Spatial Data Formation

position: For an age of big data, this is a course in selecting and shaping smaller data that actually inform. Visual explanation distinguishes the work of this college and the disciplines of the built environment. Increasingly, this work involves skills, ethics, and idioms with data. Indeed today a better data literacy belongs in any good education. This course should help you reduce the amount of pseudo-information, inaccuracy, or excess spew in the work you produce and consume.

form: Form informs. Thus this course takes its name from the importance of relating form and content. Too many people (especially outside the design professions) assume that numbers are sufficient content and that expression does not matter. The arts know better: form and content always relate. The cognitive sciences know this too.

structure: This is a hands-on course in which most class time is devoted to work in progress. Three stages of the semester will develop your skills and produce increasingly ambitious results. For approximately one third of the semester each, but often in parallel, the course will do: short warmups in familiar media; a primer in coded data visualization; and a self-directed journalistic final project.

media: Much of the course will simply demand more heads-up use of Illustrator, and there will be some exposure to GIS, but the core of this course involves scripted interpretation of text and numeric data via Processing. Although no coding experience is necessary, neither is this a full first course in that. We will be very selective about methods, and will find and share code resources wherever possible.

theme: Each participant is expected to bring, a research theme for development in the independent final project. Success will arise not from how much data you deliver, but in the thematic clarity of your narrative communication design.