

Required Texts

Our printed textbooks are available at the Northeastern University bookstore or (if you have time) can be ordered online. If you purchase them elsewhere, please buy the editions indicated here, as it will be important that we're all on the same page, both literally and metaphorically. **Please note:** Some of these texts are available as ebooks, and I certainly don't mind you reading them on your Kindle, Nook, or other device. However, you should buy the digital edition of the editions assigned here, which will include matching page numbers:

- Robert Allison, *A Short History of Boston*
- Edward R. Tufte, *Envisioning Information*
- Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcom X*
- J. Anthony Lukas, *Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families*

Communication

One of the best way to get in touch with us is to visit during office hours. If you're unsure about our readings, struggling with an assignment, or just want to talk, please visit. During the Fall 2016 semester, Professor Cordell will be in his office (Nightingale Hall 415) Mondays from 10-11am, Thursdays 3-4pm, and by appointment; while Professor Schmidt will be in his office (Nightingale 413) Mondays 3-5pm. We are also happy to make appointments at other times—just email [Professor Cordell](#) or [Professor Schmidt](#) **with at least three possible meeting times**. We can schedule in person or virtual meetings.

The next best way to get in touch with us is by sending an email to email [Professor Cordell](#) or [Professor Schmidt](#). When you write to us: consider your tone and your audience. An email to your professor shouldn't read the same as your emails to friends. For help, see this [guide to emailing your professors](#). We guarantee that we will respond to emails within 48 hours. Often we will respond more quickly, but you should not send us an urgent email, for example, the night before an assignment is due.

Participation

This course relies on active, engaged participation in class activities and discussions. There will be few lectures and we will not be building toward an exam. Instead, we will work together to build our facilities for thinking critically about the city and analyzing its data. You should come to every class having read all of the required reading (or watched the required videos, &c. &c.) and prepared to discuss them with your colleagues. We will assess your reading and course engagement through in-class writing exercises (some collected for a grade and others not), reading quizzes, in-class group work, and related assignments.

Maintaining an active class conversation also requires that the class be present, both physically and mentally. To that end: you may miss two classes without penalty over the course of the semester. *Please note:* We make absolutely no distinction between excused and unexcused absences, so use your allotted absences wisely. You may not miss two classes early in the semester and then petition for additional excused absences afterward. When you must miss class, **it is your responsibility to find out what you missed and to make up any pertinent assignments**. You may not make up quizzes or in-class work. If you take one of your excused absences, we simply will not grade any in-class work you missed. If you miss an applied computing activity due to an excused absence you should attempt to make up the work. Once beyond your allotted absences you will receive a zero for any in-class work or computing activities missed.

Note: "Attendance" does not simply mean that your body can be found in proximity to those of your classmates. You must also be mentally present, which means you must:

Be awake and attentive to the conversation of the day; Prepare assigned texts before class begins; Bring your assigned texts to class. If we're reading online articles, you should either bring a device on which to read them or print them and bring that hard copy; *Bring your assigned texts to class!* and, finally, **bring your assigned texts to class!!!!!! We mean it. Seriously.** If you come to class without the day's reading on hand, we reserve the right to count you absent.

If you fail to meet these requirements, we will consider you mentally absent, though you may be physically present, and that day will be accounted as an absence.

“Information Overload” Days

We do understand that the semester can get hectic. The reading and workload for this class is often challenging, and you must balance it with the work in your other classes. Most likely you will have days when you simply cannot—for whatever reason—complete the assigned reading. To that end, you may take *one “information overload” (IO) day* during the semester. On that days you will not be expected to contribute to class discussion and you will receive a pass on any in-class work (the work will be ungraded and not factored into your final grade). In order to take an IO day, you must follow these rules:

You must attend class, listen attentively to any lectures or class discussions, and take part in any activities or group work not dependent on the day's reading. **Your IO day cannot be used as an additional excused absence.** You must inform us before the beginning of class that you are taking your IO day. You *may not wait* until we call on you or you see the day's in-class assignment. **We will deny any IO requests made during class.** To that end: take special care to be on time if you plan to request an IO day, as you won't be allowed to request one if you arrive late. You may not extend an IO day into another class session, even if the reading or activities of one day continue on the next. You may not take an IO day to avoid completing on an in-class applied computing activity or another major assignment. IO days will excuse you from reading quizzes or reflections, but nothing of more serious import.

