

## Mental Maps of Boston

For your first assignment in this class you will take on the role of cartographer. In brief, we want you to map the city of Boston, not as it exists in three-dimensional space but as it exists in your own recollections, habits, and observations. Which neighborhoods or areas in the city do you know very well, so that you can recall specific streets and buildings? What sections of the city do you know vaguely, perhaps by a few landmarks? And where in the city does your understanding waver—be there dragons anywhere in your mental map of Boston? Indeed, there may be sections of Boston you travel *under* every day but have no notion of above the surface: how might you represent such spaces? Think too about distance and scale from the perspective of your lived experience: two landmarks in reality quite distant might seem close because you only travel between them by train, while two other landmarks in reality relatively close might seem more distant because you only hike between them. Your mental map should illustrate your confidence and unsurety. You might consider other aspects of your life in Boston to include: habitual paths or sentimental landmarks, for example.

As you plan your mental map, follow these requirements:

1. You may not consult any other map, analog or digital, while creating your mental map. The point of this assignment is not to see how close you can get to Google, but to explore your own understanding of the city. We will not assess your maps based on literal accuracy.
2. You should create your map using analog materials. We don't have a problem with computational tools—as this class will amply show!—but we find that students are generally able to work with more subtlety in analog media. If you feel you can prove us wrong—if, for instance, you're an Illustrator wizard—send us a message explaining why.
3. Think creatively, both about what you want to map and how you want to present it. Use this assignment to explore that crafty side you've been ignoring since elementary school.

**Your maps are due in Prof. Cordell's mailbox in the English department (405 Lake Hall) by 4pm on Wednesday, September 14.**

### Grading Criteria

This assignment is worth two units as described in the syllabus. We will assess your mental maps using three interrelated qualities:

1. Creativity: of medium, expression, execution. In short, we want to see you engage with the assignment's qualitative dimensions and experiment with how to represent space and place. Do not recreate Google Maps: go your own way.
2. Depth: of thought, of engagement. This is an important, foundational assignment and we want you to take it seriously (while having fun—a paradox). In other words, we want to see evidence that you have thought deeply about the assignment's central questions and responded with intellectual discernment.
3. Insight: into our course themes, into your own thought processes. We want to see evidence of synthesis and discovery: new ideas about the city and your relationship to it that you gleaned through this mapping exercise.