

University of Southern Maine / Department of Geography-Anthropology  
ANE 633 [GEO 450] THE MAPPING OF NEW ENGLAND

Class 1

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Course Introduction / Iconographic Readings of Maps

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See Susan M. Bielstein, *Permissions, A Survival Guide: Blunt Talk about Art as Intellectual Property* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

## Course Goals

This course introduces students to the study of maps as cultural texts, establishing another rich and productive approach to the study of human cultures and societies. More particularly, it seeks to provide:

- 1) theoretical frameworks and skill sets for analyzing maps as cultural products by (a) reading maps as texts and (b) establishing the scope and nature of specific cartographic discourses;
- 2) experience in analyzing maps as cultural products within the institutional setting of archives or special library collections; and
- 3) a firm knowledge base for the history of the cartographies associated with the U.S.A and New England in the colonial and modern eras.

It is hoped that students will, by the end of the course, be able to make significant contributions to the still inchoate critical scholarship on maps and mapping.

## Three Key Components of Common Modern Understanding of the Nature of Maps

1. **Representation:** there is a direct and unproblematic connection between the map and the world, such that the world is observed, measured, and “scaled down” (both geometrically and semiotically) to fit on paper; the map shows the essence of the world, it is a “depleted homologue” of the world (to quote Fremlin and Robinson 1998).
2. **Functionality:** maps are tools to aid humans to move through and act in space.
3. **Universality:** 1 + 2 => there is a direct and unproblematic connection between the map artifact and the individual’s knowledge of space derived from moving through and acting in space. Both cognitive mapping and the making of map artifacts are therefore human universals. (Failure to make advanced maps is therefore a sign of cognitive non-advancement.)

### Therefore

Map history studied from the presumption that over time, maps have inevitably **progressed** in terms of (a) the technology (better surveying, etc.) and (b) the archive (more and more accurate data).

William Hubbard, *A Map of New-England*, from his *Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians* (Boston: by John Foster, 1677) [OML]

[John Green], *A Map of the Most  
Inhabited Part of New England*  
(London: Thomas Jefferys, 1755)  
[LC-GMD]

Osgood Carleton, *Map of the District of  
Maine Massachusetts* (Boston: B. & J.  
Loring, 1802) [OML]

U.S. Geological Survey, *Hawley, Mass.*  
(1890), 1:62,500



John Chace, Jr., *Kennebec County*  
(Philadelphia, 1855), 1: ca.100,000



Osgood Carleton, *Eastern District of Massachusetts* (Boston, 1802), 1: ca.250,000



“frame fractures”

Douglass, *Plan of New England*  
(1755), 1: ca.320,000



Neal, *New Map of New England*  
(1720), 1: ca.3,200,000



*The Established, Progressive  
Narrative of the Geographical  
Mapping of New England*

## Basic Problems of the Traditional Approach to Map History

1. **Canon:** traditional approach creates, and is validated by, a canon of “great maps.” The canonical maps are repeatedly discussed and reproduced; other maps disregarded.

For example ...

Emily Hill, "A Map  
of the United  
States of America"  
(1820) [OML]

## Basic Problems of the Traditional Approach to Map History

1. **Canon:** traditional approach creates, and is validated by, a canon of “great maps.” The canonical maps are repeatedly discussed and reproduced; other maps disregarded.
2. **Functionality:** when one actually studies maps previously excluded from study, we quickly learn that they have conceptual as well as instrumental functions.
3. **Explanation:** focused on map content, the traditional approach can say nothing about *why* maps were made and *how* they were used and read.
4. **Bad history:** at root, the traditional approach is just bad history: it forces evidence to fit pre-existing ideas; it evaluates maps according to modern concerns.

## New Approaches to Maps

1. **Reading Maps as Texts:** seeking to understand the contemporary significance of maps. The process is directly analogous to literary or art historical analyses.
2. **Placing Maps in Context:** seeking to understand the processes of map production, circulation, and consumption in order to understand their discursive limits.
3. **Note:** a complete study requires both textual and contextual analyses.

## Course Structure

1. **Weeks 1 – 3:** how to read maps as texts >> first paper
2. **Weeks 4 – 9:** how to contextualize maps >> second paper
3. **Weeks 10 – 13:** combining texts and contexts in the study of how “New England” has been mapped as a meaningful region.

## Iconography

Codified as an art historical technique by Erwin Panofsky in 1930s through his studies of Renaissance art. Panofsky posited three levels of significance:

1. **Primary or Natural Subject Matter:** “configurations” that represent natural objects (humans, tools, plants, etc.).
2. **Secondary or Conventional Subject Matter:** the level of allegory (or iconography *per se*) in which particular configurations intended to possess further meaning.
3. **Intrinsic Meaning or Content:** the ultimate goal of “iconology” is to discern “the underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion” (to quote Daniels and Cosgrove 1988).

Allegorical titlepage to Abraham Ortelius, *Theatrum orbis terrarum* (Antwerp: Plantijn, 1570) [LC-GMD]

Abraham Ortelius, *Typus orbis terrarum*, in his  
*Theatrum orbis terrarum* (Antwerp: Plantijn, 1570)  
[LC-GMD]

Jacopo de'Barbari, *Venetia* (Venice, 1500)  
[jstor (Schulz 1978)]