IO days are intended to help you manage the inevitable stresses of your unique semester. Use them wisely.

Attendance and Participation Bonus

At the end of the semester, for any allowed absences or IO days you *do not* use, we will drop your lowest in-class work grade. So if you attended all sessions prepared and did not require an IO day, we would drop your three lowest in-class work grades from our final calculations. We will also drop one low grade to acknowledge exceptional engagement and participation through the semester.

Digital Etiquette

Phones

This should go without saying, but let's say it anyway: you should turn off your cellphone and/or other devices (iPods, etc) before you enter the classroom. If your phone rings once during class this semester, we'll all laugh and I'll ask you to turn it off. If your phone rings again during class this semester, we will ask you to leave and will count you as absent. Though it may seem unthinkable, your friends and family may actually survive three hours each week without direct updates as to your whereabouts and doings. They probably won't call the police to report you missing. They will no doubt pine for your witty banter, but that longing will only make your 1:26pm updates all the sweeter each Monday and Thursday this semester.

FYI: you're not as sneaky texting under the table as you think you are.

Laptops

This class will rely on access to laptops in nearly every session. However, in-class laptops also present temptations that many students find irresistible. You may not use a laptop during class to follow a game, text (see the phones policy above), check your friends' Tumblrs, post on Reddit, or commit (non course related) code to Github. Such activities not only distract you—meaning you will be less able to participate meaningfully in the class' conversation—they also distract anyone around or behind you. If you choose to virtually exit the class, we will ask you to physically leave as well and this will count as an absence. If you often seem distracted by what's on your screen, I reserve the right to ask you to put your laptop away, perhaps for the duration of the semester. Periodically we will ask you all to put "lids down." This means I want everyone—myself included—to put away screens in order to focus our attention on another aspect of class.

Technical Snafus

This course relies heavily on access to computers, specific software, and the Internet. **At some point during the semester you WILL have a problem with technology:** your laptop will crash, a file will become corrupted, a server will go down, a piece of software will not act as you expect it to, or something else will occur. These are facts of twenty-first-century life, not emergencies. To succeed in college and in your career you should develop work habits that take such snafus into account. Start assignments early and save often. Always keep a backup copy of your work saved somewhere secure (preferably off site). None of these unfortunate events should be considered emergencies: inkless printers, computer virus infections, lost flash drives, lost passwords, corrupted files, incompatible file formats. It is *entirely your responsibility* to take the proper steps to ensure your work will not be lost irretrievably; if one device or service isn't working, find another that does. **We will not grant you an extension based on problems you may be having with technological devices or the internet services you happen to use.** When problems arise in the software we are all using for the course, we will work through them together and learn thereby.

TRACE

Students are expected to complete a TRACE (Teacher Rating and Course Evaluation) toward the end of the semester. We will set aside some time during a class period for students to complete their TRACES.

Academic Integrity

In this class you will abide by Northeastern University's [Academic Integrity Policy](#) at all times:

A commitment to the principles of academic integrity is essential to the mission of Northeastern University. The promotion of independent and original scholarship ensures that students derive the most from their educational experience and their pursuit of knowledge. Academic dishonesty violates the most fundamental values of an intellectual community and undermines the achievements of the entire University.

If you have any questions about what constitutes academic integrity in this class—particularly as the concept applies to digital course projects—please talk to me. We will also discuss the ethics of digital scholarship in class.

Writing Center

The [Northeastern University Writing Center](http://www.northeastern.edu/english/writing-center/) is located in 412 Holmes Hall and in Snell Library (for current hours see <http://www.northeastern.edu/english/writing-center/> or call 617-373-4549) and offers free and friendly help for any level writer, including help with reading complex texts, conceptualizing a writing project, refining your writing process (i.e., planning, researching, organization, drafting, revising, and editing), and using sources effectively. You can receive feedback face-to-face during regular hours or via email/online response. I strongly recommend that you make appointments to go over drafts of your work—including your digital work—before turning it in. Questions about the Writing Center can be directed to [Belinda Walzer](#), Writing Center Director.