



## Geography 478/678: Spatial Storytelling

Dear mappers and storytellers,

Welcome to Geo 478/678: Spatial Storytelling! I'm so happy you are here to think about mapping as a form of storytelling! Maps are being used now more than ever to visualize and share past, present, and futures stories. In this class, you will develop a storytelling toolkit that can be used to map a variety of pressing stories.

This is an interdisciplinary and hands-on course with 10 undergraduate and 10 graduate students joining from across campus with varying backgrounds, interests, and skillsets. Importantly, mapping experience is not required to be successful in this course! I simply ask that you put in the work and be open to creative mapping methods. If you've taken GIScience courses before, this one might look and feel a bit different. For those in this camp, trust the process and be open to trying a slightly different approach. In this class, we will work collectively to support one another as we learn new concepts and skills, expand our existing toolkits, and/or think about spatial storytelling and maps in new ways. You will walk away from this class with a digital portfolio of maps (i.e., website) tailored to a story that you select.

I have reserved the Lyman 219 computer lab and the Community Geography space in Lyman 215 depending on our needs. The locations for each class period are available on the [class schedule](#). Our first meeting is on Monday, January 13 from 12:45-2:05pm in Lyman 219 computer lab. You will need to swipe your SUID for room access. Please review the syllabus and schedule (available on Blackboard) ahead of our first class.

It is my goal to support you as best as I can this semester. I will keep Blackboard and our course materials up-to-date and will send announcements and reminders via email. Please check your email and Blackboard routinely. If you have any questions, concerns, or excitement for this class you want to share, please contact me!

I look forward to meeting you all soon.

With care,  
Meghan Kelly (she/her)

## Geography 478/678: Spatial Storytelling

## Course Details

Spring 2024, Mondays and Wednesdays 12:45–2:05pm

Classroom: Marley 218 and Lyman 219 (check [our schedule](#) for day-by-day locations)

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Credits: 3.0

## Instructor and Course Support

Dr. Meghan Kelly (she/her/hers)

Email: [mkelly51@syr.edu](mailto:mkelly51@syr.edu)

Website: [meghankelly-cartography.github.io](https://meghankelly-cartography.github.io)

## Office Hours

Mondays 2:05–3:05pm (Marley 218 after class)

Wednesdays 2:05–3:05pm (Lyman 215 after class)

Or by appointment

Office hours are a time when you can ask questions related to course content, readings, or assignments, troubleshoot tech issues, and receive feedback on your maps. We can also discuss the broader field of cartography, geography, and/or intersections with your field of study. My office hours are held in an open space (Lyman 215). Folks have previously used my office hours for dedicated work time where I am available as questions emerge. If you would like to have a one-on-one conversation to discuss more personal matters like grades, concerns with the class, or anything that you'd like to share privately, please let me know. We will move to a private space for conversation. If you cannot make it to my office hours because you have a conflict, please email me and we can find another time that works for both of us. In sum, I will be available during my office hours to support you in your mapping endeavors.

## Communication and Peer Support

Course communication will occur through email, office hours, and online discussion platforms.

- I will communicate with students via Blackboard announcements and email. Please check your email regularly.
- Questions, concerns, or feedback should be directed to me via email. I respond to student emails within 48 hours during the work week (Monday–Friday). I cannot guarantee an email response over the weekend.
- Slack is an industry standard online messaging platform designed for communication, collaboration, and sharing! Students can utilize Slack to support each other throughout the semester. Students can use this platform to ask each other questions, provide feedback, share drafts, and troubleshoot technologies in real-time. I will have access to Slack, but this is largely your space to work together! Signing up for Slack is optional, but if you are interested, you can [join our workspace here](#).

We will discuss how we want to engage as a community in-person and online during Week 1.

## Course Description

Techniques and impacts of spatial storytelling from a geohumanities perspective. Ways of conceptualizing space, time, and realities. Study and practice with maps, texts, images, video, and other visualization techniques. Additional work required of graduate students.

