

## End-of-Course Reflections

**Course:** FWS 1101.102 – *Mapquest: Space, Place, and Movement in Medieval Society*

**Semester:** Spring, 2015

**Institution:** Cornell University

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### **Overall Impressions / Takeaways**

- A pretty good semester, though the class – as if trying to meet the expectations of stereotype – was far less engaged overall than the class in the fall.
- The Tatkon Center offers far better spaces for teaching, and far better AV and tech support.
  - The room is bigger, and allows for more movement of students into different groups
- The students greatly enjoyed the parts of the class dealing with maps
- Assigning *The Way* for out-of-class watching was a better decision than spending class time watching it
- Students continue to be receptive to the idea of using anonymous passages from their essays to demonstrate common issues. So long as I keep track of whose essays I have used for examples, and try to hit everyone, it works.
  - In both this class and the last, I've had students engage with their own work, because of the anonymous nature

### **Things That Went Well**

- This class grasped the concept of liminality better than the fall class, and employed it more commonly in their work throughout the semester.
- The class also understood the value of the Camille reading. Last-day discussion saw a complaint about the reading from one student, which was then rebutted by several others
- I focused more on the reasons for citation, and on identifying types of sources, than on the specifics of citation methodology, with better success
- Adjustments to the Marco Polo jigsaw worked well, with an increased focus on group work, including more time given to it in class

### **Things That Need Improvement**

- I need better accountability for the quality of drafts that students bring to peer reviews. Too many students brought half-finished drafts (if that) making co-editing not especially useful.
- Student citations, though better, were still wildly uneven. I wonder about teaching a program like Zotero next year.
- The Maproom orientation needs to include information on how to use the room to find maps. The same thing is true of the Rare Books orientation. In both cases, the librarians are too excited to show off the archive and their materials.

### **Problems**

- I had one student who became increasingly disengaged, and who then stopped coming to class. I spoke to him on several occasions, and tried to find points of commonality (he was a student-athlete, and he had spent time at an institution where I had previously coached). But he was not interested in the class. I reached out to his coaches, also with no result. He

wound up not turning in the final two essays, and failing. I'm not sure what I could have done to differently, but I'm troubled by it none-the-less.

### **Thoughts on Specific Lessons**

- The lesson where I wrote very bad passages and then asked the class to identify the problems in them worked very well. Because they it was my writing, the class was more willing to be critical.
  - Note: this lesson won an award from the Knight Institute for lesson design
- Asking the class, in groups, to draw a map of the world that Mandeville described was a useful exercise in getting them to think more broadly about medieval constructions of global space, and in seeing how they were understanding the text.