

# Smith College Spatial Analysis Lab: Conferences:Amanda\_Cox\_2011

## Department Talk

Amanda Cox  
New York Times

Friday, February 11, 2011

12:30pm - 2:00pm

Computer Science Building, Room 150

## "Data Visualization at the New York Times"

The New York Times graphics desk researches and creates charts, diagrams and maps for the paper and the Web site. We'll talk about what we do and why we do it, focusing on what we know (distributions are more interesting than averages, sliders are awesome) and what I'm still hoping to learn (how to turn uncertainty into a strength, how to resolve the conflict between interactivity and storytelling).

This video is similar to the talk she gave at Umass:

<http://www.innovativeinteractivity.com/2010/11/21/new-media-days-amanda-cox-interview/>

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- Overall Impressions
  - Five Things I know
  - Three Things I don't know
  
  - Other thoughts and notes
  - some video call-outs
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## Overall Impressions - Main Points

What NY Times Graphics really do (or are uniquely positioned to do)

- Reveal Patterns
- Provide Context
- Describe Relationships

In Amanda's words: **\*\*\* Create a Sense of Wonder \*\*\***. But NYTimes must maintain clarity - clarity is always important.  
NYTimes Graphics = **Clarity Multiplied by Awe**

Format - yikes

- Print
  - Web
  - Mobile
- 
-

Amanda organized her talk as "Fives things I do know, and Three things I don't know"

## [Fives things I do know]

### 1. Distributions are more interesting than averages

- [Mariano Rivera Dominates Hitters](#),
- Melting the Internet

### 2. All Great Songs have good background singers (provide context, sense of scale) (also includes "use of time")

- [Unemployment Rate](#) (what if scenarios)
- Path to Top Home Run Hitters
- [Downhill Skiing](#)
- [Fractions of a Second: An Olympic Musical](#) (Provides Context - e.g. "what is 0.3 seconds?")

### 3. Connecting to something is good

- Historic Shift [7:00]
- <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/11/03/us/politics/election-results-house-shift.html>



**SmithGIS** GIS @Smith College

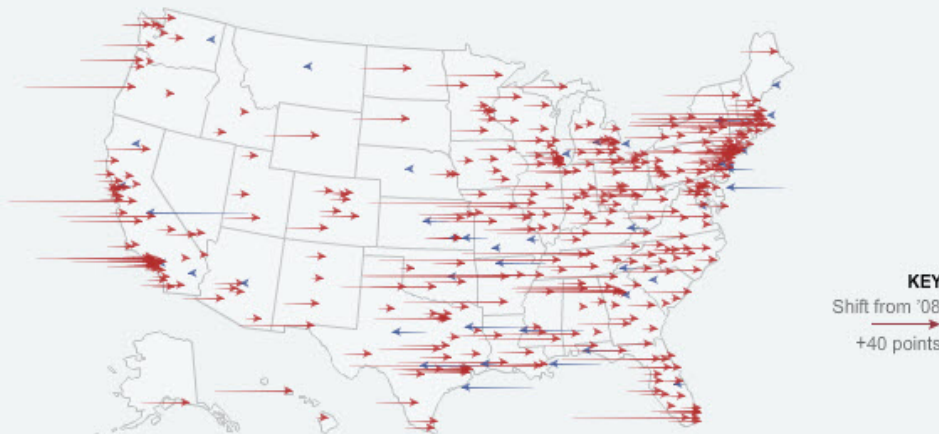
Still struggling with this map/visualization <http://nyti.ms/anEWHI>. To me, a geographer, it shows republicans moving east!