### ***Additional Course Description***

Maps and stories go hand in hand. In the simplest form, maps can be descriptive locating people, places, and events, and can be used to supplement written or multimedia stories. Maps also can tell stories through their analytical capacities, illustrating patterns, relationships, and nuance between datasets and their geographies. They can be dynamic, showing flows of people or sequences of events over time and space. Maps can be imaginative, creating fictional and fantastical geographies of other possible worlds. Perhaps most importantly, maps are powerful storytellers and can express everyday experiences, past and present, pushing the bounds of cartographic language and conventional mapmaking. And while they (too often) express dominant world views, maps can also share stories at the margins in intentional and expansive ways.

This is an advanced cartography course that draws from the humanities, social sciences, and sciences to examine the power of maps as storytelling devices. More specifically, this course explores the theory and practice of sharing stories with maps from a variety of perspectives ranging from narrative mapping and qualitative GIS in the geohumanities to data-driven storytelling in cartography, journalism, and data science. This course is split between short lectures and discussion on Mondays and hands-on mapping activities on Wednesdays. Students will select a story aligned with their research or personal interests and will iteratively re-express their story using a series of interdisciplinary narrative and storytelling techniques reflecting upon their process and independent mapping project in an online digital portfolio.

### ***Prerequisite/Co-requisite***

There are no prerequisites or co-requisites for this course.

### ***Audience***

This course is geared towards undergraduate and graduate students interested in the theory and practice of telling stories with maps from a variety of interdisciplinary approaches. All disciplines are welcome.

### ***Course Fees and/or Costs***

None.

### ***Learning Outcomes***

By the end of this course, students will be able to...

- Understand and evaluate maps and stories as expressions of power

- Identify and discuss core concepts related to mapping and spatial storytelling from a variety of perspectives
- Identify and assess spatial data (both qualitative, quantitative, and everything in-between) that can be used to map stories
- Discuss and apply a series of spatial storytelling and mapping techniques to tell a story related to your research or personal interests
- Evaluate and compare spatial storytelling and mapping techniques
- Evaluate and reflect upon power in mapping and storytelling processes in multiple forms
- Support and provide meaningful feedback to peers throughout the mapping process
- Create a digital portfolio that collates and reflects upon spatial storytelling and mapping techniques introduced in the course

This course aligns with the [SU Shared Competencies](#) in two areas:

- *Information Literacy & Technological Agility:* Identification, collection, evaluation, and responsible use of information. Effective, ethical, and critical application of various technologies and media in academic, creative, personal, and professional endeavors.
- *Communication Skills:* Effective individual, interpersonal, and collaborative presentation and development of ideas through oral, written, and other forms of expression to inform, persuade, or inspire.

### Required Texts and Software

Readings will be assigned and posted to Blackboard weekly.

This course is software agnostic. In other words, there are no required software programs or materials for this course. Students will be introduced to two tools for mapping (i.e., [Felt](#) and the [Adobe Creative Suite](#)) but will select mapping tools and/or materials that best suit their needs to complete mapping activities and mapping assignments. Supplementary support including tutorials will be provided where possible and as needed. Importantly, this course relies on the independent exploration of software and course materials.

### Course Requirements and Expectations

This is a cartographic studio course that brings theory into hands-on practice. Participation and engagement with course concepts and readings is equally important as the participation and engagement with the hands-on creative mapping activities and assignments. Mondays will be reserved for (short) lectures and group-based discussion of assigned readings that will be posted to Blackboard weekly. In their sketchbooks, students will complete a reflection related to the readings before class to support in-person discussion. Wednesdays will be reserved for hands-on mapping activities. Mapping activities are comprised of “before class” and “during class” activities. Mapping activities are largely participation-based and students will submit documentation of completion each week.

In the first four weeks of this course, students will select a story based on their personal and/or research interests that they will engage with throughout the semester. As such, this course is much like an independent study where everyone’s story and everyone’s maps will be different requiring self-direction in- and outside of the classroom. Importantly, mapping is never a solo endeavor and students will also rely on peer support and feedback along the way.

