

Final Project: Brainstorming post

You will be engaged in a final project for this class. The purpose of this assignment is to start doing so. You should, in this project, describe some idea for a project you can envision yourself or some members of your class doing.

If, for instance, you were going to build a data visualization of trains like that at mbtaviz.github.io, you might for this project describe this existence of train tracking data, and suggest that it would be interesting to visualize them using methods from Tufte like the Marey Diagram.

There are two basic ways to approach this.

One is to take a subject domain you think is interesting, imagine what sort of data might be interesting to talk about it, and make some first steps towards answering it. If you like trains, think about what else you could do with the MBTA data. If you like buildings, Google around for sources of information on buildings in Boston. Either as part of your archival research or coming forward out of it, you might get some ideas about interesting historical records to investigate.

The other is just to describe a data source that seems interesting, and speculate about a few things you could do with it. If you poke around the [City of Boston's Open Data Portal](#), you might get some ideas; there is also some data from social media, elections, and other sources.

How specific should I be?

You should not be at all worried at this point about the plausibility of your project; more important is to start off trying to match your interests to the course material.

But you should take a little time to scout out actual potential resources. Don't say, for instance, that you'll download the list of friends for every person in Boston on Facebook and make a network graph; that's impossible because there's no way to get that information from inside Facebook. Make an effort now to identify some way to work with data about the city for the future.

What kinds of things can be a project?

The two basic requirements of the project itself are that:

1. It use computers, computation, or the Internet in some non-trivial way;
2. It be about the city or metropolitan area of Boston.

The third requirement is that it creatively combine those in different ways.

You can propose to compare variables from different variables, do computational analysis of text, make a map, build a data visualization, or go off in some other direction entirely if you can persuade us that it meets the two above goals.

Form

Post 200-500 words on Blackboard.

The purpose of this assignment is to check in about an idea, not to develop it fully. You should feel free to express the limits of your knowledge, and you don't need to do any extensive research before typing up what you think is interesting. You should check the availability of the basic elements. (For example: Is there any data about the topic you propose to build? Can mapping software draw the kind of map you want to make?)

Submission

Your idea will be submitted over Blackboard by Thursday, February 14.