Language, Texts and Technology

Washington State University, spring 2010

Assignment guide for: **Life Map**

http://lttspring2010.blogspot.com/

The Life Map (100 points) is the first of the three major team projects in this class.

Its goals include remediation (transforming some aspect of your life story into a medium other than writing), artistic execution (transferring great creative ideas into an equally great finished product) and collaboration (building and refining your skills related to working with other people and within small group dynamics).

Your ultimate goal in this project is to create an autobiographical presence -- a representation of parts of your life in cartographic form – that also creates and communicates, in a communal effort, common ground among your Life Map teammates. Your contributions tell your part of the story in a significant way but also reflect the connections you have with others in your group and the overall theme of your piece.

Map historian Norman Thrower defines a map as: "A representation, usually on a plane surface, of all or part of the earth or some other body showing a group of features in terms of their relative size and position." The "other body," in this case, is you and what you have done, where you have been and what features define you. The second primary aspect of this exercise is to integrate your features with your teammates in a meaningful way.

Key elements of this project to earn the points:

[ ] **Your map has a coherent and consistent and clear theme** *(10 points).* You can answer in one sentence the question: "This is a map of what?" And all of your elements on the map relate to that theme. Think of a highly focused -- yet universal – question that connects you all and ***creates common ground*** and everyone in your group creatively can respond to, such as: "What obstacles did we overcome to arrive together at WSU Vancouver in the Digital Technology and Culture program?" Or, "What makes us laugh?" Or, "What do we love about life?" When you start finding a lot of overlap among your members, you have a potential theme.

[ ] **Your map looks and works like a map** *(25 points).* Your map has a rational cartographic organization to it. It uses the traditional conventions, including a key (to allow deciphering of the symbols you choose to use), symbols and scale. It represents a specific space that gives meaning and scale to the entire surface area and its features. You use a variety of consistent and clear symbols to communicate with your user *(at least two unique symbols per person, at least three shared symbols per person).* Your symbols are weighted. Highs and lows, important and trivial. Every part of the map has meaning and a rational explanation for why something is portrayed the way it is and relates to the rest of the map the way it does. You should be able to answer these questions about anything on the map: "Why is that there, in that particular spot?" "Why does it look that way?" "How does that relate to this thing on another part of the map?" "What is the space between those things?" It also needs to be labeled properly, with the theme and credit to the creators.

[ ] **Your map explicitly tells your stories.** *(25 points).* This is not just an exercise in factoids placed in vicinity. It is a snapshot of a particular place in time, with a history, that weaves together your autobiographies. It has a well-developed narrative that can be read by those not associated with the group.

[ ] **Your map is carefully crafted** *(15 points).* The illustration style, the symbols, the dynamic visual nature, the integration of the various parts of the map, all of it demonstrates caring construction.

• Project manager organizes and leads the team (and presents to the rest of the class); **5 extra credit points**

AND

Each team member will fill out a feedback form about each of the other people in the group (using the form posted on the class blog), giving your teammates insights into their behaviors from another perspective. The professor will observe and interact during group work sessions, and the final product will demonstrate to some degree how functional the group operated. All together, that will account for a **quality of participation score** *(25 points).*

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How do we get started? ...
Here are some suggestions that don't necessarily have to be done in order:

[   ]   **Choose a name for your group** (What are things all of you have in common? Besides being students at WSUV and in this class, how else do your lives overlap? Maybe that will inspire a name. This will give you some insights into how your group dynamics will work on this project. If you can't come up with a name, fairly quickly, to share, start evaluating where your group dynamics are convoluted. Get those ironed out early, on a decision like this, that doesn't really mean much.)

[   ]   **Choose a theme for your map** (What is it going to show? Why are you doing it this way (the viewer shouldn't have to ask)? You should be able to state, "It is an autobiographical map of _____.")

[   ]   **Choose a slice of time to represent** (Think of a map as a picture of a moment; a map is a temporal concept; make sure you fix the time in space, and that it represents a progression of the events that have come before it. In other words, your map doesn't have to be set on Feb. 10, 2010. It can be set at a different specific moment, if that helps convey your stories better.)

[   ]   **How are you going to tell your individual story and the whole?** (Each person should create a unique autobiographical presence that's distinct but also integrated with the rest of the group.)

[   ]   **What symbols are you going to use** (What are they going to look like? What are they going to mean? How are you going to create them? How are you going to describe them?)

[   ]   **How are you going to make the map dynamic and diverse?** (Show the highs and lows of your stories you are sharing; the big things that happen and the small? The important main threads and the tangents?)

[   ]   **What medium are you going to use?** (Papers taped together? Collage? A poster board that you share and create together? How are you going to present this to others? We are using print methods for this assignment, but we can be creative about the uses of print.)

[   ]   **How are you going to pull this off as a group?** (What kind of structure and organization do you need? When can all of you get together to meet and work on this? Schedule organization always seems to be a major issue with any group. What roles will each person play? What tasks will they be assigned? Again, what specific deadlines will you set to minimize bottlenecks, keep everyone pulling the same weight and maintain accountability within the group? What other questions do you need to ask and answer during this process?)