### **Content Warning**

As mentioned in the description of this course, maps are being used now more than ever to express critical stories of our time (e.g., climate change, COVID-19, political polarization, ongoing racial injustice, land occupation etc. that intersect in varying ways). As such, the course readings, class discussion, and stories used in this course may generate intellectual and emotional discomfort. I will do my best to share content warnings throughout the semester and invite you to leave the classroom as needed. If, however, your emotional response becomes acute psychological distress (i.e., triggering), please do reach out. I invite you to contact me if you have concerns in this regard.

### **Grading**

Students will be assessed using the categories and weighted percentages below. Please note that there are no tests or exams in this course. As such, it is important for students to dedicate time and energy to readings, reflections, mapping activities, map assignments with reflections, presentations, portfolio elements, and final portfolio.

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Description</b>
<p><b>Reflections and Mapping Activities</b>                      Weekly reflections                      Weekly mapping activities                      Attendance for presentations</p>	<b>30%</b>	<p>To support class discussion, students will submit short reflections on assigned readings ahead of class on Mondays. To support mapping activities, students will submit documentation of their work at the end of class on Wednesdays. Sketchbooks will be provided for reading reflections and mapping activities. Reading reflections and mapping activities will be assessed on a three-tier scale (e.g., less than satisfactory, satisfactory, and more than satisfactory scale). Reflections and mapping activities are largely related to preparation and participation. As such, late reflections or mapping activities without communication will not receive credit. Students can miss a total of two reflections or mapping activities without impacting their grade. Finally, attendance during presentations will count towards this category.</p> <p><i>Shout out to Calissa Brown for brainstorming and validating the use of sketchbooks in class!</i></p>
<p><b>Maps with Reflections</b>                      4 maps with reflections for undergrads                      5 maps with reflections for grads</p>	<b>40%</b>	<p>Each week students will complete mapping activities (outlined above) that explore spatial storytelling techniques. Undergraduate students must refine and expand 4 of these mapping activities into final maps. Graduate students must refine and expand 5 of these mapping activities into final maps. Each map will be accompanied by a process reflection. Students will</p>

		submit their map assignments throughout the semester for feedback. Revised maps will be compiled into an online portfolio (detailed below). Students will automatically receive a 48-hour extension on one map assignment with no questions asked. If extensions are needed on the remaining lab assignments, students are required to email me in advance (i.e., before the deadline) to agree on an alternative submission deadline. Late lab assignments without communication will not receive credit.
<b>Storytelling Technique</b> Presentation	<b>10%</b>	There are copious ways to express spatial stories. Students will research one spatial storytelling technique not covered in class and give a 10-minute presentation outlining core elements of the technique. Students may utilize their technique as one of their maps with reflections from above.  <i>Shout out to Rachel Ameen for suggesting a buffet of presentations highlighting additional storytelling techniques!</i>
<b>Portfolio</b> Story Intro Sketch Maps Reflexivity Statement Wireframes Show and Tell Final Portfolio with Revised Maps	<b>20%</b>	Students will compile their map assignments and corresponding reflections into an online portfolio. Portfolios will also include an introduction to the chosen story, sketch maps of storied elements, and a positionality statement, all of which will be submitted for preliminary assessment and feedback. Several user-friendly platforms for creating online portfolios will be provided (e.g., WordPress) and discussed. Students will submit wireframes or early sketches of their portfolios and will present a nearly complete portfolio on the last day of class for one final round of feedback.  <i>Shout out to Kelly Montague and Ananya Krishnamurthee for brainstorming portfolio platforms that we can use in this class!</i>

### Grade Breaks

Grades will be assigned using percentages and grade breaks below. Please note that grades of D will not be assigned to graduate students

A	93-100
A-	90-92.9
B+	87-89.9
B	83-86.9
B-	80-82.9
C+	77-79.9
C	73-76.9
C-	70-72.9
D	60-69.9
F	less than 60

### Submitting Assignments

Sketchbooks will be regularly collected to assess reading reflections and mapping activities. We will use Blackboard to submit all of course assignments including map assignments with

reflections, presentations, portfolio elements, and final portfolios. When submitting materials, please note that Blackboard is on Eastern Time.

