

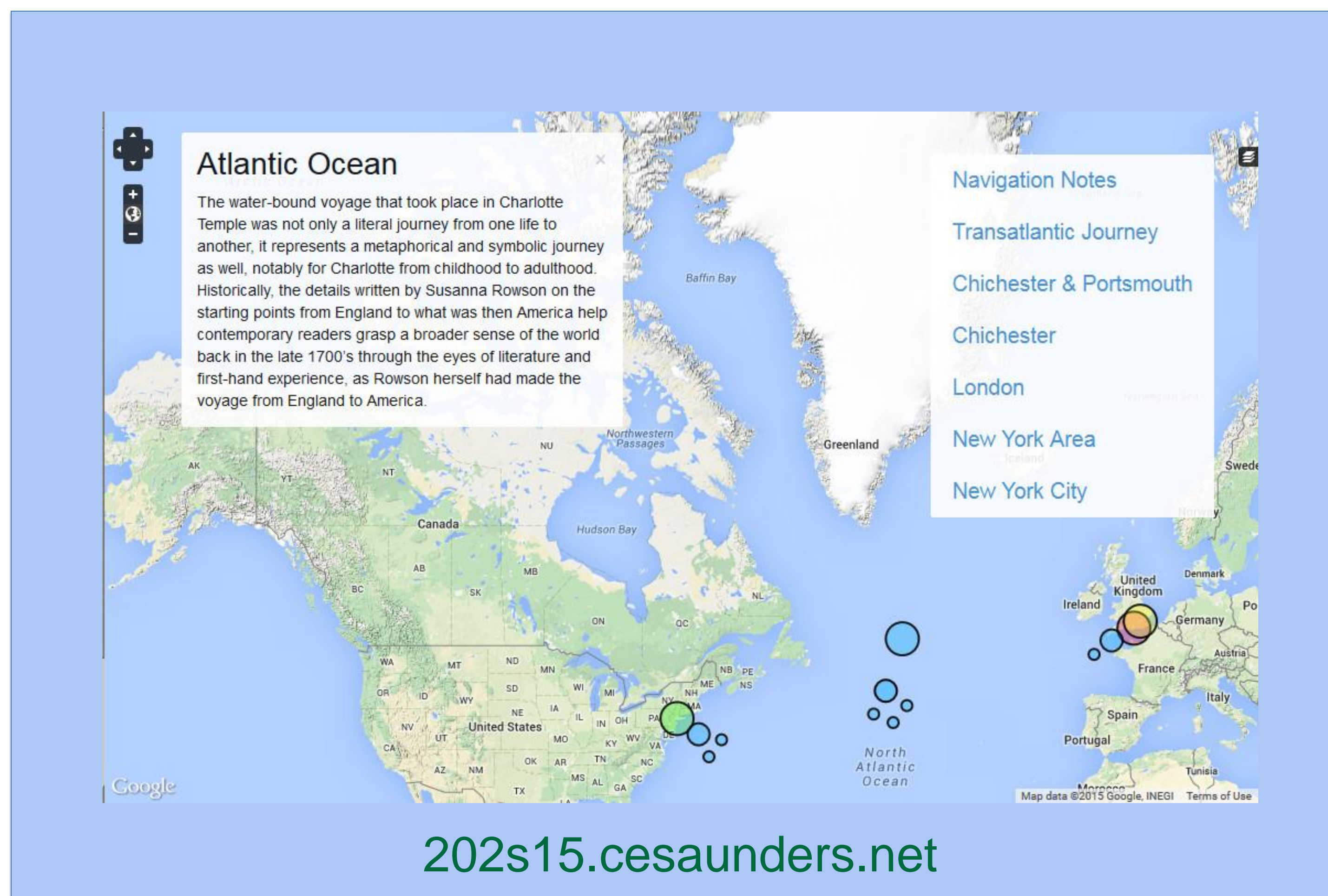


Using Omeka and Neatline to Facilitate Student Research in a Core Literature Class

