LMC8803 SPECIAL TOPICS IN DIGITAL MEDIA
DATA, DESIGN, AND SOCIETY

Syllabus, Spr 2023 (3 Credits)

What can data do to us?

Can data enhance our senses, inspire wonder, invite curiosity, unsettle us, induce anxiety, or help us become more resilient? In this project-based graduate course in Digital Media, we will use design as a form of inquiry to explore what data can do to us, not just for us.

In recent years, the fields of data science (computing), data visualization (design) and data studies (humanities and social sciences) have explored how data function instrumentally, as evidence. By this definition, data are rhetorical instruments. They exist to support the rational claims made by scientific, scholarly, commercial, and civic organizations. This perspective on data is important. However, it can overlook questions about how data work experientially, as perceptual and aesthetic artifacts. Indeed, data have an emotional impact, with social implications for what counts as data, where can data work, and who can make use of data. How data make us feel is at least as important to their effectiveness as the logical arguments they support.

Over the course of the term, we will complete a series of design exercises culminating in a final, site-specific data visualization project for the Georgia Tech library's new "media bridge," a large-scale, exterior, high-resolution screen recently

constructed on the central campus. In the process, we will learn about how data can shape the way we feel about important local issues. We will work closely with data-savvy librarians and make use of data sources with direct relevance for our campus community. Prior experience in design or computer programming is welcome, but not required.

OBJECTIVE

To help you build a foundation for working creatively and critically with data.

COVID-19 Accommodations

Are things "back to normal" this semester? Not really. Many of us are still concerned about COVID-19, and its potential long-term effects on our health. Although I will strive to create a stimulating and rewarding learning environment, complications may arise. Dealing with them will require flexibility and mutual trust. Do not hesitate to contact me directly if there is anything you would like to discuss before the beginning of the course or at some later point.

Wearing a mask is one way that we can keep eachother safe (See other recommendations by the CDC). Depending on the local conditions in Atlanta, I may be wearing a mask at our class meetings, and I would recommend that you consider doing so as well.

More importantly, if you have not yet been vaccinated and boosted, I suggest you do so. This will protect you from the worst effects of Covid-19. It will also protect our campus community and (by extension) our families. A variety of vaccines are widely regarded as extremely safe, and they are readily available on campus: https://health.gatech.edu/coronavirus/vaccine

More generally, students are expected to be familiar with and abide by the Institute guidelines, information, and updates related to Covid-19. Find campus operational updates, Frequently Asked Questions, and details on campus surveillance testing and vaccine appointments on the Tech Moving Forward site.

The CARE Center and the Counseling Center, Stamps Health Services, and the Dean of Students Office will offer both in-person and virtual appointments. Student Center services and operations are available on the Student Center website. For more information on these and other student services, contact the Dean of Students or the Division of Student Life.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After taking this course you should be able to do the following:

- Use design to effectively present data in public contexts.
- Contribute to the development of new genres and forms of digital media.
- Create digital media with an awareness of history, audience, and context.
- Appreciate and evaluate future trends in the development of digital media.

ASSIGNMENTS

The purpose of assignments is to give you regular, repeated practice exercising the course goals. There are several types of assignments in this course: reading responses, exercises, and a final project.

Reading Responses

Regular readings will structure the theoretical portion of the course. Each student should complete readings and prepare a short, written response (200-300

words for each reading) which can be submitted in the Teams personal notebook. Your responses should address the following questions:

- What would you say is the main question or claim of the reading?
- What kind of evidence do the authors use to answer their question or support their claim? In your own words, describe an easily graspable example of this evidence.
- Pose a question that you have about this evidence or the activities used to produce it.

For parts of the course, we will be using a textbook: Meirelles, Isabel. 2013. *Design for Information.* It is is available for free online via the Georgia Tech library: https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gatech/detail.action?docID=3399922&pq-origsite=primo

All reading selections listed on the syllabus are tentative. Additional readings may be assigned as supporting material.

Design Exercises

There will be multiple short design exercises at the beginning of the term. Instructions will be provided for each. We will work on these iteratively, and you will be expected to adjust or even reimagine your designs in response to regular feedback.

Final Studio Project

The final project will focus on using digital media to explore new forms of engagement with data.

Grading

Reading responses and design exercises will be graded according to a contract model. If you complete all parts of the assignment, you will get full points. Points will be deducted only if you are missing components of the assignment. Class participation is expected, but not explicitly graded. The final project will be given a letter grade (A-F), according to a rubric distributed with the assignment. Your overall grade for the class will be calculated as follows:

20% Reading Responses
30% Exercises
50% Final Project

Deadlines

All assignments will include submission instructions and a due date. Failure to complete a number of readings, exercises, or the final project may be grounds for a failing grade.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all sessions and actively participate in all classes.