3 Mar ☆ Favorite ↩ Reply 🗑 Delete

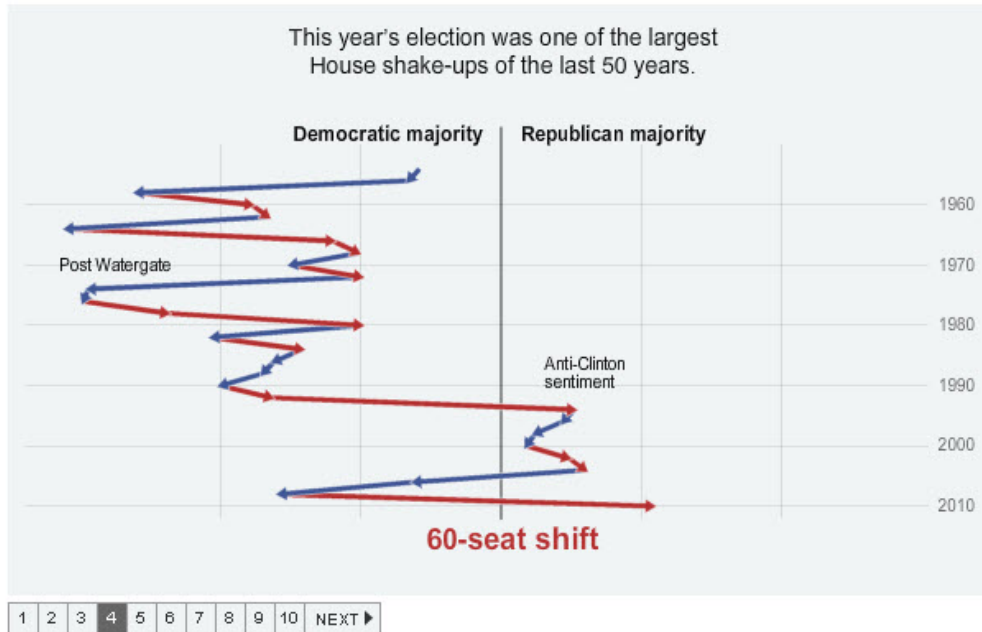
Published: November 3, 2010

## A Historic Shift

Almost all Congressional districts voted more Republican in this election than in 2008.



## A Historic Shift



The “annotation layer” is often the most important/fun. Sometimes provided by others, it elevates the data sets.

Cotton Picking to Picking Presidents <http://bigthink.com/ideas/21383>

### 4. Form is important

A great example is comparing a classic presentation of [exit poll results](#). These numbers are useful, but a user must know exactly what they are looking for to discover the story. Compare it to [this interactive](#), which lets the outliers stand out and the gives prominence to the surprises the data reveals.

“The form wants to depend on the story you are trying to tell. Form is super important. Form really matters. It reveals things that are different in each one.”

