

Connect

Information Technology at NYU



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Current Issue

Mapping for Social Change

By [René Francisco Poitevin](#)



Archives

Mapping for Social Change, a new course at NYU's Gallatin School of Individualized Study, brings together public participation GIS, service learning, and community organizing. Among the unique features of this course is the fact that it is the only undergraduate GIS course at NYU. Previously, the only way to learn GIS at NYU was through graduate courses.



About Connect

Mapping for Social Change teaches GIS in collaboration with community organizations addressing real issues. The underlying concept is that by teaching how to do spatial analysis while working on actual community issues, we help increase the capacity of these organizations to advocate on behalf of their membership at the same time that we help students learn GIS.

Last spring, students worked with groups and agencies addressing a variety of issues ranging from voter registration and union campaigns to low income housing. Thanks to the active support of the Dean of the Gallatin School, Mapping for Social Change was able to successfully attract four community members to participate in this course as if they were regular NYU students.

The idea behind this approach is that, by bringing their particular expertise and knowledge into the classroom, community members make an invaluable contribution to students' thinking about how GIS projects should be designed. At the same time, this strategy helps community agencies increase their capacity to do their own in-house GIS analysis by creating a core of GIS-trained community members.

Next spring, students enrolled in this class will learn the ins-and-outs of GIS while supporting the groundbreaking research currently taking place at the Center for the Practice and Study of Community Problem Solving at the NYU School of Law.

If you or someone you know is interested in the intersection of GIS and community issues, we encourage you to contact us for more information; please send e-mail to René Poitevin at rfpoitevin@nyu.edu.

Author Biography

René Francisco Poitevin is an Assistant Professor at the Gallatin School of Individualized Study. This year he is teaching Mapping for Social Change and Gentrification and Its Discontents. He also coordinates the Community Learning Initiative at Gallatin. He can be reached at rfpoitevin@nyu.edu.

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