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COURSE GOALS FOR ENGH 202-004 (Spring 2015) “AMERICAN WOMEN’S BESTSELLERS: DIGITAL HUMANITIES PERSPECTIVES”

- Give students the chance to practice skills of close reading, analysis, and synthesis in a writing/rhetorical context different from that of the familiar “English paper.”
- Provide a writing/rhetorical structure that facilitates making connections between the core texts of the class and contemporary historical documents.
- Highlight a key focus of the class -- the cultural significance of places and spaces, real and fictional, in the core texts under study-- through the use of digital mapping tools.
- Give students a preliminary taste of one form of original research performed by literary scholars.
- Introduce students to some digital humanities tools, and the ways they can be used to visually represent literary texts and their cultural/historical contexts.
- Give the instructor a chance to experiment with the possibilities, pedagogical and otherwise, of the Omeka/Neatline platform.



202s15.cesaunders.net

RESULTS & REFLECTION

Successes:

- Most students were able to locate appropriate primary documents with only moderate difficulty in understanding the concept and/or figuring out appropriate search strategies. Many were excited at the documents they found, and the connections they were able to make with specific aspects of the novels under study.
- The assignment sequence scaffolded the process of locating and analyzing individual pieces of evidence, then drawing broader conclusions by identifying the patterns that emerge when individual pieces of evidence are examined as part of a larger group.
- Mapping spaces and places from the novels not only illuminated the significance of those locations in the novels and the cultures from which they arose, but also revealed the engagement of these “domestic” fictions with larger geopolitical events.
- Both item and exhibit assignments and the final exam encouraged original thought and discouraged attempts to find pre-existing answers on the internet or elsewhere.

Issues & Considerations:

- While students were able to explain factual connections between primary documents and literary texts, and to summarize the contents of both, they sometimes overgeneralized from limited evidence. In addition, many had difficulty moving beyond factual statements to analysis and synthesis that engaged texts and contexts at a deeper symbolic/thematic level.
- Due to time constraints, students did not place dots on the maps (and didn't for the most part provide detailed instructions for doing so). Making these decisions involves critical thinking about texts and how to represent them digitally; it would be worthwhile to have students participate more actively in the process.

•Items in a public Omeka/Neatline site must include, at the very least, accurate source and rights information; ensuring this level of correctness in the work of a 40-student class can consume significant time both inside and outside class.

•Students in a core literature class may be resistant to trying something new in what is, for many of them, the last English class they expect to take. Resistance may manifest as doing the minimum possible amount of work, increasing the need for corrections and revisions.

ASSIGNMENTS & ACTIVITIES

•The class was held in a computer classroom with one computer per student, plus an instructor's computer/projector setup. Class time was divided more or less equally between sessions focusing on traditional in-class activities – brief lectures, whole-class discussion, and group work centering around the four core literary texts studied in the class -- and in-class work on and presentation of Omeka/Neatline items and exhibits.

•After reading and discussing each of the four core texts, students brainstormed a list of important spaces and places in the text, and identified larger areas and subareas into which those space/places could be grouped. Students then signed up for area/subarea groups according to their interests, and decided which members of the group would work on specific spaces/ places.

•Each student located at least one primary document relevant to his/her chosen space or place, and, following the directions on the item assignment/worksheet, created an Omeka item based on the document.

•Groups worked together to fill out an Omeka worksheet for their assigned area, writing synthetic area and subarea introductions, adding quotations from core texts to individual items, and determining where dots representing items, subareas, and areas should be placed. The instructor created the exhibits following these directions. Groups then presented their draft exhibits to the class, then had an opportunity to revise before final grading.

•Final exam questions drew on the Omeka/Neatline items and exhibits, asking students to incorporate references to specific items and exhibits into essays analyzing particular aspects of at least two of the core texts studied.

ENGH 202 - Texts and Contexts

ENGH 202 - Texts and Contexts

Credits: 3

Repeatable within Term

Studies literary texts within the framework of culture. Examines texts within such categories as history, gender, sexuality, religion, race, class, and nation.

