

LMC 3206: Studies in Communication and Culture: Data
Second Midterm Assignment: Data Visualization Project and Analysis

*Project due via TSquare no later than **Thursday, March 7th at 3:00pm.***

In this unit, we've turned from the concept of data to the concept of visualization, asking questions about the practical, rhetorical, and theoretical functions of various visualization modes. We've also examined the historical, scientific, and social contexts that gave rise to modern forms of data visualization, as well as examples of visualizations from those long-ago time periods. Your second midterm assignment (aka the real midterm) is in some ways quite simple: to create a visualization that is in some way informed by the conceptual, theoretical, and/or historical issues that we've discussed, and then provide a written project analysis that explains why you did what you did. The reality is that it's a little more complicated. Your midterm submission should therefore include the following components:

1. **A cover sheet** that includes:
 - a. **A breakdown of the points** you want to allocate to the visualization component of your project; and the points you want to allocate to the analysis component. You may choose between 4-20 points for each part, and be sure that the parts add up to a total of 24.
 - b. **A link to your visualization** (if not included in the submission).
2. **A visualization (or set of visualizations) of a dataset of your choosing.** You may choose scientific data that you've personally collected; personal data that has been collected about you; statistical information about Atlanta, Georgia, the US, or the world; or a dataset of your choice. Please refer to the first midterm assignment sheet for suggestions. (You may choose to visualize the dataset you analyzed for the first midterm). Your visualization should be in some way **informed by the conceptual, theoretical, and/or historical issues that we've discussed** in class. For a growing list of possible tools, see the "Tools" page on the course website. You may also choose to create an analog visualization (i.e. something you draw out by hand), or a visualization of another form.
3. **In a 3-4 page paper** (double spaced; 1" margins; 12pt Times New Roman or equivalent), provide **an analysis of your visualization**. Your analysis should contain:
 - a. **A description** of what your dataset contains, and what you did to visualize it.
 - b. **An analysis** of how your visualization engages the themes and issues we've discussed in the course.

Instructions continue on next page....

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 and/or issues you choose to explore. Some topics and questions to consider when conceiving of your visualization, and when working through your analysis:

- **Dataviz as mapping.** How does your visualization provide, in Manovich's terms, a "mapping between discrete data and a visual representation"?
- **Representation vs. abstraction.** Does your visualization seek to represent the data, to abstract the data, to do something else?
- **Is your visualization interactive?** Why did you make that choice? What does interaction contribute? How does a lack of interaction affect the effect of the visualization?
- **Reduction.** Do you feel that you had to reduce your data, or your argument in some way? What is the effect?
- **Space.** How did you use space to convey the information contained within the data, or your argument about the data?
- **Other visual dimensions.** What else, stylistically, did you consciously attempt to deploy?
- **Does your visualization tell a story? Convey an argument?** If so, what and/or how?
- **History.** Do you engage the history of data visualization? How might the past speak to the present through style and/or form?
- **Theory.** Have you chosen a form of data that is subjective, not factual, or otherwise atypical. How does your chosen visual form relate to the idea about data that you put on display?
- **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 this project 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.