True to editor Will Steacy’s vision, “Photographs Not Taken is a collection of essays by photographers about moments that never became a picture.” After imagining the collection, he asked contributors “to abandon the tools needed to make a photograph and instead describe the experiences that did not pass through their camera lens.” Your first task this term is to draft a microessay of your own in response to his request. Focus on one moment, one image that you experienced but did not capture. Allow the nature of that moment to dictate what you include/exclude in your essay. As Lyle Rexer notes in his introduction to Steacy’s collection, there are many kinds of photographs not taken. “There are: pictures that could not be taken, pictures that were taken and failed, pictures that were almost taken but abandoned, pictures that might have been taken but were renounced, pictures that were missed and became memories before they could be taken, and of course pictures that were taken of one thing that were really about something entirely different that could not be shown directly.”

A Few Additional Guidelines:

☐ While each of you will begin writing about a “photograph not taken” in class on the 23rd, if you really don’t want to continue working on that piece, you should feel free to begin again with a fresh experience or image. Sometimes starting over is more productive than holding onto a first thought.

☐ Your final text should be brief and well edited. 350-500 words would be appropriate. You may adopt either a more scientific voice or a more poetic voice in your writing.

☐ Your project should grapple with the challenges and the opportunities presented by the task of creating a “photograph” with words. Note: this is a task that differs from re-creating a photograph with words. Spend some time thinking about how these two tasks might be differentiated in useful ways.

☐ Examine one or two of the example essays closely. How are they put together? What sentences are your favorites? Do they have different kinds of paragraphs? Are there moments that bore you? Assumptions these writers make about the nature of the world that you agree/disagree with?

☐ Steacy’s contributors are all professional photographers. The role image making plays in their daily lives impacts how they think and write. Does photography play a specific role in your life? Does another art or practice impact your relationship to image creation? You might choose to integrate some more general philosophical musings on habits of seeing, saying, remembering, crafting, or capturing into your microessay.

☐ Even though the examples in Steacy’s collection are not titled, you should pay special attention to the act of titling your “photograph.” Consider several possible titles. How do they work on readers in different ways? What is a title’s job? You should also select a non-standard font to set your title in. In addition to browsing your computer’s options, you might want to check out fontsquirrel.com or other online galleries. Be ready to defend your choice.

☐ You should turn in your project via Coursweb. Submit it as either a .doc or .docx file.
GUIDELINES FOR YOUR PHOTO + WORD COMPOSITION:

1. **Select a “famous” photograph that is also of personal interest to you** (for whatever reason — technical, professional, historical, biographical).

2. **Find a high quality digital version of this image.**
   Or use a good scanner to make one from a photobook.

3. **Select a single word that interacts with your image in an interesting way.**

4. **Place this word on top of the photograph.**
   Choose font style, size, and color with care.

GUIDELINES FOR HISTORY NOTES:

☐ Three paragraphs **on the photograph you selected.** You should discuss: (1) **This specific image.** What is known about the context in which it was created? When/where was it made? What visual features make it remarkable? Does it reference other images or conventions in a notable way? Is it important to understand the content of the image in relation to historical events? (2) **The technology used to make the image.** Can you find out what kind of camera was used? What kind of film? What processing techniques? Are the techniques and tools that are in play typical of the time in which the image was produced, or are they remarkable in some way? (3) **The photographer behind the image.** Who is/was this person? Where does this image fit in his/her larger body of work? Where does he/she fit into the larger history of photography?

☐ A paragraph **on the typeface you have selected** to set your word in. Include: a description of key features of this particular font, who created the font, a list of other fonts that are closely related. You may also include anecdotes about other designs/contexts in which this font has been used.

☐ A paragraph **on the word you have selected.** Include its etymology. Look it up in the Oxford English Dictionary (you have access through the library website) and report on a few notable things found there. Include two or three sentences (not composed by you) that use this word.

☐ Individual sentences should be clear and grammatically correct, but you should worry about collecting provocative content more than you worry about organizational polish. Transitions between sections are not necessary. In terms of length, 1000-1500 words overall would be appropriate.

