

Project #1: Analyzing Visual and Multimodal Rhetorics in Monument and Memorial Design

RWS 414- Dr. Jenny Sheppard



Overview

In this project, you will work with a small group (no more than five people) to research and analyze the visual rhetoric of a **public** monument or memorial. You will present your findings to the rest of the class in a short 6-8 minute presentation and a one page handout. Your goal is to help the class understand the rhetorical messages of the memorial's visual elements, context, and significance to its multiple audiences.

Directions

On our class schedule, I have provided links and resources for a number of memorials and monuments. You are welcome to select an alternative site, but please discuss your choice with me to make sure it will



work for this assignment. I encourage you to select a memorial that interests you and about which others have generated analysis and/or scholarship that can help you develop an understanding of the meaning it makes through its visual rhetoric. I also encourage you to refer to language and approaches from the Blair and Michel article, the introduction to the visual rhetoric of memorializing and remembering by Olson, Finnegan, and Hope, and the strategies for visual rhetorical analysis suggested by Foss.

You will have some time to meet and work with your group over the next two class periods. As you work on this project, consider the following questions to help with your analysis:

- What does this monument/memorial ask viewers to remember or commemorate?
- Why?
- How?
- What are the spatial elements of this monument/memorial and how do these shape audience interaction and commemoration practices?
- Who decided on this representation and who created the design and artifact?
- What kinds of disagreements happen(ed) over the making or other readings of this memorial?
- What influence does landscape, placement/location, and context play in the memorial's/monument's meaning?
- What role did *kairos* play in the design of the monument/memorial?
- What elements, issues, or perspectives are left out or challenged by this monument/memorial?
- In what ways does this artifact/site do the work all monuments/memorials must do: "make an event of the past- what the memorial marks- relevant to the needs and desires of the memorial's own present"- (Blair and Michel, 33)?

References

Blair, Carole and Neil Michel (2000). "Reproducing Civil Rights Tactics: The Rhetorical Performance of the Civil Rights Memorial." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No 2 (pp. 31-55).

Foss, Sonja. (2005). "Theory of Visual Rhetoric." In K. Smith, S. Moriarty, G. Barbatsis, and K. Kenney (Eds.) *Handbook of Visual Communication: Theory, Methods, and Media*. (pp. 141-152). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Olson, Lester C., Cara A. Finnegan, and Diane S. Hope (2008). *Visual Rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and American Culture*. Los Angeles: Sage Publishing.