Readings and Materials

Readings will be distributed electronically. You will need your own laptop computer (Windows or Mac) as well as access to a strong network connection.

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For information on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit: http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/ or http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/. Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the course. This is not only the uncredited copying of text from another's work but also copying ideas or code from other digital artifacts. However, adaptation of code samples (provided or found online) is not necessarily plagiarism, as long as it is appropriately credited. Having said that, students are encouraged to share and critique each other's work. You are allowed (and encouraged!) to work together with other students, but collaboration is only permitted when specified. 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.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that requires special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404)894-2563 or http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/, as soon as possible, to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

It is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/ for an articulation of some basic expectation that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek.

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 expected to be respectful of others' values and beliefs. Repeated inappropriate or abusive comments and/or behavior will be addressed accordingly. 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 paper. With the pandemic underway, the communication center is continually revising its practices. 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. All services are free and confidential.

ASSIGNMENTS

C1 = Case Study 1 Spatial Structures
C2 = Case Study 2 Temporal Structures
C3 = Case Study 3 Spatio-temporal Structures
C4 = Case Study 4 Recontextualization
E1 = Exercise 1 - Spatial Information Design
E2 = Exercise 2 - Temporal Information Design
E3 = Exercise 3 - Information Recontextualization
FP = Final Project

SCHEDULE

DATE	Format	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
Week 1	**Introduction**		
Monday, January 9	Overview	Syllabus	
Wednesday, January 11	Discussion	Meirelles, Isabel. 2013. *Design for Information* (Introduction) Kennedy, H. and Hill, R.L. (2017) "The Feeling of Numbers"	E1 Assigned C1 Assigned
Week 2	**Spatial Information 1**		
Monday, January 16	MLK Day		
Wednesday, January 18	Critique	Kevin Lynch. 1960. *The Image of the City* (Introduction)	E1 Draft A Due
Week 3	**Spatial Information 2**		

Monday, January 23	Case Study 1	Meirelles, Isabel. 2013. *Design for Information* (Ch4 - Spatial Structures)	C1 Due C2 Assigned
Wednesday, January 25	Tutorial: Adobe AfterEffects *(Meet in Crosland Tower 2130)*		E1 Draft B Due C2 Assigned
Week 4	**Temporal Information 1**		
Monday, January 30	Review		E1 Final Due
Wednesday, February 1	Case Study 2	Meirelles, Isabel. 2013. *Design for Information* (Ch 3 - Temporal Structures)	C2 Due E2 Assigned
Week 5	**Temporal Information 2**		
Monday, February 6	Artist Reception		
Wednesday, February 8			E2 Draft Due
Week 6	**Recontextualizing Information 1**		
Monday, February 13	Case Study 3	Philips, Tom. 1973. Humument. ([Introduction](#)) Optional: [Book review](#)	C3 Due
Wednesday, February 15	Review		E2 Final Due E3 Assigned
Week 7	**Recontextualizing Information 2**		
Monday, February 20	Critique		E3 Draft
Wednesday, February 22	Critique (continued)		
Week 8	**Final Project Introduction**		
Monday, February 27	Review		E3 Due
Wednesday, March 1	Final Project Introduced	Suggested References: Matthew Battles and Jeffrey Schnapp. 2014.	FP Assigned

Library Beyond the Book.

Sianne Ngai. 2015 *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zanny, Cute, Interesting.*

Parry, Kyle 2022. *A Theory of Assembly.*

Week 9	**Final Project Meetings**	
Monday, March 6	Critique	FP Proposal Draft
Wednesday, March 8	Critique (continued)	
Week 10	**Final Project Proposal**	
Monday, March 13	Review	FP Proposal Due
Wednesday, March 15 *Withdraw Date	Review (continued)	
Week 11	**Spring Break**	
Monday, March 20	No Class	
Wednesday, March 22	No Class	
Week 12	**Final Project Workshops**	
Monday, March 27	Individual Meetings	
Wednesday, March 29	Individual Meetings (continued)	
Week 13	**Final Project Mid-Review**	
Monday, April 3	Review	FP First Draft Due
Wednesday, April 5	Review (continued)	
Week 14	**Final Project Workshops**	
Monday, April 10	Skill Share	
Wednesday, April 12	Skill Share (continued)	
Week 15	**Final Project Pre-Review**	
Monday, April 17	Review	FP Second Draft Due

Wednesday, April 19	Review (continued)	
Week 16	**Reflection**	
Monday, April 24		
Exam Week	**Final Project Final Review**	**FP Final Due**