☐ You should turn in your complete project via Courseweb. Submit it as a single .pdf. The first full page of the document should be nothing but your image-word composition. You should also submit a list of resources consulted and a 300-500 word debrief (as a word doc) about the experience of completing this project. I'll talk about the debrief in more detail during Monday’s class.
A Publisher’s Weekly review describes the book A Postcard Memoir in this way: “Sutin’s ingeniously constructed memoir uses duotone reproductions of postcards—by turns nostalgic, quaint or exotic—as Rorschach blots to evoke his deepest memories and feelings. Here he writes about typical events—Little League, his discovery of sex, bar mitzvah, past loves—but imbues his reminiscences of adolescent insecurity with a rueful, forgiving wisdom. Between each image and the corresponding text, odd juxtapositions and eerie or hilarious disjunctions fly like sparks, amplifying Sutin’s memories and puncturing his wild fantasies.” In this assignment, your job is to find a set of 3-4 postcards somewhere (they need not be duotone; they may be found online) and then write postcard memoirs of your own to accompany two of them.

A Few Additional Guidelines:

☐ Your final texts should be brief and well edited. 250-500 words each would be appropriate. More is not necessarily better. More carefully constructed is.

☐ Your project should grapple with the challenges and the opportunities presented by the task of creating “memoirs” that are “true” despite being speculative or mythical in some way.

☐ Examine one or two of the example essays closely. How are they put together? What sentences are your favorites? Do they have different kinds of paragraphs? Are there moments that bore you? Are there assumptions Sutin makes about the nature of the world that you agree/disagree with?

☐ A Booklist review describes the task of Sutin’s book this way: “As he sets out each enigmatic postcard like a personal tarot, he inventively reimagines the story of his fantasy-rich boyhood, at-sea adolescence, and slowly liberating adulthood.” Think about how you wish someone would describe your memoirs. What adjectives would you want them to use? How can you prompt that desired reaction using language? What kinds of descriptions might help?

☐ The same review also calls this book “Rich in unexpected associations and genuine wisdom.” Offer some unexpected associations of your own.

In terms of associations, think about the relationship between individual postcards and the texts that accompany them. But also think about the relationship between your two final postcards, your two texts. You should be able to answer the question, how do these things work differently as a set than they would alone?

Consider also sentences working together. How can a pair of sentences become pleasantly surprising?

☐ You should turn in your project via Coursweb as a single file. You should include reproductions of your postcards in the file. If you are using physical artifacts, you can scan them in the library or photograph them – I need to be able to see them clearly, but reproduction quality is not (yet) a top priority for this part of the project.

☐ You should expect to write a short debrief explaining some of the choices you made while composing this project. How might you have done things differently?
This assignment is less structured than the three that have come before. There are only two real requirements:

(1) You must produce a written response to a single work of visual art.
(2) There must be something experimental about your response.

There are many different ways to imagine the ekphrastic project. Poet Cole Swensen suggests that contemporary artists and poets have begun understanding ekphrasis in such a way that “A side-by-side, a walking-along-with, replaces the face-to-face relationship—the two, poem and artwork, are presumed to be going in the same direction and at the same speed; they are fellow travelers sharing a context” (Noise That Stays Noise 70). For her, this stands in contrast to “the traditional ekphrastic stance,” where a writer remains separate from the object of art he or she is engaging; “often physically in opposition to it, often standing across from it in a physical kind of face-off, in a gallery or museum” (70). I encourage you to try thinking or walking along with a piece of art rather than trying to “just” describe it or capture it in words.

A Few Additional Guidelines:

☐ Your final text(s) should be brief and well edited. 250-500 words each would be appropriate. More is not necessarily better. More carefully constructed is.

☐ You are encouraged to respond in your own way to one of the works we saw O’Hara responding to or to a painting by a New York School painter; you may respond to anything that you’d like.

☐ A short essay would be an appropriate response to this assignment. You might follow Mark Doty’s lead and attempt to describe falling in love with a particular painting.

☐ A poem or a suite of poems would also be an appropriate response. Minimalist poems that use space in a masterful way and that are clearly put together with a great deal of care are acceptable even if they do not adhere to the suggested word count; if this is your project, you may want to touch base with me before turning it in.

☐ One way to think of ekphrasis is to think of it as a way of making an artwork “call out.” Another way to think of it is to think of it as the rhetorical practice of “calling an inanimate object by name.”

