**Research Paper**

**Overview:**

For this project, you will research and discuss the depiction of one historic event, person, or subject and its relationship with public memory.

You will need to conduct research to find reliable primary and secondary sources, analyze their arguments, defend a unique thesis, and use formal language. Because communicating for different audiences and in different formats is one of the major learning goals of 1102, this is not a normal “choose a topic and write an expository essay” type of final project.

**Research Topic:**

Over the course of the semester, we have looked at how arguments are made subtly in various media (like fiction, music, and images) and how even “public” sites often only serve or represent specific demographics. For example, the education system implies that certain novels that use a lot of complicated language or symbolism, like *Moby Dick,* are inherently more worthy of study than novels that are actually widely read, like *Gossip Girl*, even when the latter have a greater cultural impact. Similarly, museums and historical societies choose to memorialize particular events in order to suggest that certain historical events (like Civil War battles) are more worthy of being remembered than others (like the Trail of Tears).

Along these lines, you will choose one local event or figure that you feel has major cultural significance but has not been publicly memorialized (with anything more than a plaque) in Metro Atlanta, conduct research using primary and secondary sources, and explain why this event or person has been overlooked.

**Choosing a Topic:**

Your topic must be:

-somewhat historic (at least one generation older than you)

-significant to Metro Atlanta

-not publicly memorialized

It may be difficult to come up with topics, but remember that Atlanta has a rich history combined with a reputation for tearing things down. You may pick any time period, so long as sufficient time has passed for sites associated with that event or person to have been forgotten by the public (Justin Bieber’s house in Buckhead, for example, was occupied by him too recently to be made into a museum yet). Similarly, the term “memorialize” is deliberately being left vague in this assignment prompt so that you can choose a topic that appeals to you. This project is essentially about uncovering off-the-grid local history and examining critically how public memory remembers history selectively.

Remember that this project requires critical thinking, but it does not necessarily call for negative thinking. So long as you can support your thesis convincingly, you are welcome to argue that the lack of memorial for the individual or event you choose is a good thing. For example, you could argue that the 1906 “Atlanta Race Riot” is best forgotten because bringing it up could cause bitterness and even set a poor example for modern extremists. However, you could argue instead that the Riot ought to be remembered so that audiences today can learn from the mistakes of the past.

Examples of figures, events, and sites that are not memorialized: Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, Blind Willie McTell, James Calhoun, Leo Frank, John Wesley Dobbs (other than a statue and street), the Confederate earthworks, the Cherokee nation, the early railroads, the Atlanta Race Riot. And many, many more!

The following figures, events, and sites are already memorialized and therefore may not be used for this project, but the fact that they’re remembered and the topics above are not may help you come up with ideas: Joel Chandler Harris, Margaret Mitchell, Coca-Cola, Stone Mountain, the 1996 Olympics.

**Research Goals:**

You will need to research:

-the person or event

-the history of major sites associated with that person or event (both in Atlanta and elsewhere, if applicable)

-the perspective(s) of the scholarly community on that person or event

For example, Booker T Washington famously delivered the so-called “Atlanta Compromise” speech in what is now Piedmont Park. You would research Washington, his speech, and what happened to the building in which he spoke. You would look into what scholars have to say about the significance of his speech and about the importance (or unimportance) of his having delivered it in Atlanta. You would also consider whether Washington’s speech is already memorialized elsewhere.

You should ask yourself:

-Which local site is associated with that person or event?

-Why isn't that site a museum? If it was demolished (or had a mysterious fire and “collapsed”), why wasn't it preserved?

-Why does the Atlanta Development Authority prioritize protecting certain historic sites over others?

-Why do municipal governments and historical societies prioritize funding certain sites over others?

-Are there public memorials to this individual or event outside Metro Atlanta?

-Are sources biased in favor of or against the individual or event?

-How does lack of memorialization for this person or event reflect upon Atlanta?

Example: At about 180 years old, the Solomon Goodwin house in Brookhaven is one of the oldest surviving structures in Atlanta, yet it is privately owned by descendants of Goodwin and it has no historical protection, so the owners are free to sell it to a commercial developer who could demolish it and build a McDonalds on the site (and since it’s wedged between a U-Haul store, a Subway, and a new Walgreens, and the owners are trying to sell, this isn’t such an unlikely possibility). You would research Goodwin, the house, and Brookhaven, to try to explain why such a unique property is at risk. You are welcome to conclude that this old house is at risk because it lacks cultural value and that a profitable business like McDonalds would serve the Brookhaven community better - or you could conclude that the gentrification of Brookhaven is tragically causing cultural treasures to be overlooked in favor of generic commercial ventures.

**Format:**

The paper must be **6 full pages** long, not including the bibliography. Your paper should have a clear, original thesis which is well-supported by scholarly research. You should organize your paper consciously in order to present your ideas as persuasively and logically as possible. Although this paper does not need to be structured with 3 main body paragraphs, you will need to have an introductory paragraph that introduces your thesis, multiple body paragraphs that focus on presenting evidence to support your thesis, and a concluding paragraph that summarizes your argument. You must use reliable academic sources and integrate them properly. You must write in complete sentences and use an appropriate academic tone. Your paper should contain no significant grammatical or mechanical errors.

**Sources in the final paper:**

You should cite at least 5 sources. At least two of your sources should be primary sources. The secondary sources should be reliable scholarly works - articles published in an academic journal or books published by a college press or a major publisher. Websites can only be used with prior approval from the instructor. You must include at least 3 quotations and only one of the quotations may be longer than 3 lines.

**Bibliography:**

The paper must have a bibliography in MLA format. All sources used in the paper must be listed. Sources should be listed in alphabetical order by author’s last name.

**Grading Scheme:**

**A (90-100)**

Ideas are insightful, thought-provoking, and focused. The paper has a clear central thesis as well as a broader purpose that indicates awareness of the academic conversation about the topic. Organization of paper includes abundant details and examples. Author provides relevant, concrete, specific and insightful evidence in support of sound logic. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation are conventionally appropriate. Writing style conforms to academic writing standards. All citations follow MLA guidelines properly. Quotations have been selected carefully to support the essay’s purpose and are integrated appropriately.

**B (80-89)**

Ideas support the topic and a central idea but may not be consistently insightful or thought-provoking. Organization is mostly coherent and unified in support of the essay’s purpose, but could be more effective. May present weak transitions between ideas or paragraphs. Minimal errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Language conforms to academic writing standards (no question marks, wordiness, or use of first or second person). Citations follow MLA guidelines and quotations are integrated appropriately.

**C (70-79)**

Ideas are clichéd or general but demonstrate some support of the central topic. Development of thesis is sufficient but general, providing adequate details and examples in some places. Evidence and explanation may lead to a few logical fallacies or unsupported claims. Numerous errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation, but the style mostly conforms to academic writing standards. Citations follow MLA guidelines but quotations are not always integrated appropriately.

**Failing paper (0-69)**

Ideas are confusing and unfocused. Ambiguous central idea. Development does not fulfill the requirements on the assignment sheet. Serious problems with conventional grammar, spelling, and punctuation that confuse the meaning. Formatting is faulty.