

## **HSTAA 208 DIGITAL RESEARCH PROJECT: SOUTH LAKE UNION STORIES**

### **Site Report #1: THE DEEP READ (10% of grade)**

Due Date: Friday, January 25 at 1:30 PM

Page Length: 300-450 words plus minimum of 3 images and 1 hand-drawn map

Urban places are like texts; we can read their histories by closely paying attention to and deconstructing the details of their present state. John Stilgoe describes this process of deep reading in *Outside Lies Magic*, and for your first assignment you will do a close read of the South Lake Union block you have chosen for your project.

Pay a visit to your site during the first two weeks of the quarter, taking a small camera with you (cell phone camera should be fine). Take a small notepad and pen with you and take notes about notable things you see, hear, smell, or touch during your exploration. Take as many photos as you can; you may want to use these in later site reports. Don't forget to observe details above and below eye level. The site report should, first, explain what is there, both buildings and infrastructure, and what purpose they seem to fulfill. Include the details of the city streetscape that you don't usually notice, and think about why you did not notice them.

It then should ask at least three questions inspired by this first look. These are questions to which you do not yet have answers, but that you think might be answered by your historical research. These could be things like: was this always land or was it once part of the lake? What kinds of businesses were here? Who lived here? Who lives here now? What is planned for this site in the future? Where are other people going as they move through here? What's underground? What's that strange smell?

Last, it should consider what's missing – the buildings or uses that you might expect to find, but don't. Speculate about why they might be there, and identify what data you need to find answers.

With your camera, take pictures of features of interest to illustrate their site report; your final report and the Omeka gallery associated with it should feature at least three photos. With pen/pencil and unlined white paper, draw a map of your block showing how its buildings and features relate to one another. No drafting skills are necessary, and you choose to be as realistic or impressionistic as you choose. You may choose to upload this map to Omeka or, if you would prefer it not be public, you can instead email it to your section instructor to be graded.

### **Site Report #2: ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY (10% of grade)**

Due Date: Friday, February 8 at 1:30 PM

Page Length: 300-450 words plus minimum of 3 images

The landscape historian Anne Spirn has written, "nature is a continuum, with wilderness at one pole and the city at the other. ... The city is neither wholly natural nor wholly contrived." Your second site report will present a history of your block from the perspective of its natural setting and natural processes.

First, drawing on the resources gathered on the HSTAA 208 Library Guide, consult at least two early topographical maps of the South Lake Union area to identify what natural features were present at or closely adjacent to your block prior to 1850. Using what you have learned from *Native Seattle* and the class lectures, discuss how this natural topography may have influenced urban development at their site. Upload at least one of the map images to your Omeka site to accompany this section of the text.

Then, discuss how this natural state has been altered over time. You can gather evidence of these changes from more maps, photographs, newspaper reports, and environmental impact studies. Is your block one of those created by filling in the lakebed or marshland? Was it part of the Denny Regrade? How was its original

topography and hydrology altered over time? What were the environmental effects? Upload at least one of the primary document images to your Omeka site to accompany this section of the text.

Last, analyze on the environmental present of their site. Take photographs of any signs of the pre-urban landscape and current on-going natural processes, i.e. trees, grass in the sidewalk cracks, sewer inflow and outflow, etc. Discuss at least 2 of these signs and explain how they are evidence of the original “natural” state of the block. Upload at least one of your photographs to the Omeka site to accompany this section of the text.

### **3. Site Report #3: THE AUDIO TOUR (10% of grade)**

Due Dates:

Script: turned in at discussion section on February 17/18

Text and Audio Recording: uploaded to Omeka by March 1 at 1:30PM

Page Length: 200-300 words plus at least 2 images; 2-minute audio recording

This part of the assignment asks you to tell the story of your block over time through an audio tour. Your work has three parts: doing the research, writing a script (on which the instructor will give ungraded feedback), and creating a recording of your reading that script aloud. You will upload text of the script and your spoken-word recording to Omeka.

