



project three/spring 2001
making connections in space and time

Overview: In projects one and two you discussed the present condition of a specific place. In this project, I am asking you to expand your perspectives and put the tactics of your analysis to work in a project of greater spatial and temporal complexity. Here you are asked to investigate how the central questions you asked in project one, and began to answer in project two, apply to other places as well. In other words I am asking you to take a regional perspective in this stage of your project, by adding to your analysis of your place's inner workings an awareness of its interconnections to other places. You are also being asked to broaden your temporal, as well as spatial perspectives. In this project you'll inquire not only into what the history of this place is, but also how this place is history—how it encodes and communicates its past in its present form, and how people understand, respond to, and make use of those historical messages. In doing so we will try to see the places we are studying, and the writing that accompanies these studies, as part of a larger network of issues, ideas, and arguments that shape and are shaped by the historical relationships among places.

Writing: The outcome of this project will be a substantial revision and expansion of your writing thus far that generates **1000-1500 words of new text**, so, as in project two, your starting place for this project should be a return to the manuscript of your essay for a careful re-reading and a renewed effort at clarifying your central questions and issues. Ask yourself again, what aspects of the many ideas you generated in your initial thinking now represent the most promising, potentially useful, politically and intellectually relevant lines of inquiry?

This stage of the project might involve expansion at multiple sites in your work, rather than the insertion of a single, lengthy new passage, so in rereading your text you might look for places where you touched on regional or historical relationships and consider how those discussions might be usefully expanded. I've tried to highlight some such moments in my comments on project two, and I'll be glad to discuss other options with you during my office hours or an appointment. See where, in your text, would be the best places to add information and analysis that addresses some of the questions below:

Space:

- *What other places are shaped by the same larger cultural and political issues you engaged with in unit one? Why are these places involved in the same struggles? How is the expression or the impact of these issues different in different places? On the other hand, what kinds of places are not affected by these issues at all? Why are they exempted?*
- *What other places exercise the greatest influence over the place you discussed in unit one? What is the nature of that influence? Where do people come from or go to most often? Where do people wish they were, or are thankful that they aren't? What other places do people rely on for employment, for education, for goods and services? For energy, clean water, trash disposal? For entertainment and "culture?" For inspiration or escape?*
- *What is the spatial relationship among these places? How can you describe or organize the larger place defined by the interrelationships you describe in response to the questions above? What do you call the area defined by these relationships, and what is the impact of identifying and naming this space? What do you call the area that is constituted by those places in rough geographical proximity? Does the region have a name ("Appalachia," "Chicagoland") or a traditional description ("urban sprawl" or "watershed")? How do regional labels shape local identities?*

Time:

- *What was this place like in the past? What physical features of the landscape have altered, disappeared, or endured? What social features of the landscape—the people who were here and the things they did in this place—have changed? have remained the same? How has this place's relationship to other places changed over time?*
- *Why has this place changed? What are the most important factors in the changes you observe? What suggests this? Is there a shape or pattern to historical changes, like a vector (up from poverty) or a cycle (boom and bust) or a sudden rupture (natural or man-made disaster)? Who has benefited from these changes? Who has been negatively affected?*
- *What traces of the past still remain? What aspects of this place evoke memories of previous times? What "official" histories are put forward by monuments, markers, historical parks or preservation projects? Are there other more subtle or covert historical reminders? What value do people assign to the history of this place?*
- *What elements of the past are missing? Whose stories are not included in the official or popular versions of local history and local culture? Whose presence isn't reflected in the built environment, in official versions of the past? What accounts for this absence? What ways of looking at the landscape might see the histories that are neglected or excluded here? What changes to the landscape might make its version of history more complete?*

As you identify and expand on these sites in your text, you should be particularly attentive to maintaining the overall coherence and clarity of the structure of your work. By adding not one but two new dimensions to your study and increasing its length by as much as 50%, you may produce a patchwork or stream-of-consciousness work that presents unreasonable challenges to your reader, absent some careful, deliberate thought about large-scale organization issues. I have two pieces of advice in that regard: first, don't hesitate to cut material that no longer directly pertains to your increasingly well-defined (and redefined) central questions. Second, take careful note of the way the authors we are reading use section breaks and subheadings. When you're dealing with a broad range of materials and perspectives, breaking the lengthy overall text into "mini-essays" (each with its own title, even) can make handling the development of the argument and the flow of information, and the combination of different rhetorical strategies (personal narrative, aesthetic analysis, historical description, etc.) easier for both writer and reader. Pay careful attention to the other strategies our fellow authors use for structuring a lengthy project composed of diverse materials.

Materials: This project requires that you gather (or continue gathering) source materials as it asks you to make use of knowledge about the past that it's impossible for you to have first-hand, and to confirm some general impressions you might have about the larger area you're studying with more solid evidence. You must educate yourself about local history and regional relationships to credibly address the questions above; if you have difficulty with that, use me and your library reference staff as intellectual resources. To provide you with practical training in the handling of source material, we will complete the university-required "Exercise in Avoiding Plagiarism" and give some deliberate discussion to source citation and the preparation of a works cited page. To successfully participate in these activities, you'll need to gather some source materials. Use the maps I asked you to find in 3:1 as a starting place: what questions do they raise that other sources might answer?