

The College of  
**Arts&Sciences**

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Document Title: Mapping a City  
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Course: ARCH 1901  
Course Title: Writing the American City

Year of Award: Fall 2020

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## Fall 2020 Knight Award for Writing Exercises and Handouts

The Knight Award for Writing Exercises recognizes excellence in short exercises and/or handouts designed to improve student writing. Appropriate topics may be drawn from the whole range of writing issues, large scale to small scale, such as development of theses, use of secondary sources, organization of evidence, awareness of audience, attention to sentence patterns (e.g., passive/active voice; coordination/ subordination), attention to diction, uses of punctuation, attention to mechanics (e.g., manuscript formats, apostrophes). Exercises and handouts may be developed for use in or out of class.

Submissions should comprise three parts: (1) A copy of the handouts or instructions that go to students. (2) An explanation of the exercise/ handout and of the principles behind it, addressed to future instructors who may use the material. (3) If possible, an example of a student response.

Submissions may range in length from one to four or five pages.

Winning entries will be deposited in a web accessible archive and made available to other instructors under a creative commons attribution, non-commercial license. (See [creativecommons.org](http://creativecommons.org) for more information about cc licensing. **No undergraduate student's writing will ever be published in this archive.**)

To facilitate future searching of the Institute's archive, we ask that you provide a brief descriptive abstract (about 75 words) of your document, and a short list of appropriate keywords that might not appear in the text. Examples might include terms like "rhetorical situation," "style," "citation," etc. **Any borrowings such as quotations from course texts or handbooks must be cited properly in the document itself.**

The two winning entries will receive \$350; second place winners (if any) will receive \$125.

Submissions are due by Monday, December 21. No exceptions can be made.

## Fall 2020 Knight Award for Writing Exercises and Handouts

~Please type or print clearly. Do **not** staple. Use paper clips only~

Instructor's name: Michael Moynihan

Dept & Course # Arch 1901 Course title Writing the American City

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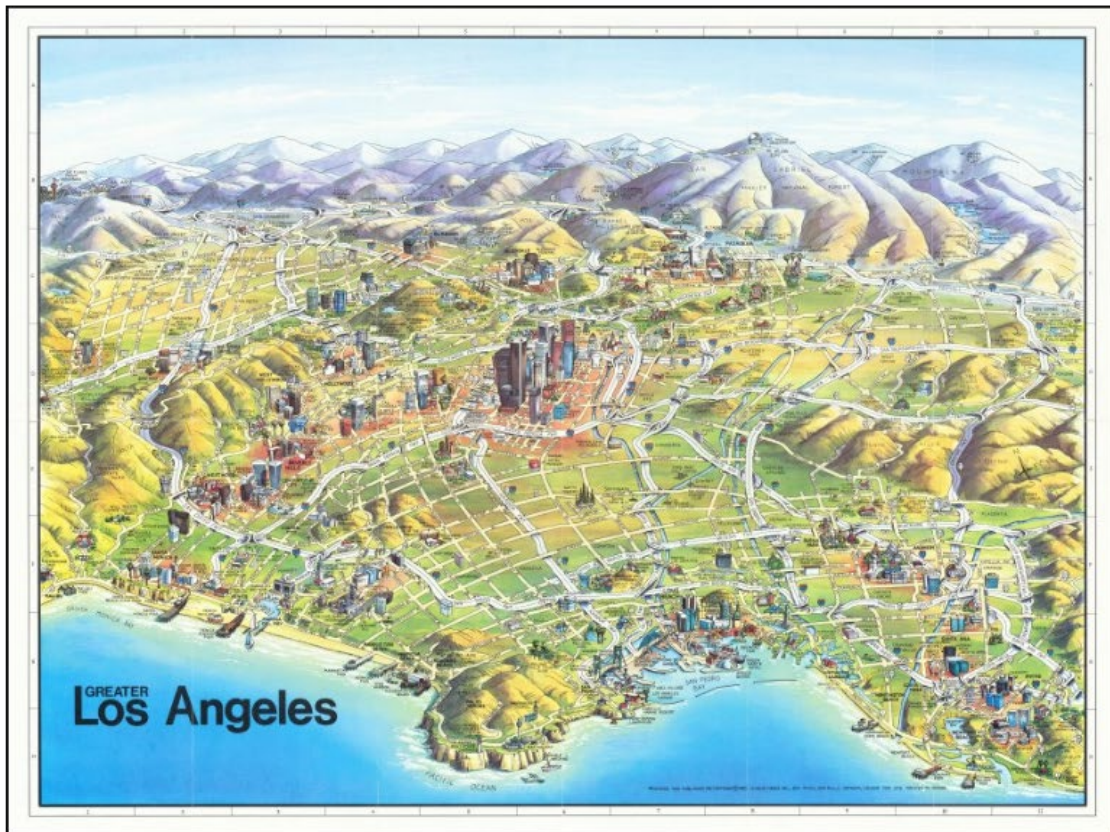
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Should I win a prize, I give the John S. Knight Institute permission to publish, quote from, and/or distribute copies of the writing exercises, and to distribute publicity to newspapers and other publications, local and/or national, about my winning the prize. I also grant the Knight Institute permission to deposit the writing exercises in a web accessible archive and make them available under a creative commons attribution, non-commercial license. I am prepared to send electronic versions of my text to Donna Newton ([dlo1@cornell.edu](mailto:dlo1@cornell.edu)) in the Knight Institute. I understand that I will receive the award for my prize-winning essay upon submission of the electronic text.