### ***Late Work Policy***

Late reflections and mapping activities will only be accepted if students email me in advance (i.e., before the deadline) to agree on an alternative submission deadline. Late reflections or mapping activities without communication will not receive credit. Students can miss a total of two reflections or mapping activities without impacting their grade.

Map assignments with reflections are due throughout the semester. Students will automatically receive a 48-hour extension on one map assignment if their choosing with no questions asked. If extensions are needed on the remaining lab assignments, students are required to email me in advance (i.e., before the deadline) to agree on an alternative submission deadline. Late lab assignments without communication will not receive credit.

In sum, I am more than happy to work with you on deadlines if we are in communication! If you anticipate prolonged absences in this course or your assignments begin to snowball, please reach out. We can develop a plan to support your progress in this course.

### ***Attendance***

Attendance and engagement during class directly support the learning goals of this course. Attendance will be noted during each class. Students with an attendance record over 90% will receive a boost in their final grade if they are on a grade boundary. If you anticipate prolonged absences in this course, please keep me in the loop as much as you can, and we can develop a plan to support your progress in this course.

### **Course Schedule and Deadlines**

The working schedule for this class is available on Blackboard. The specifics of this schedule and deadlines are subject to change. I will notify you with changes.

### **University Policies**

#### ***University Expectation Regarding Attendance***

Attendance in classes is expected in all courses at Syracuse University. Students are expected to arrive on campus in time to attend the first meeting of all classes for which they are registered. Students who do not attend classes starting with the first scheduled meeting may be academically withdrawn as not making progress toward degree by failure to attend. Instructors set course-specific policies for absences from scheduled class meetings in their syllabi (see above). Students should also review the university's religious observance policy and make the required arrangements at the beginning of each semester.

If a student is unable to participate in-person or virtually for an extended period of time (48 hours or more), the student may request an absence notification from their home school/college Dean's Office or through Student Outreach and Support office. Instructors will be notified via the "Absence Notification" flag in Orange SSuccess.

Barnes Center at the Arch (Health, Counseling, etc.) staff will not provide medical excuse notes for students. When Barnes Center staff determine it is medically necessary to remove a student from classes, they will coordinate with Student Outreach and Support case management staff to provide appropriate notification to faculty through Orange Success. For absences lasting less than 48 hours, students are encouraged to discuss academic arrangements directly with their faculty.

### ***Academic Integrity***

As a pre-eminent and inclusive student-focused research institution, Syracuse University considers academic integrity at the forefront of learning, serving as a core value and guiding pillar of education. Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy provides students with the necessary guidelines to complete academic work with integrity throughout their studies. Students are required to uphold both course-specific and university-wide academic integrity expectations such as crediting your sources, doing your own work, communicating honestly, and supporting academic integrity. The full Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy can be found by visiting [class.syr.edu](http://class.syr.edu), selecting, "Academic Integrity," and "Expectations and Policy."

Upholding Academic Integrity includes the protection of faculty's intellectual property. Students should not upload, distribute, or share instructors' course materials, including presentations, assignments, exams, or other evaluative materials without permission. Using websites that charge fees or require uploading of course material (e.g., Chegg, Course Hero) to obtain exam solutions or assignments completed by others, which are then presented as your own violates academic integrity expectations in this course and may be classified as a Level 3 violation. All academic integrity expectations that apply to in-person assignments, quizzes, and exams also apply online.

Students found in violation of the policy are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered. Students may not drop or withdraw from courses in which they face a suspected violation. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level.

