

11.016J The Once and Future City Spring 2015

Grading Criteria

This description of criteria is intended to help you plan your work. Please take the time to proof your text. Papers are marked down for numerous typos and misspelled or missing words.

- 1) Meeting the basic requirements of the assignment:
 - a. Site (4-8 blocks in size, 10 blocks at most) illustrated on a map showing the boundaries;
 - b. Comparison of site in four different time periods (including at least three detailed atlases) plus one from the present, at least one of which must be from the nineteenth century (delineate your site boundaries on all maps);
 - c. A thesis about patterns of change on your site and their significance;
 - d. Description and analysis of specific changes on your site during the periods of the maps examined, which support your thesis;
 - e. Reference to the required reading to test, substantiate, or revise your thesis about the changes you observed.
- 2) Submission on time. Late submissions receive a reduction in grade. There are no extensions without prior, written consent of the instructor. The assignment must be posted on your website and a copy of the text document must be uploaded to the class website. It is not necessary to include the photos and maps in the text document since they will be accessible your website.
- 3) Quality of observations. The observations should go beyond vague generalization and mere description. They should be specific and insightful, and should be used as evidence to construct an argument (a thesis) about patterns of change over time on your site. These observations should not be a mere catalogue of changes, but should be focused on significant details and should explain why they are important within the neighborhood and/or how they exemplify larger patterns of change characteristic of the city as a whole.
- 4) Quality of writing. The essay should be well written and well-organized, with strong introductory and concluding paragraphs, a clear sequence of ideas, and specific examples to illustrate and support the ideas. There should be no misspelled words, mistakes in grammar, or typos. All sources should be fully cited.
- 5) Quality of illustrations. The required maps should be neatly presented with site boundaries shown and the sources of the maps and any other illustrations fully cited (see **Citation Guide**)
- 6) Quality of the presentation of words and images on the website. The quality of the layout and features of your website will be given more weight in later assignments than in earlier ones. Clarity of the web presentation is paramount.

Note: As emphasized in class, research in secondary sources, such as books or websites about Boston is no substitute for your own observations of primary documents, especially the detailed fire-insurance atlases. Make the most of your observations from these primary sources and avoid the temptation to rely heavily on secondary sources beyond the required reading.

The very best assignments are well organized, with specific examples to make each point about how the site has been shaped by social, economic, political, and cultural processes. These examples are not a mere catalogue of features, but include an explanation of why these processes are important within the site and/or how they exemplify larger patterns of urban change. Successful papers cite observations

made in the field and cite the required reading in order to test, substantiate, or revise hypotheses about what was observed. Such papers have excellent introductory and concluding paragraphs. Maps of the site are included with the boundaries clearly marked. All sources are cited properly. The essay is well written with no (or very few) typos or misspelled words. Such papers will receive an A or A- depending on how significant and astute the observations are.

Good assignments contain detailed observations and include the maps required by the assignment, with site boundaries drawn on each map. However, papers in this category may have one or more shortcomings, for example: they might describe general characteristics of the site drawn from secondary sources at the expense of detailed, first-hand observations of the maps themselves or they may fail to cite the required reading. They may lack a well-reasoned thesis or argument and/or strong introductory or concluding paragraphs. Such papers will receive a B+, B, or B- depending on whether or not they also had some characteristics of excellent papers.

Less successful assignments contain some detailed observations, but do not discuss their significance. Some draw mainly from secondary sources, at the expense of first-hand observation, and/or contain broad generalizations without substantiation. They may lack strong introductory or concluding paragraphs and/or are weak in structure or too brief. They may contain numerous typos or misspelled words. Such papers will receive a C+, C, or C-, depending upon whether or not they also had some characteristics of good and excellent papers.

Unsuccessful assignments fail to meet some or all of the basic requirements. They lack sufficient, detailed observations about the site, contain assertions without evidence, misleading generalizations, or errors of fact that should have been verified in the required reading, and/or fail to put observations into context. Such papers receive a D+, D, or D- depending upon whether or not they also have some characteristics of more successful papers. A paper that fails to address the basic requirements of the assignment will receive an F.

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