### 5. Sliders are fun

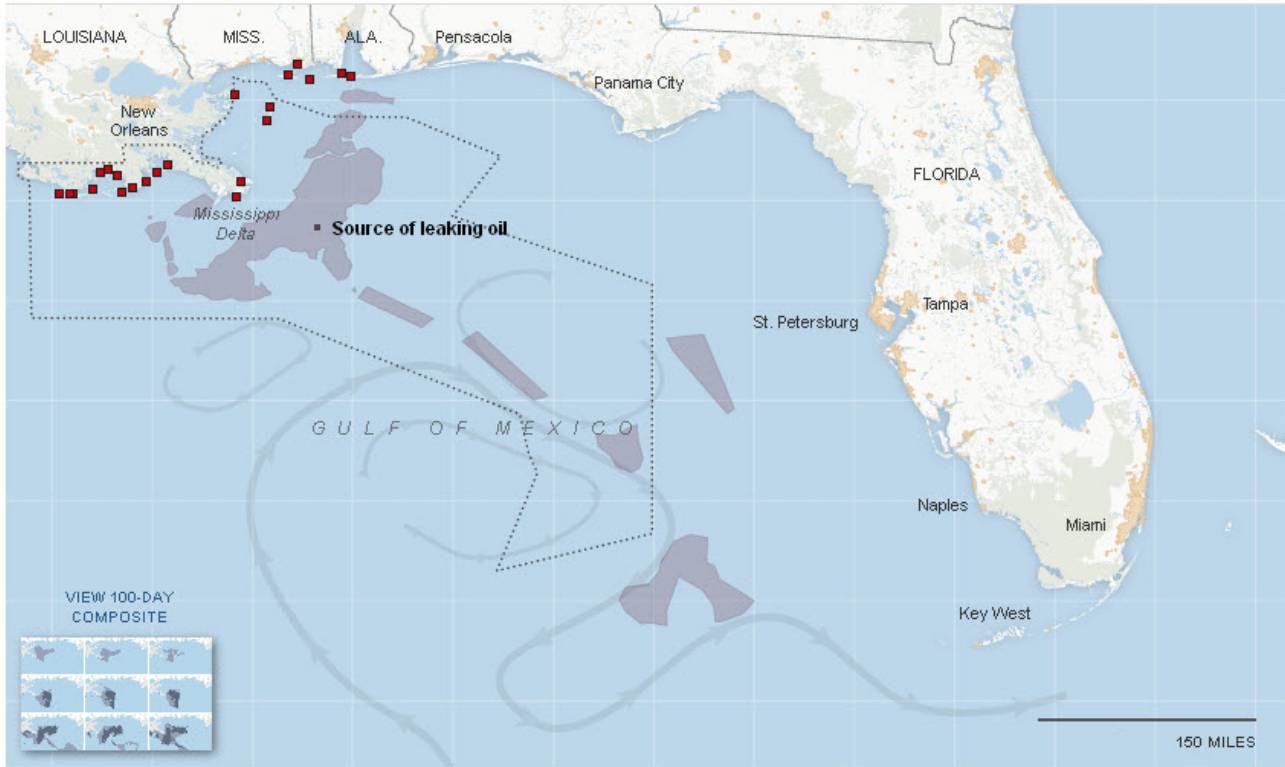
- [Oil Spill](#)
- Olympic Medals
- [Inauguration Words](#),
- Buy or Rent
- Electoral Explorer

# Tracking the Oil Spill in the Gulf

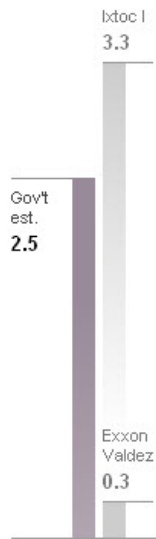
- WHERE OIL IS IN THE GULF
- WHERE OIL HAS MADE LANDFALL
- EFFORTS TO STOP THE LEAK
- EFFECTS ON WILDLIFE
- INVESTIGATING THE BLOWOUT
- FINAL MOMENTS ON THE RIG

