LOverman/Fall 2012

English 115

**PROGRESSION 3:**

**Arguing Through Texts**

You will be reading and writing about the socioeconomics and politics of space and how artists will, at times, “deliberately try to challenge the customary ways we view the world around us. When an artist disrupts our conventional spatial orientation—for example, by complicating our mental categories of top/bottom, inside/outside, front/back, or surface/depth—the effect can be one of confusion and disorientation. Writers and artists like to call this effect, ‘defamiliarization’, to emphasize the way they have altered our perception of ordinary objects” (Atwan 287).

While space can be defined as urban, community, and personal, it may also be *institutional* (e.g., the university and hospital). We’re interested in how space shapes/defamiliarizes our conception of the world, self, and other and in particular to social implications of particular spaces. The topic of space and how it can defamiliarize us will include fieldwork in which you report on the physical and cultural geographies of a particular area or structure, the virtual or material representation of that area or structure; the effects or defamiliarization of a particular space on our understanding of race, class, and gender (e.g., how your notion of space reflects these attitudes). This project lends itself to analysis of a particular space and how it shapes/defamiliarizes you.

One thing we all come to understand over time is that influential ideas are rarely formed in the mind of a single individual; rather, they are formed by thinkers playing off of each other’s thoughts, theories, and discoveries. Sometimes scholars create ideas by engaging each other directly (through verbal exchanges, email messages, or memos), but they often exchange ideas in more indirect ways. A scholar can respond to a published text that has been in circulation in an academic community for years, perhaps even decades or centuries. Because written texts can span miles and millennia, a philosopher of this decade can, for example, “listen to” (read) and “speak to” (write about) Plato in the form of an essay or an article. Of course, Plato will not be able to listen to the modern thinker’s reply, but other living scholars can, and they too can begin to make contributions to on-going ***conversations*** about topics, ideas, and questions that remain matters for investigation or debate.

This progression’s essay requirement asks you to enter into ***conversation*** with published scholars. In your essay you must reproduce and respond to a scholarly conversation in light of these questions:

* **What are the larger *implications* of this conversation?**
* **What are some of the different *positions* in this conversation?**
* **What is your response to these *viewpoints*?**
* **What is *your* contribution to the *conversation*?**

You have been provided with texts that represent some of the key positions within a particular discussion or debate. You will want to use these texts to initiate and inform *your* ***argument***. In other words, your purpose should not be to cram as many sources as you can into your essay; you do not want other writers’ voices to drown out your own.

*By the end of this progression, you should understand the following key terms:* ***conversation****,* ***claim****,**and* ***argument****. You should also understand the basic concepts of* ***formal academic structure****. You will be expected to follow* ***MLA documentation****, to perform* ***surface editing*** *and* ***deep editing****, and to write a* ***planning document.***

**EXERCISE 3.1:**

**Argument and Analysis**

The purpose of this first exercise is to encourage you to practice an open-minded but cautious way of engaging with the ***claims*** of other scholars.

**Task**: For this exercise you will turn a curious yet skeptical gaze onto one of the articles about space that you have read for this progression. First, even if you have reservations about the author’s ideas, make sense of her/his ***argument*** by explaining it in your own words. What is the writer’s ***position***? What are the essential ***claims*** here? What evidence does the author offer for these claims? Next play devil’s advocate: which aspects of the essay sound wrong to you? Does the evidence persuade you? Which assumptions or conclusions strike you as problematic or unreasonable?

**Requirements**: Your response should be two to three double-spaced pages and calls for ***MLA documentation***. Avoid large block quotations and use this exercise as an opportunity to refine your ability to weave together short quotations, paraphrases, and your own prose. Post to blog.

**Due**: See Weekly Schedule

**EXERCISE 3.2:**

**The Dialogue**

The purpose of this exercise is to remind you that you are forming an argument within the context of an ongoing ***conversation*** about a given topic. Within this conversation, participants will inevitably touch upon certain common ideas, and very possibly they will develop ***claims*** that directly contrast with those of other participants.

**Task:** For this exercise, animate some of the opposing ***claims*** that you have encountered in our readings. ***Create a fictional dialogue*** between two or more authors (you pick the setting that is most appropriate). Since these “characters” will most likely be academics, they will have a habit of quoting texts, especially their own. Be sure to give each ***claim*** equal development, and avoid oversimplifying (even when discussing an ***idea*** with which you do not agree).

