

Project 3: *introduction*

In this assignment, we will investigate the connection between place and identity. Much of our sense of self, both conscious and unconscious, is formed through relationships to locations, such as being part of a nation, a city or town, and smaller, specific communities (Boiler Up!). How do the spaces we inhabit influence our notions of identity? Why do we use physical space as a way to associate and differentiate people? What claims do locations make about groups? As a class, we will explore these issues. **Your project will focus on one of three geographical levels:**

Local—This level pertains to Purdue or the greater Lafayette area.

National—This level pertains to the United States of America.

Worldwide—This level pertains to planet Earth.

Each level comes with slightly different assignment guidelines; however, all levels require the same deliverables.

Assignment

You are responsible to deliver **three components of this project:**

1. A research portfolio (**due Dec. 10**)
2. A presentation (**due Dec. 10**)
3. A reflective essay in MLA format of approximately four pages (**due Dec. 10**)

These three sections will be covered in greater detail on the accompanying sheets.

Project³: *local*

If you focus on the local level, you will select a space at Purdue or in the greater Lafayette area. This could be a building, an open area, a neighborhood, a mode of transportation, etc. Some examples include apartments, businesses, areas on the Purdue campus, the “drunk bus,” and so forth. Feel free to explore the boundaries of what constitutes a space. Your inquiry should focus on what claim this space makes about the larger culture and its people.

Research Portfolio

Your research portfolio should contain:

- descriptive notes about the space
- a brief historical sketch
- a statement of cultural and social status/importance
- images of the space
- copies of your research materials
- all other notes, documents, outlines, and prewriting related to this project

Presentation

For your presentation, you will have to shape the information you have researched for a specific **purpose** and **audience**. Perhaps you have had a bad experience with your apartment, and you would like to create a website to help inform incoming students about housing. Perhaps you would like to create posters to call attention to the university’s tacit negation of the existence of rape on campus. Whatever you choose, remember that there is always a rhetorical aim driving your work. You are trying to do something.

Reflective Essay

Your essay should reveal the purpose behind your presentation and the choices you made to accomplish it. Your paper should formalize your statement about the space you have selected and its position in the larger culture, and how your presentation factors into this relationship.

Project3: *national*

If you focus on the national level, you will investigate the relationship between physical spaces in the USA and the abstract concept of Americanism. You will select a space—such as the USA/Mexico border, the Appalachian Mountains, Masonic Temples, or Ground Zero—and identify what it claims about our national identity. What is America? What is American culture? How is it shaped and defined through boundaries and spaces? These issues should guide your inquiry.

Research Portfolio

Your research portfolio should contain:

- descriptive notes about the space
- a brief historical sketch
- a statement of cultural and social status/importance
- images of the space
- copies of your research materials
- all other notes, documents, outlines, and prewriting related to this project

Presentation

For your presentation, you will have to shape the information you have researched for a specific **purpose** and **audience**. Perhaps you will create a website that examines the USA's actions in Nicaragua, Guantanamo Bay, and the Abu Ghraib military prison in view of its own war on terrorism. Perhaps you will create a pictographic installation of higher and lower-income health care facilities to make a claim about the country's social systems. Whatever you choose, remember that there is always a rhetorical aim driving your work. You are trying to do something.

Reflective Essay

Your essay should reveal the purpose behind your presentation and the choices you made to accomplish it. Your paper should formalize your statement about the space you have selected and its position in the larger culture, and how your presentation factors into this relationship.

Project³: *worldwide*

The space probes Voyager 1 and Voyager 2 both carried golden records containing encoded images and sounds of Earth. These records attempted to summarize existence on the planet. If you focus on the worldwide level, you will have the same task. What features of this planet and humankind would you include? Would you highlight humanity's greatest triumphs, or would you attempt to present a balanced representation by including our horrors and reprehensible acts? What claim, argument, or statement about humankind and existence on this planet would your representation make?

Research Portfolio

Your research portfolio should contain:

- a discussion of the materials you might include
- a discussion of what medium to employ and how your data could be accessed
- copies of your research materials
- all other notes, documents, outlines, and prewriting related to this project

Presentation

Your presentation will be the tangible work you would include on a similar space probe. Perhaps you will use visual materials such as a collection of photos. Perhaps you will assemble images, video, and sound on a CD. Whatever you choose, remember that there is always a rhetorical aim driving your work. The choices you make will construct an argument about this planet and humankind. What is the argument that you are making?

Reflective Essay

Your essay should reveal the argument your presentation makes about this planet and its people. You should rationalize the choices you have made to construct your argument. Your essay should reveal that your presentation crafts a coherent argument rather than an arbitrary cross-section of data, and that your choices were driven by research and careful planning.

Project³: *purpose*

Whatever level you opt to investigate, a purpose must always permeate your work. You are not making a presentation just to show people a place; this would be lazy and devoid of critical analysis. You must examine specifically what you are trying to do and how you can best accomplish your aim. This investigation, and its resultant products, must take message, medium, and audience, into account.

Always ask yourself the “so what” question. If you decide you would like to focus on the local library, ask yourself “so what”? What are you trying to say? Why should anyone care? What are you doing or saying that has not been done or said before?

Angel: I would like to look at the public library.

Devil: So what?

Angel: Well, it's a place that not many people know about, and they take it for granted.

Devil: So what?

Angel: Well, maybe they would appreciate it more if they saw what it did.

Devil: So what?

Angel: Shouldn't people use the public library? Isn't it a good thing?

Devil: I don't know.

Angel: I think it says something about our culture when libraries are ignored.

Devil: So what?

Angel: Why do libraries have to scrape by while we blow millions of dollars on football games, DVDs, CDs, and off-road vehicles that will never leave the road?

Devil: I don't know. You tell me.

Angel: Well, maybe our culture favors amusement over education. Maybe we privilege the satiation of our own desires over education.

Devil: So what?

Angel: So I should try and communicate the importance of the public library to the people whose taxes support it. I should show them that education doesn't just happen in schools, and that an uneducated populace is easier to manipulate.

Devil: That sounds like a purpose. I think you're getting warmer...

Always push yourself for specificity of purpose. Take control of what you are doing.

Project3: *grading*

The three sections of Project3 are assessed separately, but the project will be assigned a cumulative grade. Specific guidelines for each component follow:

1. **Research Portfolio**—Excellent research portfolios will demonstrate the author's concerted and dedicated research effort on this project. The research portfolio, more than the other components, should demonstrate the breadth and depth of the author's work. Research portfolios should contain all of the supplementary materials that are relevant to this project, including research materials, prewriting, drafts, etc. Excellent research portfolios will be organized in a clear and accessible way.
2. **Presentations**—Excellent presentations will reveal a specific purpose that is shaped for a particular audience and aim. Above all, presentations should demonstrate purpose and a thorough knowledge of the rhetorical situation, including audience and design elements.
3. **Reflective Essay**—Excellent reflective essays will reveal the purpose driving the author's presentation and how that purpose shaped the author's presentation. Excellent essays will be clear and have a coherent point. Excellent essays will conform to MLA guidelines, both in page format and documentation rules.

All portions of Project3 are due on December 10. Because of the late date, I cannot guarantee that you will have any revision opportunities after the project is turned in, but we will do a number of prewriting, writing, and revising activities before the due date.

If you have any questions about any facet of Project3, I encourage you to discuss your work with me during conferences and office hours. **Purdue's Writing Lab is also an excellent resource during any stage of the writing process, although it is not a mandatory component of this project and your grade will not be affected if you cannot go.** As always, I may be reached through jtirrell@purdue.edu.