☐ Two things that I don’t want to see (although you might include elements that are drawn from the type of writing that happens in these genres): (1) a traditional piece of criticism, (2) a direct, research-based historical account of the art.

☐ You should turn in your project via Coursweb as a single file. You should include either a reproduction of the art you worked with in the file OR a stable link to a reproduction of that artwork.
In this project, you’re being asked to take either a text (an essay, a story, a business plan) or a data set and to visualize it in a compelling way. Your final product might be best labeled a data visualization, an infographic, or (more simply) a visual story. You might try crossing two data sets or attempt to make visible something that’s normally invisible. You might illustrate a decision making process or an emotional field.

In his introduction to the *Best American Infographics 2013*, Gareth Cook reminds us that the best of these kind of graphics “allow us to grasp some relationship quickly and easily that would otherwise take many pages and illustrations and tables.” When choosing projects to include in that year’s collection, he looked at lots of visualizations and asked himself the following questions about each one:

- Does the work yield insights?
- Did it challenge me to think?
- Does it suggest a new view of the world?
- Do I know something that I didn’t know before?

I encourage you to look back through *The Book of Trees* and to ask these questions in relation to some of the examples shared there. You should expect that I’ll be asking these questions in relation to your projects. You’re welcome to create a tree diagram of some sort, but your work need not be tree-based; it should rely upon some kind of structural metaphor. This might be another structure found in the natural world, or it might be mechanical. Lima suggests trees are both evocative and expressive; what else meets those criteria?

**A Few Additional Guidelines:**

- Use color, typography, and negative (empty) space in deliberate ways to influence readers/viewers.

- A successful visualization project should do something for readers/viewers that the original text/data set didn’t. It should also do something that is different from anything that a written response to the original would be likely to do. Another way to put that is to say: your visualization should be more than illustration, but also more than analysis.

- Be mindful that good visualizations necessarily leave things out and that what you leave out matters. It says something about how you as a creator understand the world. Cook also reminds us that “the people who visualize the world for us make choices, and these choices can skew our impressions.” He suggests that, when looking at a visualization, it is important for us to ask things like: What is the data? Where did it come from? What was left out? What is emphasized? And what is glossed over? Speculate about how readers/viewers might answer these questions in relation to your project.

- Your final visualizations need not be flawlessly executed (this isn’t a design class, and I recognize that we haven’t had much time to troubleshoot technical things together). Nevertheless, it should aim for clean, visually striking design that makes your information easy to understand and interpret, and any text that is included in the project should be carefully edited. You’re invited to use the debrief to explain to me what you wish you had the time and/or skills to create in response to your source text. This may be useful to us both, if you decide to revise later.

- You should turn in your project via Coursweb as a .pdf file. I encourage you to limit yourself to an 8.5x11 canvas and to start with a resolution of 300ppi. This corresponds to a single print-quality page. You may spread your visualization over two pages or produce something on a tall skinny canvas that’s maximized for the web (many infographics are formatted this way).
SOME NOTES TO HELP WITH THE TECHNICAL PART OF COMPOSING:

☐ Pitt makes Lynda.com available to you; this is a great resource for learning specific skills.

☐ Adobe offers a set of official tutorials: http://tv.adobe.com/show/learn-photoshop-CS6/

The PCs in the basement labs in the Cathedral and the Macs in the library (are all supposed to) have the Adobe creative suite loaded onto them. Some of you already know your way around this stuff. If you don’t, you won’t become an expert in this class. But you might teach yourself just enough that its marketable. Or you might want to check out the free alternatives to Photoshopt introduced here: http://gizmodo.com/5974500/10-photoshop-alternatives-that-are-totally-free. Consider blocking out an hour or two in which you don’t expect yourself to get anything done beyond getting a feel for the software. Find and read some online tutorials (or watch some on Youtube). Practice making.

☐ Unless you are already adept at using a particular design software, there’s a good chance that you’ll want to use or at least try out several different things.

For instance, Microsoft Excel does make it really easy to take ‘raw’ numbers and create a wide variety of graphs and charts. Take advantage of this, if it makes sense for the info you’re working with. However, you may find that after creating charts in Excel you want to copy them into another program---one where it will be easier to move them around, make them overlap, stylize them, and/or add text or graphics around them. Save versions as you go---a draft that seems unsatisfactory now might look much better tomorrow.