Play 4/22 8/2

**June 2** The attempt to cut the riser pipe was delayed today when the wire saw got stuck.



**Estimate of oil spilled into the Gulf through June 2**  
In millions of barrels of oil.



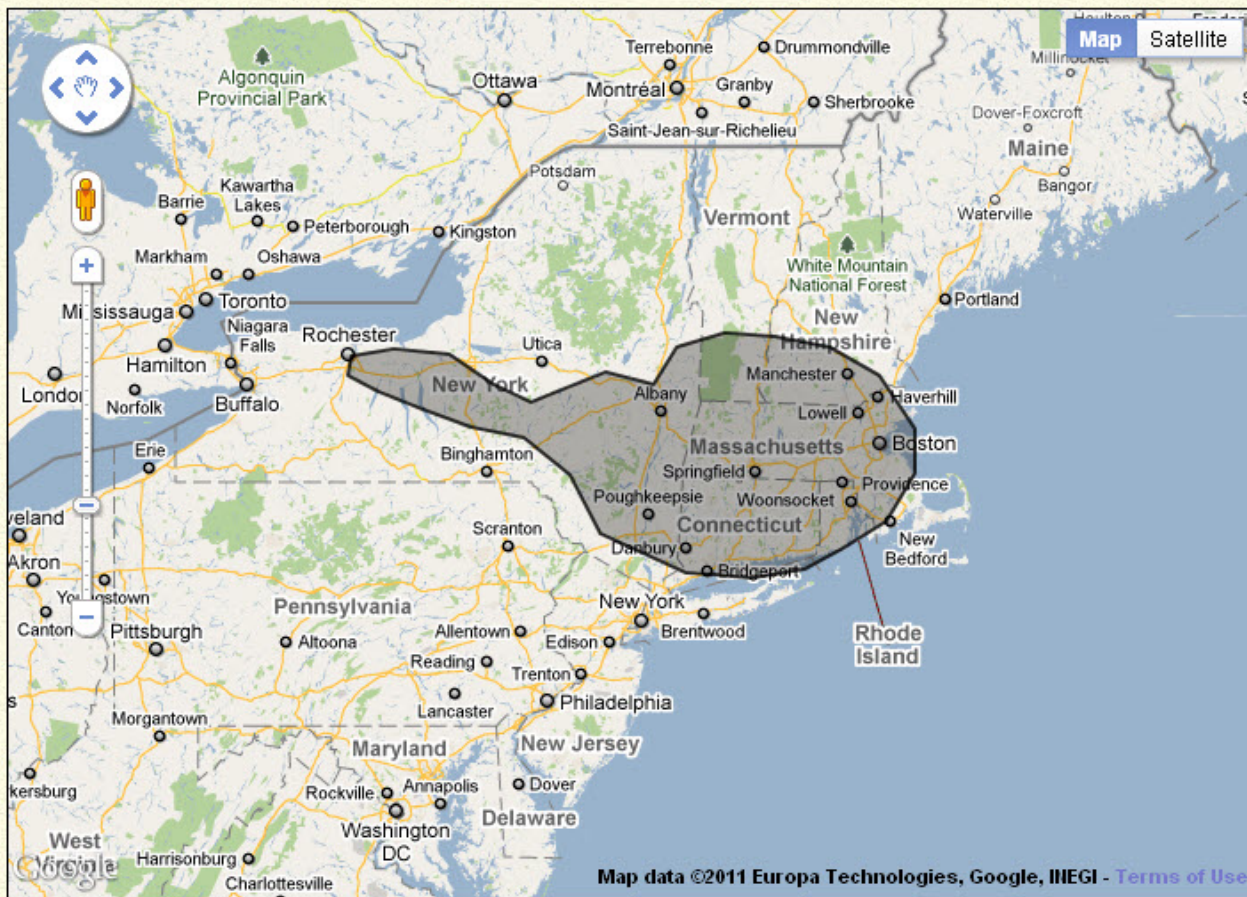
- Map Key**
- Estimated extent of oil on surface
  - Surveyed extent
  - Fishing ban
  - Loop current
  - Marshes
  - Urban areas
  - Reports from locations where oil has made landfall
  - For updates, follow us on Twitter @nytoilspillmap.

Location: Northampton, MA, USA

MOVE THE SPILL

PUT IT BACK IN THE GULF

PUT IT IN NORTHAMPTON, MA, USA



How big is the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill - [Google Earth Viz by Paul Rademacher](#)

