

Introduction:

This assignment will demonstrate to participants how different cultures express values through memorial sites, specifically public monuments. Participants will create an in-depth site-specific presentation, that invites students to engage with an unfamiliar culture by researching a public monument, attending to its material form and the history of its reception, while also comparing it to a similar structure from their home context.

Monuments are statements of power and presence in public spaces. We ask a great deal of them, to represent a vision of the collective, particularly in contexts characterized by social stratification and political polarization. The object of this assignment is to offer students an opportunity to think carefully about public monuments, while keeping in mind the ways in which their function, reception, and physical character changes over time.

Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Recognize points of correspondence between monuments and the controversies that they generate.
2. Recognize disparities between monumental structures.
3. Develop an appreciation for difference, without reducing materials to a hierarchical ranking of better and worse.

Time:

Preparation time: Variable.

Participant presentation duration: 20-30 minutes.

Journal reflection: 30 minutes.

Group Size:

Entire group.

Materials:

Participant Instructions (in [Downloads](#)); Access to the internet; Optional: a journal/notebook for each participant.

Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Polarization
- Acceptance

Activity Instructions:

The facilitator should provide participants with the following instructions:

1. Each student will select a monument in the destination city, from a list provided in

advance, before departing from their home city. This monument will serve as the subject for the student's presentation while abroad. Students will be provided with resources relevant to their selected monuments by the instructor and are welcome to seek additional resources through out-of-class conferences. Only the student working on the presentation will be required to read these sources.

2. The presentation may include the following components as well as any additional information the presenter finds relevant and of interest to the class. The presentation will run between 20 and 30 minutes, prior to questions.
 - **Creation Details:** Who designed the monument? When was it erected? What is the significance of the site? Is it a state-endorsed monument?
 - **Memorialization:** What event, group, person, or idea is the monument attempting to memorialize? Why did this seem like a worthy subject for memorialization?
 - **Material Description:** What material did the creators use to construct the monument? How large is it? Is there an inscription? If so, what does it say? What does it look like? If abstract, what shapes did the creators employ? Find one specific detail to address at length.
 - **Conceptual Description:** What does the monument aim to represent? Why is this significant? Does the monument employ symbolism? If so, what is the symbol and what is its significance in this context? Find one specific detail to address at length.
 - **Controversy/Debate:** Summarize the dialogue between critics and supporters of the monument. Present these findings in a manner that informs classmates, enabling them to draw their own contingent conclusions.
 - **Comparison:** Select a comparable monument from your home context. The connection can be literal: two statues of horses. The literal connection should, however, generate broader speculations about political issues, cultural values, and communication styles. Remember, relation does not simply mean similarity. Contrasting the images can lead to important insights about the complexity of public memory and the ways in which monuments register the unique dynamics of a region.
 - **Questions:** Develop three questions that build upon ideas advanced earlier in the presentation. Be sure to base at least one of the questions on a specific detail of the monument.

Debrief and Reflection

Once the presentations have concluded, help students reflect on their presentations in a written journal entry, by asking them to answer the below reflection questions:

1. What are the main takeaways from researching, producing, and delivering your presentation?
2. Has this destination site led you to new understandings of purpose and impact of monuments in society at large? If so, please elaborate on these insights.
3. Have you learned anything about the destination city based on your analysis of this monument?

Additional Resources:

The following items are intended for the instructor to familiarize themselves with different monuments to help guide the introduction of this assignment and class discussion.

- Monument Lab in partnership with The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. (2020-2021) *National monument audit*. <https://monumentlab.com/projects/national-monument-audit>
- *Whose heritage? Public symbols of the confederacy*. Southern Poverty Law Center. (2019, February 1). <https://www.splcenter.org/20190201/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy>
- Introduction and Chapter 1 in:
Young, J. (1993). *The texture of memory: Holocaust memorials and meaning*. Yale University Press.
- Nguyen, C. T., Burks, M., and Frost, E. (2020, December 2). *Making George Floyd's square*. MPR News.
<https://www.mprnews.org/story/2020/12/02/making-george-floyds-square>

Related Tools:

- [Amazing Race, The!: A Cultural Scavenger Hunt](#)
- [Commemoration Activity](#)
- [Hidden America: An Intersectional Perspective](#)
- [Hidden Ways in Which Culture Differs, The](#)
- [Intercultural Scavenger Hunt](#)
- [Multiple Realities](#)
- [Neighborhood Walk](#)
- [Visible and Invisible Values](#)
- [We Americans by The Avett Brothers \(song\)](#)