To start the research, examine at least four maps of the neighborhood. One must be from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, another from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the remaining two can be from a time period of your choice. Remember, the broader the time period the more effective your tour will be. Note what happens to your block. What changes occur? Are the changes sudden or gradual? Most importantly, why do the changes happen? (This part of the research builds on the work you have done in Site Report #2; the more you know from that assignment, the easier this part of the assignment will be.)

The second research step is to draw upon at least four primary sources beyond the maps to answer questions of 1) what types of activities occurred on the block and why, 2) who lived/worked on the block and why, 3) key events (policy, economic, social) that affected the block’s development. The HSTAA 208 Library Guide will point you towards sources, which can include city directories, census data, newspapers, zoning maps, et al. Screenshots of at least two of the documents should be scanned and placed as historical artifacts in the student’s Omeka gallery to accompany the final script.

Now, write the script. Remember that writing something that’s intended to be spoken is a different form than writing something that will never be read aloud. Sentences can be shorter use simpler vocabulary. As long as the substance is there, the tone can be conversational and more informal. The script should quickly tell the story of the block, citing evidence from the primary source materials. Imagine someone listening to this audio tour on their phone or iPod as they walk around your block, and include information that will help them see the landscape in a different way.

You will turn in this script at section, and receive feedback on it from the instructors a few days later. Based on that, record yourself reading the script on a device of your choice (phones are fine if they have that capability, and the Odegaard Media Center has equipment that can do this as well). Upload the media file to Omeka along with the text of your script and at least 2 images of primary sources.

### **4. Site Report #4: THE PAST AND FUTURE SOUTH LAKE UNION (10% of grade)**

Due Date: March 15 at 1:30 PM

Page Length: 300-450 words with at least 2 images

South Lake Union is now a booming neighborhood of technology companies, cafes and restaurants, museums and parks. Its new identity has been pushed and marketed by a variety of actors, from real estate developers to public officials, and this narrative also has been contested by other people and groups who lament the erasure of its past and the displacement of its residents. Development has changed the neighborhood dramatically in the past few years, and it's about to change it even more, as a proposal to dramatically increase building heights and densities in the neighborhood is currently under debate in City Hall.

Using the online class portfolio of South Lake Union documents, students should research how South Lake Union is understood today. Taking at least 2 of the documents in the portfolio, the site report first should discuss who is writing each document, how they want their readers to understand the neighborhood, and what they hope will be gained. Have their plans already being implemented? How do these plans compare/contrast/complement the historical usage of their site? Are city planners aware of this history?

Next, the site report should reflect on what the history of your block might tell planners and developers and residents about where South Lake Union might go next. What should we take into account in future development of the neighborhood?

### **Site Report #5: FINAL GALLERY (10% of grade)**

Due Date: March 20 by 5:00 PM

Page Length: Revisions to earlier text plus additional 200-300 words

The final element of the project pulls everything together. It gives you an opportunity to return to the earlier sections of your Omeka exhibit and amend, correct, redact, and improve what is there. The first part of this assignment, then, requires going through the first four reports and editing and rewriting as necessary. Consider both the comments of your instructors and those from your peers, and respond as fully as you can. These rewrites will not change the initial grade on your report, but they will be taken into account in your grade on this section.

Second, you should add an introduction and a conclusion of 100-150 words each to the exhibit. In both, incorporate what you have learned about the larger themes of urban development and of Seattle's development specifically, and how this microhistory project shows these processes at work. Frame an introduction that orients a new reader to your site and, in the conclusion, tell the reader 2-3 critical takeaways we should understand from learning this site's history.

### **PEER REVIEW (5% of grade)**

Students will also engage with other students' projects through peer-editing. In the week after the due dates of the first three site reports, you should view at least 4 other projects and provide constructive criticism and praise (at least 12 comments in total).