## Three things I don't know

### 1. How to make models more accessible (reveal patterns - background story)

[Netflix Map](#) ~ Coraline in Boston

Navigation: < Previous | Next > | A ... | ... to Z

Sorting: Most rented | **Alphabetical** | By metacore

# Coraline

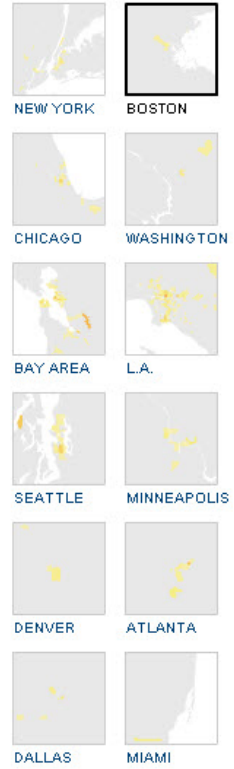
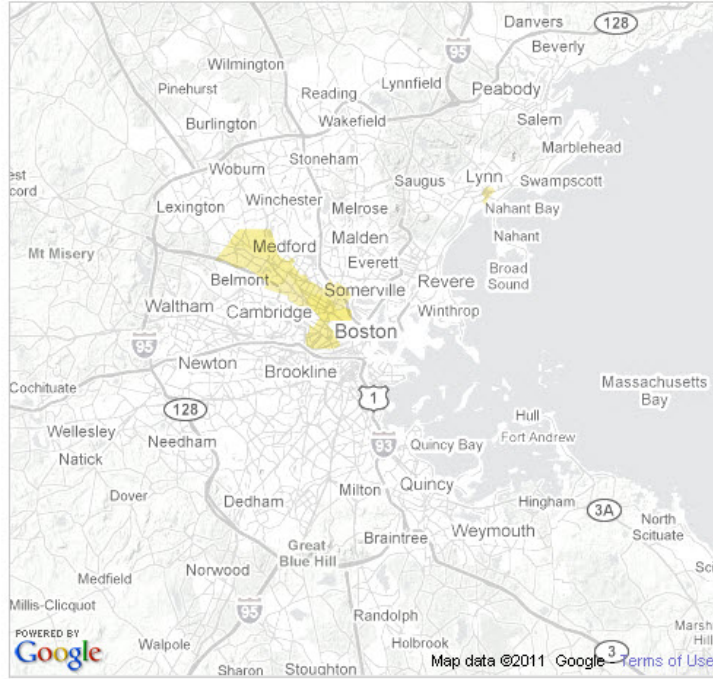


**80**  
Metacritic score  
100=loved by critics, 0=hated

There are many scenes and images in "Coraline" that are likely to scare children. This is not a warning but rather a recommendation, since the cultivation of fright can be one of the great pleasures of youthful moviegoing. As long as it doesn't go too far toward violence or mortal dread, a film that elicits a tingle of unease or a tremor of spookiness can be a tonic to sensibilities dulled by wholesome, anodyne, school-approved entertainments.

[Read Rest of NYT Review »](#)

The ZIP codes are shaded according to each movie's rank. **Ranked No. 1** (dark red) to **No. 50** (yellow)