**Requirements**: This dialogue should be three double-spaced pages. Ordinarily a dialogue format does not call for ***MLA documentation***, but you should supply it anyway. Remember to include a “Works Cited” list. Post to blog.

**Due**: See Weekly Schedule

**EXERCISE 3.3:**

**Argumentative Proposal**

How do you plan to construct your own ***argument***? Since your audience will be an academic one, your ***planning document*** should follow an accepted ***academic structure*** for presenting your ***claims*** and your ***evidence***.

**Task**: Discuss the overall topic/concept for your paper and state your position on it so far:

* Here is one important ***claim*** in this ongoing conversation.
* Here is an opposing ***claim*** in this ongoing conversation.
* Here is what I think is questionable or problematic with some of these ***claims***.
* Here is my ***claim*** in this conversation.
* Here is what other scholars might say about my ***claim***.

For each item, you will need to provide brief summaries of the ***evidence*** you will be weaving into your essay. You will, of course, want your summary of what other scholars think to emphasize the passages most relevant to your own ***argument***.

**Manuscript Notes:** Your ***planning document*** should be detailed and not simply a list of points; three double-spaced pages should suffice. When you quote, use ***MLA documentation***; remember to include an “Annotated Bibliography” list.

Post to Forum in Moodle as indicated in schedule.

Each class member will post helpful constructive questions/comments in reply to TWO other classmates.

**Due**: See Weekly Schedule

**ESSAY III**

Your primary objective for this paper will be to make a well-informed, carefully considered contribution to an on-going conversation or debate about spatial forms and perspectives. Your audience for this essay is comprised of scholars who are interested in your topic and who may be aware of the important texts, thinkers, and arguments frequently cited within your chosen ***conversation***. However, while your readers may be familiar with some of the more influential voices that you will cite, they will expect you to remind them of key words and statements. These academic readers like texts, and they respect well-read participants of the conversation, so you should use textual support as a way of establishing credibility as well.

Your academic readers, though, will not be reading your essay simply to “re-hear” authoritative voices; they want you to bring those voices into your ***argument*** ⎯ and they want you to prove that you have understood them ⎯ but they still expect *your* voice to predominate. So you must have something definite to contribute, even if it is only a revision, qualification, or correction of an existing belief or idea.

**Task**: Consider the effects of your chosen space that shape and/or defamiliarize us and explore their larger implications on society as a whole.

* **What are the larger *implications* of your idea about your chosen space?**
* **What are some of the different *positions* you can bring into your discussion of your chosen space?**
* **What is your response to these *viewpoints*?**
* **What is *your* contribution to the *conversation*?**

Review your previous exercises and some of the “moves” your academic audience will expect you to make as you write your essay. Your readers will expect you to discuss established ***claims*** already in circulation within the conversation, and they will expect you to give these ideas a full and fair trial. But most of all your readers are interested in what *your* response is, and what *your* contribution to the conversation will be.

Remember that academic readers like a calm and methodical consideration of ideas; making an ***argument*** is not the same thing as being argumentative. Even though you may criticize another scholar’s position, your readers will not respond favorably to a strident or sarcastic tone. Also, as before, keep in mind that while your ***evidence*** provides the foundation for your work, you need to keep your voice and your thinkingfront-and-center.

**Requirements:** This essay should be five to seven double-spaced pages and calls for ***MLA documentation***; you must include a “Works Cited” list at the end of your essay. When you quote key phrases or clauses from your text(s), you must provide parenthetical documentation. Post to blog.

**Due:** See Weekly Schedule

**FINAL PROJECT: Pick a thesis based on PROGRESSION 3 ESSAY + COLLABORATIVE ORAL PRESENTATION WITH USE OF NEW MEDIA\*\*\***

**Task:** Groups will collaboratively put forth an argument related to defamiliarization of space in our society. Present your findings with use of new media (powerpoint, YouTube, website, blog, etc.).

**Requirements:**

* Thesis
* Examples/Supporting Evidence
* Counter-argument
* 2 scholarly sources (with MLA Works Cited page)
* New media
* **Final Project Presentation**

**Task:** Present your new media findings to the class.

**Requirements:**

* 10 min
* Participation from all group members
* Individual blog post which includes link to presentation & provides a paragraph which details contributions of group

**Presentation dates:** See Weekly Schedule