The Phantom City: Mapping Cultural Memory in Corpus Christi

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ENGL-2335: The City in Literature

Overview:
Students will research a site in Corpus Christi that no longer exists, compiling personal narratives from community members, and conducting archival research to understand how cultural memory preserves these sites, even as history proclaims their disappearance.

High Impact Practices

1. Collaborative Assignment/Project
   In groups of four, students will visit their “phantom sites” and conduct personal interviews with residents in the neighborhood, attempting to access an oral history of that neighborhood. Each student will have a specific role in the group. Roles include: “Community Liaison,” “Archival Researcher,” “Tech Wizard,” and “Master Organizer.”

2. Writing Intensive
   Students will complete several writing assignments and participate in a peer-review workshop over the course of the six-week project. These assignments include weekly reflections, a comprehensive final reflection, a two-page “history” of their site (group project), and a six-page critical analysis essay.

3. Diversity/Global Learning
   In conducting their field research, students will likely encounter cultures and communities different from their own. The project will encourage students to recognize the ways in which these communities have shaped the history of our city, and the ways in which they, too, are invested in an ongoing project of urban cultural production.

Peer-Review Workshop
Before submitting their six- to eight-page critical analysis essays, students will participate in two days of peer-review workshops. Papers will be circulated through Blackboard prior to the workshop, and each student will receive 25 minutes of constructive feedback from their peers.

Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment
In weekly journal reflections and a comprehensive final reflection essay, students will discuss the extent to which specific activities fulfilled the following SLOs:

Critical Thinking:
- Generate and communicate ideas by combining, changing, or reapplying existing information.
- Analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information.

Communication Skills:
- Develop, interpret, and express ideas through written communication.

Personal Responsibility:
- Evaluate choices and actions, and relate consequences to decision making.

Social Responsibility:
- Engage in regional, national, and global communities.

Mapping Cultural Memory
Groups will embed their field research—interviews, photographs, audio and video clips, etc.—and their two-page written “history” of their sites in the interactive map accessible through www.placestories.com. At the end of the project, the map will provide users with access to thirteen different “phantom sites” that trace cultural memory in Corpus Christi. At the end of the unit, I will make the map publically accessible through the World Wide Web.

Mirror Mercantile Company, 1906
St. James Hotel, 1937
County Jail and Courthouse, 1907
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Novels that deal with cultural memory in the city

Guest Speaker: Murphy Givens?!