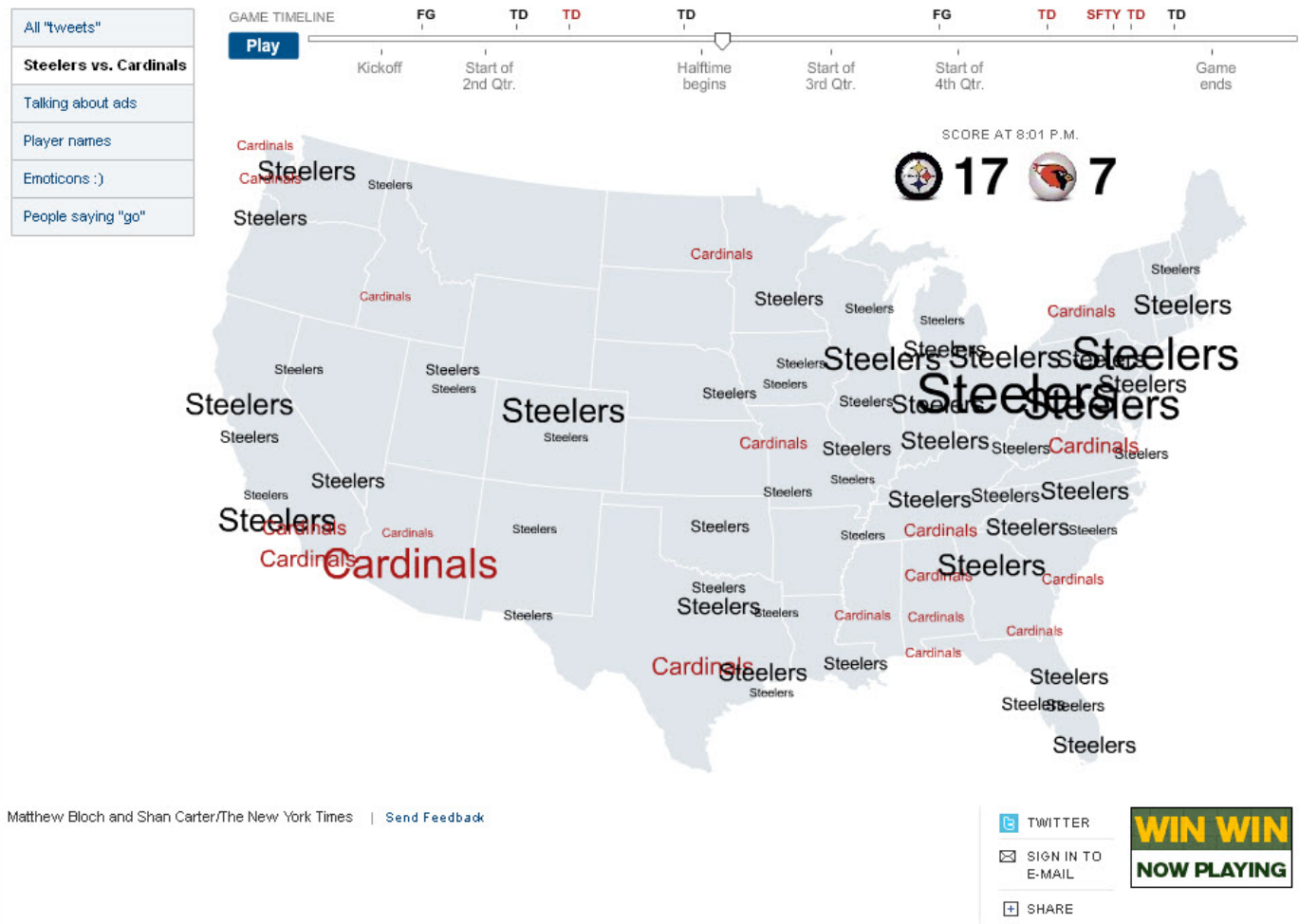


Sources: Netflix provided data on the top 50 rentals in 2009 in each ZIP code. Titles are listed in the approximate order of popularity across selected metropolitan areas. Metascores are from metacritic.com.

[2009 Superbowl Twitter Chatter](#)

# Twitter Chatter During the Super Bowl

As the Steelers and Cardinals battled on the field, Twitter users across the nation pecked out a steady stream of "tweets." The map shows the location and frequency of commonly used words in Super Bowl related messages.



## 2. How to turn uncertainty into strengths instead of weakness

## 3. Where are the templates for telling stories with data?

Steppers - basic form  
Timelines

[Video Call-Outs Time Stamps]

7:00 - Historic Shift to the Right Map!! (bring my copy!!!)

8:00 - **Annotation Layer:** "southern crescent shape for election map" - bring my stuff.

9:45 - **Context** -

- A) provide sense of scale (Haiti);

- B) **11:13** - Oil Spill (adore sliders) \* add the "If it were my home - mashup"
- C) Size of Olympic Swimming Pool in China;
- D) Background Singers - Jobless Rate for People Like You

#### **16:35 - Form -**

- Exit Polling New Hampshire Voters - phonebook mentality; not good at illustrating patterns. vs
- Democratic Primary Obama vs. Clinton - e.g. "Super Educated People in Arkansas voted for Clinton"

#### **~ 21:00 - 22:00 - Reveal Patterns**

- honor a simpler approach "fatalities in Iraq". Not "Tricked Out"

#### **25:00 - use of time -**

- skiing - Bode Miller (**use of time**)

Some Links referenced in video (also see below)

[2010 Winter Olympics](#)

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Other notes and thoughts/nuggets

#### **How to Describe a Process**

Both examples below use what are called "steppers"

- [NY Times Tracking US Airways Flight 1549](#)
  - [Crane Collapse in Manhattan](#)
  - Data Vis - tell a story - [How Americans Spend Their Day](#)
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