**History 8630 - The American Built Environment**

**Georgia State University**

**Field Investigation/Site Analysis Guidelines**

DUE Monday Mar. 21

The goal of this assignment is to get you out into the local built environment, and put into practice the observational skills we have been developing in class and through readings. Carefully examine the elements of the local landscape that make up all parts of your proposed tour route.

Prepare a detailed field investigation that describes the landscape of your tour site(s), and write a brief narrative and analysis of the historical layers and social organization of that built environment. The purpose of this assignment is to invite you to apply what you have learned about the history of the built environment to what you observe around you. This portion of the assignment does not require research – rather, you should use the skills and concepts you have explored during this course to compose a systematic analysis of the landscape. You are, however, encouraged to make reference to the readings and seminar discussions to ground your analysis.

Because the geographies you are exploring differ in terms of use, scale, density, social organization, and spatial and architectural aesthetic, there is no one set of questions that apply universally to all tour sites. Below are some of the questions you may consider as

guidelines. *You will not be able to answer all of these questions – rather, use them to frame you own questions and to refine your critical reading skills.*

I suggest beginning from a broad perspective to describe the larger landscape (neighborhood, district, etc) before moving in to closer analysis of individual sites.

What makes this place a landscape? How is it framed? What are its boundaries?

What is the relationship between artifice and more natural-seeming elements of nature?

Is this a regionally-specific landscape? How does its geographic location determine its shape and order? Could it be anywhere?

Is there a federal or state presence? If so, how is it expressed?

How uniform or diverse is the architectural style? Can you tell a history of the place from its layers? Do you see evidences of adaptation, renovation, or conversion? What appear to be earliest features/structures/elements of the landscape? What are the most recent?

What aspects of the landscape are unintelligible?

Are there new constructions/renovations? Who is building and for whom?

How do you move through the space? What kinds of routes and rhythms are established by the streets, transit, walkways? Where are people invited to pause? What kind of surveillance (high and low tech) regulate behavior and traffic?

Who populates the landscape? How does the population change according to the time of day? Weekends?

Who owns the land and buildings? How do they represent their claims on the landscape? Are the owners the same as the users?