

**LMC 3206: Studies in Communication and Culture: Data  
Final Assignment: Data-Based Project and Analysis**

*MANDATORY conferences to be held **Tuesday through Thursday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>**.*

*Sign up for a timeslot here: <http://doodle.com/hrb8re6xc4rwn74d>  
Project/analysis due via TSquare no later than **Tuesday, April 30<sup>th</sup> at 11:30am**.*

In the final weeks of the course, we've moved from ideas about visualization, and how the visual representation of a dataset can reflect its content, to ideas about how the representation or reconfiguration of data can challenge or otherwise transform its meaning, or can make a point about a larger theoretical, social, or political issue. Your final assignment is therefore as follows: to conceive of and implement—at least to the proof-of-concept stage—a data-based (not database!) project that performs this function—that is to say, a project that takes a dataset, and a concept or issue associated with that dataset, and represents or reconfigures the data in a way that expresses an argument about it, about visualization, or about data more generally. As with the midterm, you will also provide a written project analysis that explains why you did what you did. Unlike the midterm, you may choose to work in groups, but each group member still must submit an individual project analysis. Should you choose to continue your work on your midterm project, you may do so, but be sure that your re-presentation of that data reflects a new argument about, or takes a new position with respect to the dataset, about visualization, or about data more generally.

Your final submission should include:

1. **A cover sheet** that includes:
  - a. **A list of group members** (if applicable; no more than three people).
  - b. **A breakdown of the points** you want to allocate to the project component of your final; and the points you want to allocate to the analysis component. You may choose between **4-24** points for each part, and be sure that the parts add up to a **total of 28**.
  - c. **A link to your project** (if not included in the submission).
  
2. **Your data-based project.** As indicted above, you may continue to develop your midterm project; or you can start something new. You may choose a fairly circumscribed project, e.g., a single image, as in the midterm; or, you may think big. If your project exceeds the bounds of what can be developed in the month that remains, you may submit a proof-of-concept, a proposal for an installation, etc. Please check with me if you're unsure as to how far to push your project development. Please also check with me if you're unsure as to where to begin. Regardless of the form your final project takes, it should in some way **reflect an argument about, or take a position with respect to the dataset, about visualization, or about data more generally.**

*Assignment continues on the next page...*

3. In a **3-4 page paper** (double spaced; 1” margins; 12pt Times New Roman or equivalent), provide **an analysis of your project**. Your analysis should include:
  - a. A **description of your process** for creating your project: how you selected your data, what tools you employed, what specific role you played in your group (if applicable), etc.
  - b. An **analysis** of how your project expresses its argument, with reference to the themes, issues, projects, and texts that we’ve discussed in the course.

The description of your process need not be longer than a page, which means that the analysis should constitute the majority of your paper. Your analysis should indicate an **in-depth** engagement with the themes, issues, projects, and texts that you choose to explore.

Some topics and questions to consider when conceiving of your project, and when working through your analysis:

- Epistemology. What is the distinction between data and fact, or between data and truth? Can you represent that distinction (or lack thereof) in some way?
- History. Can you use a historical visualization format or style in order to alter the meaning of your data? Alternately, can you take an example of a historical visualization and update it? How is the meaning of the data transformed?
- Structure. How might the structure of a timeline, a network, a hierarchy, etc., add additional meaning to your data, or alter it in some way?
- Theory. Do all network diagrams look the same, as Alex Galloway posits? Do all lists convey hierarchy, as Alex Wright believes? What is the relationship between you and your “data double,” as Rita Raley terms it? Can you challenge the dataveillance that takes place around you through a new form of couterveillance?
- Identity. Can you present your personal data in form that says something about you, or, at a meta-level, about what your data says about you? (Think here of Stephen Wolfram and the Feltron Reports).
- Art. Can you transform your data into a “data diary,” a la Cory Archangel? Or another abstract form that shifts the significance of your data from concrete meaning to aesthetic impact?
- Narrative. Can you tell a story with your data, like Egan’s PowerPoint slides?
- Publics. Can you present data in way that’s useful for the public, or that offers comment on a shared political, cultural, or national event?

These topics and themes are intended to get you started thinking—not to think for you! Please be sophisticated and creative in conceptualizing your project, and articulating its aims. Please also come talk to me if the assignment seems daunting, or if you’re not sure where to start. And a final, standard note:

Your project should be focused, and your analysis should integrate examples with evidence. You should demonstrate an awareness of the implications—and limitations—of your argument, and you should consider multiple perspectives when appropriate. Above all, your project should reflect the culmination of your thinking about the issues addressed in this unit of the course; it will be evaluated accordingly.