THEMATIC REFERENCE MAP PROJECT

Week 4-5
Cartographic Design
Spring 2017
OBJECTIVE

Create and defend a map layout design that helps people learn and understand the geographic context of a spatial narrative. Your tasks are to:

(1) Choose a published spatial narrative (a story that refers to a series of different places or geographic features). Try to pick a story that you think could be made more readable if the places and geographic features in the story were depicted in geographic relation to each other and other things. Examples of spatial narratives include:

(a) a guidebook (like Rock Climbs of Acadia main map and locator map)
(b) a journey by an individual, group or event across space and time (like One Man's Escape from Syria or Collision Course)
(c) an article or story about a region that makes references to many different locations (like Far-Flung Parks) or where the central theme of the narrative could be better contextualized with a map of the larger region (like Displaced by War).

(2) Sketch a layout with pen or pencil and make a preliminary plan for the design by identifying patterns and principles that you think you will implement. Please refer directly to:

(a) any of the patterns in the handout from 3/7 lecture,
(b) any of the principles that you identified in the first three weeks of the course for graphic variables, perceptual color theory and positioning names on maps.

(3) Implement your design plan for the spatial narrative by creating a layout that could be included in the book, magazine, or journal where the narrative was originally published.

(4) In a concise statement, please explain the decisions that you made when setting up and solving your design problem. Please refer directly to the patterns from the handout and the principles from the first three weeks of the course as described above.

CONSTRAINTS

Your map layout should help people think across scales by including two maps at different scales. For example, one map could depict the larger geographic context of a region while the second map could provide details of the region.

Your map layout should not include a detailed depiction of terrain that requires a hillshade or other method of shaded relief.

SCHEDULE

March 9 lecture: Bring (1) a reference for the narrative you will map, (2) a sketch of your layout that reflects your thinking about the layout's composition (the things that you will need to show) and configuration (how you will arrange these things on the layout itself), and (3) a list of the patterns and principles that you plan to implement.

The sketch should be sketchy (don’t worry about a lot of detail on coastlines, etc). Your goal is to just think visually and spatially about the basic composition and configuration. Your goal is not to create a detailed, hand-drawn version of the map that you will eventually make with AI.

The list of patterns should include a brief statement for each item that describes how you will implement the pattern. For example, your “How will you know you’re done” pattern should present a list of the questions that you want your map to help your audience answer. Your “Simplify the World” pattern should identify the list of features you’ll need to show. Your “Visual Hierarchy” should convey the intellectual hierarchy of these features. And so on.

The sketch and pattern list are meant to prepare you to work more efficiently on data compilation and map design in Thurs lab and over the weekend.

March 14 lecture: Bring (1) your map layout for the crit, (2) your original sketch, and (3) a final list of all the relevant patterns and principles with brief statements for each item that describes how you implemented them.

EVALUATION

The main components for evaluation are:

(1) Did you choose to develop a good case: a narrative that could be enhanced or made more informative by pairing with a good map? Is the case not too simplistic but not overly complicated so that it is appropriately worth doing and do-able in a week?

(2) Did you develop a thoughtful sketch and plan that prepares you to work efficiently when compiling necessary data and creating the design?

(3) Does the layout work? Is the purpose, audience and context clear? Are the geographic frameworks appropriate? Does it deliver an elegant visual argument? Does lettering, line work, color and graphic variables all follow principles?

(4) Do you clearly, thoughtfully and thoroughly articulate the decisions that you made during the process of making your layout? Do you thoroughly identify patterns from the handout that are found in your work? Do you clearly identify principles from the first three weeks that can be found in your work?