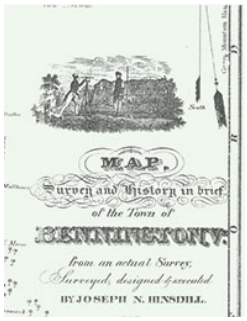
Connecting Through Place: The Future of a New England Mill Town

May 16, 2016



There will be an exhibition of student work on view, Connecting through Place: The future of a New England Mill Town, at the Left Bank Gallery in North Bennington May 23 through 27. The opening reception will take place on Friday, May 20 from 5 pm to 7 pm.

Bennington faculty and students used the town and landscape of Bennington as a vehicle to understand connections between the biophysical world, societal issues, and history. The College was awarded a National Science Foundation grant in 2012 in support of a three-year curricular project aimed at exploring sustainable futures for former mill towns in New England.

Rebecca Eisenberg is working on community responses to renewable energy projects. Annika Kristiansen is studying the effects of the proposed Ninja and Applegate Trails on the surrounding community. Olivia Errico is studying the conditions of walkability in downtown Bennington. Charlotte Uden is studying landscape/habitat fragmentation through road construction (1835 - 2016). Emma Lanning is working on mapping the spread of PFOA through groundwater.

The student work grew out of a course taught in the spring and fall of 2015, Studying Place by Metes and Bounds, which drew heavily on local residents with expertise on town history and current issues of concern. Students developed analytical skills, including literature review, interviewing, participant observation, mapping, and qualitative and quantitative data analysis. Faculty members Tim Schroeder and Ron Cohen taught the course in the fall 2015, and Miroslava Prazak and Valerie Imbruce taught the course in spring, 2015.

In the spring 2016 term, students completed independent projects based on questions and designs developed in the first course. In addition to meeting as a group, each class member worked closely with one of the collaborating faculty members, including Kerry Woods and Donald Sherefkin, as well as community entities.