Similarly, Adobe Photoshop is a great pick for a lot of layout things; it handles text decently well, and gives you a lot of creative control. Besides, you may want to include highly stylized pieces of photos in your infographic, which would make it a really intuitive choice. But creating accurate charts and graphs in Photoshop is not easy---so you might let a tool like this help you: http://ceagon.com/tools/charts

☐ Check out this list of tools/resources from the Daily Tekk blog (a couple highlights below): http://dailytekk.com/2012/02/27/over-100-incredible-infographic-tools-and-resources/

☐ When picking colors, try using a color-theory-based tool like http://www.paletton.com (http://colorbrewer2.org/ is a nice cartography-based tool). Also, take a minute to imagine how your design might work (or fail to work) well for a colorblind viewer - http://www.vischeck.com/ can help you think about this.

If you get frustrated, feel free to go back to wherever you’re comfortable and start over. Look through the applications that came loaded on your computer that you never use. Do you already have image editing software? Do you use something like CAD in your major that you might be able to “misuse” to create a cool graphic (or part of one)? Is your data super geographically focused---might ArcGIS or the Google Maps API help you make something relevant and visually enticing?

☐ There’s nothing wrong with starting from a template or using a relatively common program. However, there is a huge difference between using a program’s defaults and using custom settings. If something’s customizable and you choose not to customize it, that sends a message to viewers (who may use the same software and recognize this as laziness, even if that’s not what it is).
A Publisher’s Weekly review of You Are Here: Personal Geographies and Other Maps of the Imagination claims that "Into this seemingly lighthearted 7”x10” look into people’s love affairs with maps and mapmaking, [Katharine] Harmon packs some serious intellectual concepts about the human impulse to locate oneself in the cosmos; the intricate and thoughtful works she presents show mapmaking as diverse and extraordinary a human act as any other." Your job in this, our final major project, is to craft either a visual map of your own imagination or an essay that meditates upon your relationship to the cartographers project of locating yourself (and others) in the world.

The jacket description of this book suggests, “maps need not just show continents and oceans: there are maps to heaven and hell; to happiness and despair; maps of moods, matrimony, and mythological places. There are maps to popular culture…There are speculative maps of the world before it was known, and maps to secret places known only to the mapmaker. Artists’ maps show another kind of uncharted realm: the imagination.” Your creation might begin with one of these projects in mind. In the end, Harmon suggests that “What all these maps have in common is their creators’ willingness to venture beyond the boundaries of geography or convention.” Cultivating a similar willingness is, then, part and parcel of this project.

A Few Additional Guidelines:

☐ If you choose to compose an essay, your final text should be brief and well edited. 500-1000 words would be appropriate. You may adopt either a more scientific voice or a more poetic voice in your writing. Consider taking one of the book’s lengthier essays as a model. You might create a textual map of your own body or tell the detailed story of a moment in which a particular map enraptured you or helped you out of a practical, real-world jam.

☐ If you choose to craft a map, you might begin with last week’s guidelines/resources. Consider creating a single or double page spread. You might try using a map generator like http://maps.stamen.com/ to create a basis for your work. Or you might check out the options for stylizing Google maps found here: https://developers.google.com/maps/ (scroll down). Think adding whimsical textual features to more traditional maps. Think about layering types of maps and/or layering maps and other types of images. Think about ways in which you might distort a given map in order to make it more closely resemble the experiential geography that you carry with you in your mind and your body.

☐ Your project should grapple with the challenges and the opportunities presented by the task of creating a imaginative “territory” that can’t (quite) be visited. In what ways is this project different from the project of visualizing data or knowledge? In what ways is it different from more traditionally accepted cartographic practices? Then again, how are all these tasks similar? Given those similarities, where might you look for models that offer visual or conceptual elements worth emulating? If you’re working with text alone, consider what it might mean to translate these visual/conceptual elements into particular types of sentences.

☐ You should turn in your project via Coursweb. Submit it as a single .pdf. (As usual, your debrief and one-page response to an historical map should be included alongside this submission.)
It is your job to revisit and re-imagine ONE of our major projects.

