

Essay 3: The Psychogeography Project

The Assignment

Choose a neighborhood somewhere in Los Angeles County and analyze the effects of the geographical environment (built or natural) on the emotions and behaviors of the individuals who live or visit there.

The geographical environment may involve the landscape, architecture, types of stores or restaurants, language on signs, presence of freeways or public transportation, or other elements that give us a sense of “place” or the personality of a neighborhood. In essence, you are studying the psychogeography or “psychic space” of your chosen neighborhood.

Psychogeography studies the effect of the geographical environment on the emotions and behavior of individuals.



For example: What do the palm trees on this street tell you about the neighborhood (consult “Orphans, Dwarfs, Strangers, and Monsters” for information on LA botany)? What about the view of the Hollywood sign? The number of cars? Are there any physical indications or reminders of the social or economic history of this street?

The Thompson article (“Corporate Sociability”) is an example of a psychogeography study of consumer spaces and how IKEA, the Apple Store, and Starbucks designed their stores to have particular effects on the customer. You can use this article as a model of how to write a psychogeography essay focused around a main claim or idea. Your essay will also be focused around a complex claim (your thesis) that offers an original idea or theory about the personality of your neighborhood. Your task, as a writer/scholar, is to move readers into a deeper understanding of the elements that characterize place and how those elements affect us.

Choosing a Neighborhood

Start by considering a neighborhood that you find interesting or unique, or one that you want to learn more about. This might be a neighborhood that you are already somewhat familiar with or a neighborhood that is entirely new to you. Consider building on your exploration of your chosen neighborhood from essay 2. Remember that your goal is to add original insights to a conversation about this place, so even if you choose a neighborhood you are familiar with, you will need to dig beneath a surface understanding and deepen your examination with thorough research.

Tip: Before you say, “That’s easy! I’ll choose my own neighborhood!” remember that it can be very difficult to set aside our preconceived notions of a familiar place and view it through a new lens. For that reason, it may be a good idea to consider a place that you are not intimately familiar with.

Getting a Visual

Because this essay will analyze visual elements of a place, it is essential to capture your visual text for the reader. Therefore, this essay will include a visual component. This may be in the form of photographs that you have taken of the location, a map you have created, or an infographic. The visual should be relevant and serve to enhance the reader's understanding.

The Research

In essay 2, you had to do research in order to write about your chosen songs. In this essay, you will take your research even further. Because essay 3 is a research-based essay, your use of sources will be fundamental. Your research will likely take a variety of forms, such as:

- Scholarly research – secondary sources / scholarly articles involving analysis of your neighborhood, most likely found in online databases or in print in the library
- Historical research – primary sources involving first-hand accounts of the neighborhood or secondary sources detailing its history
- Fieldwork – interviews with people who live in or are knowledgeable about the neighborhood, acquiring information such as building codes and demographics, visiting the neighborhood to gather personal observation and evidence

Keep in mind that your essay is not simply a summary of facts about a place or an historical overview. Instead, you will use the ideas that you find in your research to develop your original analysis of the neighborhood. Wikipedia may not be used as a source.

The Requirements

- Your essay should be a **minimum** of **8 full double-spaced pages** with **1”** side margins, **1”** header and footer margins, **Times New Roman, 12 pt font**.
- Your essay should attempt to engage in **analysis** that goes beyond a superficial understanding of your neighborhood. While stereotypes may be discussed, your essay should not rely on stereotypes in place of analysis, and your thesis must go beyond stereotypical statements.
- Early on in your draft, you should form a **working thesis** to give your readers a main complex claim or theory that explains how elements of the neighborhood lead to certain attitudes or behaviors.
- Your essay must integrate and cite **at least five credible sources**. For your readers, you must accurately summarize the ideas, theories, terms, or concepts you are using from your source (making sure your summary is understandable to a reader who is not familiar with the source you're introducing, but that summarizing does not take over your essay).
- Cite all sources in **MLA format** (in text), in addition to a Works Cited page. Use Purdue OWL (linked on Canvas) to look up proper MLA in-text citations and Works Cited formatting.

- Proofread for mistakes and edit for clarity. Consider paragraph organization and appropriate transitions to lead your reader through your discussion.

