

Mary Gormley  
College Writing I  
Representing and Analyzing Place

## **Assignment Overview and Objectives:**

Throughout our discussion of *Townie*, we will address issues of how place both shapes and is shaped by identity. Later in the semester, you will be asked to write an essay about your own sense of a personal place, as well as a rhetorical analysis of another, more public, place. This in-class exercise (to be completed over two class days), along with our discussion of *Townie* and other assigned readings\*, will help you to examine various perspectives of place in order to develop insightful, detailed, and critical essays about place.

### **Part 1: Mapping UML**

In class today, draw a map of your UML, that is, UML *as you experience it*. I will distribute white paper and colored pencils and markers, but you can also feel free to use your own pen/pencil. Don't worry about how well you can draw or how well you know the entire campus. The goal here is not to create an artistic rendition of the entire campus, or an instructive guide for others to follow to get from North to South; the goal is for you to represent how you personally see, live, experience UML. Though these maps do not have to be perfect, I will provide enough time and paper for you to draft and revise as needed. You will be asked to share these maps with classmates.

### **Part 2: Group Discussion**

Working in groups, you will examine the maps for similarities, differences, and patterns, and answer the questions below. As you work in your groups, everyone should take notes. (You will need them to write a 1-2 page individual reflection of the mapping and group discussion experience.)

- What specific places do the maps in your group have in common? How can you categorize these places?
- What kinds of places are left out? Why do you suppose they are left out?
- How are places identified? (Are formal names used, abbreviations, nicknames, etc.?)
- What shared assumptions about UML do your maps suggest?
- Are there any contradictions among your maps?
- How do different factors of experience and identity influence what gets included and what gets excluded? (A resident student, for example, with no car may have excluded all parking areas, while a commuter student may have started the map at the parking lot.)

Groups will report findings to the class, and we will identify larger patterns and differences. We will also re-consider these questions and responses as we discuss the concepts and arguments of our different readings on place.

### **Part 3: Reflection**

In a short essay, you should write about how it felt to complete this exercise, and what you think you can take from it. How did you feel about being asked to draw a map in writing class? What surprised or troubled you about your own map? About your group members' maps? Were there any group findings that you disagreed with or would have stated differently? Anything you would have focused on that the group did not address? You do not have to answer all of these questions—in fact, you shouldn't answer all of them—in your essay; but you might use them to help determine what to reflect on, and one or two could be the focus of your essay. Bring reflective essays to next class (follow syllabus guidelines for formatting). I will not collect your maps, but you should save them for use with another place-based assignment at the end of the semester.

### **Evaluation:**

Group discussion will count as part of your course participation grade; everyone is expected to share work and contribute to group responses. Reflective essays will count as one of your required response pieces (see syllabus), and will be evaluated according to how well you develop and explain your thoughts on the exercise, provide a focused discussion, and do not simply summarize the exercise.

\*Additional readings about place (may change):

- Forest, Benjamin. "West Hollywood as Symbol: The Significance of Place in the Construction of a Gay Identity."
- hooks, bell. "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance."
- Jackson, Peter. "Domesticating the Street: The Contested Spaces of the High Street and the Mall."