### ***Artificial Intelligence***

Based on the specific learning outcomes and assignments in this course, artificial intelligence is permitted to support data processing and to troubleshoot mapping technologies. See each assignment, quiz, or exam instructions for more information about what artificial intelligence tools are permitted and to what extent, as well as citation requirements. If no instructions are provided for a specific assignment, then no use of any artificial intelligence tool is permitted. Any AI use beyond that which is detailed in course assignments is explicitly prohibited except when documented permission is granted.

### ***Disability***

Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. There may be aspects of the instruction or design of this course

that result in barriers to your inclusion and full participation in this course. I invite any student to contact me to discuss strategies and/or accommodations (academic adjustments) that may be essential to your success and to collaborate with the [Center for Disability Resources \(CDR\)](#) in this process.

If you would like to discuss disability-accommodations or register with CDR, please visit [Center for Disability Resources](#). Please call (315) 443-4498 or email [disabilityresources@syr.edu](mailto:disabilityresources@syr.edu) for more detailed information.

The CDR is responsible for coordinating disability-related academic accommodations and will work with the student to develop an access plan. Since academic accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact CDR as soon as possible to begin this process.

### ***Discrimination or Harassment***

The University does not discriminate and prohibits harassment or discrimination related to any protected category including creed, ethnicity, citizenship, sexual orientation, national origin, sex, gender, pregnancy, disability, marital status, age, race, color, veteran status, military status, religion, sexual orientation, domestic violence status, genetic information, gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender.

Any complaint of discrimination or harassment related to any of these protected bases should be reported to Sheila Johnson-Willis, the University's Chief Equal Opportunity & Title IX Officer. She is responsible for coordinating compliance efforts under various laws including Titles VI, VII, IX and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. She can be contacted at Equal Opportunity, Inclusion, and Resolution Services, 005 Steele Hall, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244-1120; by email: [titleix@syr.edu](mailto:titleix@syr.edu); or by telephone: 315-443-0211.

Federal and state law, and University policy prohibit discrimination and harassment based on sex or gender (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, and retaliation). If a student has been harassed or assaulted, they can obtain confidential counseling support, 24-hours a day, 7 days a week, from the [Sexual and Relationship Violence Response Team](#) at the Counseling Center (315-443-8000, Barnes Center at The Arch, 150 Sims Drive, Syracuse, New York 13244). Incidents of sexual violence or harassment can be reported non-confidentially to the University's Title IX Officer (Sheila Johnson Willis, 315-443-0211, [titleix@syr.edu](mailto:titleix@syr.edu), 005 Steele Hall). Reports to law enforcement can be made to the University's Department of Public Safety (315-443-2224, 005 Sims Hall), the Syracuse Police Department (511 South State Street, Syracuse, New York, 911 in case of emergency or 315-435-3016 to speak with the Abused Persons Unit), or the State Police (844-845-7269). I will seek to keep information you share with me private to the greatest extent possible, but as a professor I have mandatory reporting responsibilities to share information regarding sexual misconduct, harassment, and crimes I learn about with the University's Title IX Officer to help make our campus a safer place for all.

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### ***Faith Tradition Observances***

[Syracuse University's Religious Observances Policy](#) recognizes the diversity of faiths represented in the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their traditions. Under the policy, students are given an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance, provided they notify their instructors no later than the academic drop deadline. For observances occurring before the drop deadline, notification is required at least two academic days in advance. Students may enter their observances in MySlice under Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances/Add a Notification.

### ***Health and Wellness***

Mental health and overall well-being are significant predictors of academic success. As such it is essential that during your college experience you develop the skills and resources effectively to navigate stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health concerns. Please familiarize yourself with the range of resources the Barnes Center provides (<https://ese.syr.edu/bewell/>) and seek out support for mental health concerns as needed. Counseling services are available 24/7, 365 days, at 315-443-8000.

### ***Educational Use of Student Work***

Because I am new-ish to Syracuse University, I intend to use academic work that you complete this semester in subsequent semesters for educational purposes. Before using your work for that purpose, I will either get your written permission or render the work anonymous by removing identifying material.