Fulfills Mason Core requirement in literature.

Prerequisite(s): 3 credits of 100-level English.

Notes: Builds on reading and writing skills taught in ENGH 201.

Hours of Lecture or Seminar per week: 3

Hours of Lab or Studio per week: 0

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[Click here for the Fall 2015 Schedule of Classes](#)

Samuel
English 202-004

Exhibit Assignment & Planning Worksheet

The goal of an exhibit is to make connections among the individual primary sources you've located and incorporated into items, the novel under investigation, and the spaces and places you've identified in connection with the novel. You'll need to choose representative items to represent the novel and sub-area introductions, and, where appropriate items by deciding where to place them on a map.

This file combines directions for creating exhibit shows, and lists of data, associated with multiple concerning additional text into the exhibit (see 1 see <http://lib.arts.gmu.edu/engh202/engh202s15/>) decide which geographical areas should be highlighted worksheet will guide you through that process.

Each group should work together to complete a Group Exhibit (1 exhibit) of text with which the items to be used (Group C/Ex. group 2's worksheet 6 exhibit, check the list of space/place assignments (these three numbers should match for an item you're not yet in a group for the text on which the exhibit).

You'll turn in two different copies of this work each version of the worksheet). The first copy, allow me to create the version of the exhibit to you'll have the chance to complete a revised to highlight any new or changed information and changes indicated on the worksheet, then grade.

Item Requirements

Each item in the class Omeka site will be based on approximately the same time period as the core to some aspect of the core text (usually, given the list source will be updated as a file associated with a committee describes the item itself, and explains its author, title, and, especially, the source file to a published document, where it is archived, and hand column of the worksheet below.

As noted on the y/Hubes, for the most part you will do the time period under investigation, which you may not serve as the primary basis for an item. To fill content, see directions for the "Description" field.

Once each member of your group has created at least one item in the particular space/place you are investigating second stage in the process.

Item Assignment & Worksheet

This file incorporates both the requirements for each of your four Omeka items, and a worksheet to use when creating those items. Before creating an item in Omeka, please save a copy of this worksheet in a file named according to the following convention: [Itemname]([initials])([year]) of text with which the item is associated. C.T.L., D.H., or C.P.(y). If you're creating a Charlotte Temple item, I would name the file SaundersCT1, SaundersCT2, etc. 3. Then fill out the fields in the middle column of the sheet that begins on page 2, following the detailed instructions in the right-hand column. Once you have completed the worksheet (and are satisfied that you have fulfilled all the requirements described below and in the right-hand column of the worksheet), transfer the information to the corresponding fields of an item you create on the class Omeka site. Create.

Fields that must be filled out are marked

Field	Double Care	Item Description
Title*		If the original item has a title, the entry in this field should match that title exactly. If the title of the original item is generic, with a subtitle that more accurately describes the content, you may put a colon after the title, and include the subtitle (as for an entry of Suzanne Bowen on that appears in a generally title column, with a subheading for each document, you might enter "Ordinary" Mrs. Rowson" in the title field). If there is no title, supply a brief descriptive title in square brackets. If the actual title is not as descriptive as you'd like, you may also use square brackets to add a more descriptive one (as, for instance, for an advertisement for a woman's school titled "Students' Young Ladies" you might put "Attention!! Young Ladies [advertisement for women's school]" in the title field). If the item is an excerpt from a larger work, put "excerpt" in square brackets after the title of the whole work. If you are creating a series of items which are excerpts from the same work (most likely if you're dealing with a text which is quite long or still in copyright), you may number the excerpts to create unique item titles (excerpt 1), (excerpt 2), etc.
Creator*		The author of the work, exactly as identified in the item itself (as identified in the source text, not the name as square brackets). You may also use square brackets, after or within the name, to fill in information gained from another source (e.g. to expand initials into a full name).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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