Project Year
2013-2014

Project Title
Mapping Early North America's Global Context

Project Team
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Audience
The audience for this research seminar and the resulting global North America digital map is twofold. First, the proposed seminar promises to introduce a small group of 25-30 undergraduate students in the early stages of their academic careers to the digital applications of historical research. This aim will be accomplished primarily through individual research projects leading to the production of a collaborative electronic resource. Second, the digital map will serve as a pedagogical tool in larger survey courses offered by the History Department, including the early America component of the *Making America* series, which typically enrolls 60-120 students.

Pedagogical Challenge
Early North American history is a field in flux. Atlantic, hemispheric, continental perspectives compete for attention, yet lower division early America surveys have been slow to adapt and respond to the shifting geographic contexts for understanding the development of North America during the three centuries from about 1500 to around 1800. Digital resources currently available for the period encompassed by this project—most notably Emory University's Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database and Stanford University's Mapping the Republic of Letters—typically speak to discrete subfields within early American or early modern European history. Despite their value to researchers, these digital visualizations of historical processes are of limited use in survey-style undergraduate courses. Additionally, few electronic resources exist for teachers intent on introducing undergraduate students to the global connections at work in the development of early modern North America.

Solution
This project aims to develop two applications of the Center for Educational Resource's Interactive Map Tool that will make the global context of North American history accessible to students. The first is to use a Map Tool site to help students trace some process—including diseases, commodities, and migrations—across space and over time. The second is to use the Map Tool site to track interactions and movements of particular individuals. One aim will be to compile a select number of biographies and primary sources—autobiographies, memoirs, letters, and diaries—to illustrate key themes in the history of early America. The objective will be to connect specific people to larger processes, while providing students with a unique understanding of potential digital applications for historical research in the formative parts of their academic development.

Faculty Statement
The overall goal of this project is to get students to weigh the actions of individuals against the catalytic properties of impersonal forces, whether microbes, climatic change, or governing structures. Although instructors already have a number of electronic tools for understanding some of the intellectual and social processes at work in shaping early North America, none of these digital resources provide

satisfying accounts of the sweeping developments that forged a globally connected North America. The aim will be to attend to those imperatives without losing sight of the specific people who inhabited the continent.

The success of the proposed seminar and resulting Map Tool site will be measured by our ability to capture the myriad complexities of North America's past while being alert to the global influences shaping the continent's present. The course will expose students to these processes while calling their attention to the digital applications of the historian's by creating original content for the Map Tool site. Following implementation, the course will be evaluated by the project team and students as a model for future digital humanities seminars within the History Department. The resulting Map Tool site will be made available for use as pedagogical tool in the department's *Making America* course series and as a companion to Philip Morgan and Molly Warsh's *Early North America in Global Perspective* (2013). Molly Warsh, an Assistant Professor at the University of Pittsburgh, has expressed interest in our endeavors and may be able to mount a parallel course at her institution.

Prior to the course, the technology fellow will work with the CER to create a Map Tool site. Although KML files for three-dimensional earth browsers could also accomplish the goals of this project, the Interactive Map Tool allows for the use of historical maps. Under the guidance of the faculty advisor, the fellow will be responsible for creating the Map Tool shell and populating it with tags under which students will nest texts and images from their research assignments. The fellow will develop materials for a tutorial session introducing students to the Map Tool site and will create sample tags. Over the course of the semester, the fellow will work individually with students to develop the digital component of their projects, assisting with image editing and the formatting of other material to be included under students' tags. Additionally, the fellow will prepare a manual for the future maintenance and use of the site by instructors in the History Department. In fulfilling these responsibilities, the fellow's preparatory and class-related work will not exceed 240 hours beyond his normal responsibilities as a teaching assistant.