The idea here is to slow down, to (hopefully) produce something that you’re proud of, something that could stand on its own as a piece of writing and/or visual storytelling outside the context of this class. (I.e. whatever you produce should be potentially intriguing to a curious reader/viewer who never saw the assignment or came to our class, who hasn’t read our shared texts or your debrief).

This revision should include AT LEAST 50-percent new content. Don’t think: copyediting. Think instead: new sentences that work in new ways. Include weirder verbs, look for details that only you could know how to sneak in. Think: new organizational structures, new main ideas, new research. Think: newly imagined audiences, new “unanswerable” questions that you can ask readers to ponder.

While each of you will begin with a project from earlier in the semester, many of you will (again, hopefully) end up with essays and/or design-based projects that depart in significant ways from the assignments as I imagined them. You should feel free to use any form you think will help you address a specific story or argument to a specific audience in a compelling way.

You might simply edit and expand one of your existing projects. Turn your set of two postcard memoirs into a set of four postcard memoirs. Turn a piece of your history project into a 2000 word narrative journalism style essay on the photographer you started researching. Double the length of your photograph not taken essay, either by describing additional photos you’ve failed to take in your life or by really digging into a philosophical question that you raised (or could have raised). Maybe your map or visualization would be more compelling accompanied by a short essay of some sort?

Your revision might draw more heavily on a debrief or one of the short analysis assignments than it does on the text from our more experimental assignments. For example, you might use sentences culled from a debrief as the basis for writing a series of letters (a pair of love letters and a breakup letter, etc.) to a map, painting, or writer that we covered earlier in the semester. You might imagine a dialogue between yourself and one of the writers/designers we covered (or a figure from your history project). Might it make sense to convert one of your essays into a visualization or vice versa?

Sometimes starting over is more productive than holding onto a first thought. Pull just one amazing sentence or paragraph from something that you made earlier in the term and build a new project around it. Imagine some forms we didn’t work with. Are there sentences from one of your projects that would make a great set of taglines for a series of mock advertisements?

Despite the fact that this isn’t an assignment that’s “about” copyediting, your final text should be well edited. Appropriate lengths will vary depending on how the revision assignment was approached, but it should be clear to me that you put in a significant amount of time and thought work (equivalent to at least the amount of time that each original project took).
REFLECTION LETTER / FINAL DEBRIEF GUIDELINES:

☐ You're invited to imagine your final debrief either as a letter addressed directly to me or as one last (potentially experimental) micro-essay with a wider audience. I will read this before grading your final project, so this is a chance for you to teach me how to read your work well. It is also a chance for you to direct my attention to the things you’ve done the most work on.

☐ Reflect on both your final revision and your experience in the class as a whole. Everyone will want to contextualize their revision within the course. Some of you may find it worthwhile to contextualize our work together within your broader studies or your life.

☐ However you imagine it, this piece of writing should be taken seriously; it should be clear and thoughtful and say something about your experiences writing/composing this semester and why those experiences matter (or why you think they don’t; as long as you can be articulate about that position).

☐ 750-1000 carefully edited words would be appropriate.

☐ You're invited to include maps, diagrams, or illustrations.

☐ I appreciate honesty more than flattery. I appreciate specificity most of all.

☐ As usual, you might answer these questions: what went well? What did you struggle with? How did you move through difficulties as you worked to put together your projects, especially the revision? What are you proud of (this may not be the work that is the “best” or most polished from an aesthetic standpoint)?

☐ If you say, “I learned x in this class,” point to a specific place where your work shows you making use of idea/skill x. Quote from yourself.

☐ Look back at assignment sheets from early in the semester, the goals offered on your syllabus, our readings, and early drafts of your own work. Consider referencing specific moments from these documents in your letter.

☐ Consider also useful experiences that you had during workshops or class discussions. What did you learn from the people around you during this term?

☐ What is going to stick with you from this class? This could be a bulleted list of things not to do. It could be a list of things you now know that you don’t know---things that you want to spend more time with in the future. Are there open questions from class that you’re excited to continue working with/thinking about (the rushed nature of the condensed class makes me hope there might be at least one question like this)?

☐ If you’re not excited about writing a traditional letter, you might pick a metaphorical object to compare your revision process to. Or you might choose to think of this piece of writing as something like the editor’s message at the beginning of a magazine or as something like the writing that appears in a gallery brochure describing an exhibition.