

WK 11 | November 2: Final Project Critique   (with Span 4813)

WK 12 | November 9: Final Project Critique   (with Span 4813)

WK 13 | November 16: Final Project Critique   (with Span 4813)

WK 14 | November 23: Thanksgiving Recess

WK 15 | November 30: Final Project Critique and Course Review (with Span 4813)

WK 16 | TBD: Final Review

            Due: Final Project