INVESTIGATING A PLACE

As we have been learning in these classes, history is a way of dynamically crafting a narrative about a moment in the past. And as Linenthal discusses, monuments are landmarks that represent, honor, or institutionalize cultural values or beliefs.

Identify a place or a particular artifact or set of artifacts that can be understood as a significant monument. What story does this place or thing tell? Discuss what it memorializes. Examine what it narrativizes about a culture. Investigate its history. Expose or inquire into any controversies surrounding this place. Of course, with any narrative, choices are made in terms of what is included and also what is excluded. Examine the historical accuracy of this historical site. Look at how it represented the particular historical moment accurately and view its misrepresentation.

Using library research, identify a monument you want to research. Find at least five resources that give you a sense of that monument's history: the event that precipitated the memorial, the origins of the memorial, any controversies surrounding the monument, etc. What is the dominant narrative this site tells and what is the subversive narrative that may be read between the lines? Come to some conclusion about the function or purpose of memorializing generally based on your discoveries. This purpose will serve as your thesis, an assertion you make about this artifact. You will prove it to be true through your observations and research. You will use the skills you honed in your previous assignments to incorporate narrative, description, with your developing research skills to craft a discussion about the work this particular historical site does to remember an event in history, to create a living narrative of that event, and to serve as a manifestation of a culture's values.

You might consider what rituals, artifacts, and cultures are connected to this monument or memorial. You might return to your previous work on monuments, memorials, and artifacts that has led you to this point. Finally, you might consider the different angles we have taken with our reading and class discussions to look at how various texts can be and how writers have worked using different texts and artifacts to illustrate their manifestation of cultural values.

The Process:

- Once you have decided on the monument you want to research, begin developing your observations and reflections about it preliminarily. What do you know of it? What have you seen of it? Who do you know who has visited? What do they remember of it? What do pictures show you about it? What do you know about
the historical moment, person, or event it reflects? Think about what its purpose might be as a monument. Be certain you are choosing something that you have questions about or are curious about.

- Using Jewell Anderson’s recommendations for conducting library research, investigate this monument:
- Identify the conventional narrative—what tourists might see or come away with.
- Come to an understanding about the historical significance of this place and space.
- Read between the lines to determine how and why the narrative was crafted in a particular way. Is there a subversive narrative along with the conventional dominant narrative?
- Do investigative reporting to determine what was left out and why. Why might some aspect of the narrative not serve to emphasize the cultural values being memorialized?
- Develop questions you are inquiring about and return to your research with these questions in mind.
- Find particular resources that serve your purpose. Investigate deeply for the best resources—not just the easy resources to find!
- Reflect on your research notes by reading through them and taking notes to determine your thesis.
- Once you have your research and reflection, try and articulate a thesis. A rough formula might look like this for a starting point: This _________ memorial illustrates ___________ particular values of ____________ culture.
- Consider the various essays we have read as models for writing about cultural values. Select a few rhetorical moves you admire to incorporate into your own essay. Be an artist!
- Now that you have a purpose, rough out a structure and consider what sections you want to cover in making your case. Looking at your descriptions and observations, what evidence do you have in your assertion of this site as a manifestation of cultural values?
- Draft with your notes and rough outline in hand.
- Return to your research if necessary to make your argument clearer and more persuasive
- Cite your sources consistently in an appropriate academic citation style.
- Proofread to attend to those pesky finer points. Revise again with craft and style in mind! Get feedback. Revise again.

An A paper will address the above issues and satisfy the requirements as outlined in the departmental grading policy.

Your essay must be 4-5 double-spaced pages. It should have 1 inch margins. It should be in a reasonable professional font like Times New Roman 11 or 12 point or Garamond 11 point (which you see here). If you are tempted to achieve length via a technicality, DON’T. See me instead.