Mapping a City

Title of Writing Exercises

Instructor's signature Michael Moynihan Date 01/04/2021



## Mapping a City

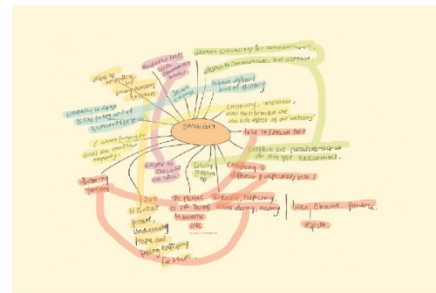
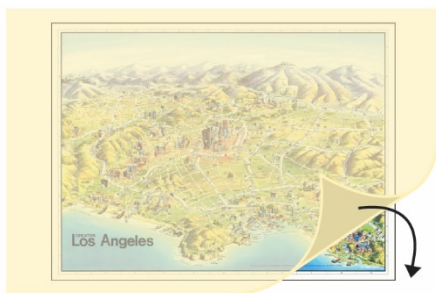
*The purpose of this activity is to teach mapping as a tool to develop a research question.*

Unlike most North American cities, Los Angeles did not begin with a central industrial core and expand outward with suburbs. Instead, there is an administrative-residential center surrounded by an industrial suburban network. We will use the decentralized urban form of Los Angeles to teach mapping as a tool to develop a research question. Students will each receive a tourist map of Greater Los Angeles. The students will put a piece of trace paper over the map and write down relevant terms related to specific neighborhoods in the city. This could include the names of historical actors, concepts, moments of change, etc. The purpose is to bring the spatial element of a city into the brainstorming process. Likely, most students will not know very much about Los Angeles, so instead of relying on the student's knowledge of Los Angeles for the brainstorming, in class, we will watch a BBC telecast called *Reyner Banham Loves Los Angeles (45 min)*. This show was created by an architectural historian in 1972 and aired specifically for a British audience who knows very little about Los Angeles. In the film, Reyner Banham drives around the city and narrates brief histories of different neighborhoods and spaces. The show is structured like a tourist guidebook. Using their maps, the students will follow Banham around the city and write down anything they think is relevant on their map. For example, when he is in the Watts neighborhood, note that he is talking about segregation, protests, and the failure of the Pacific Electric Railway Company in the 1920s. When he visits a gated neighborhood, note that he is talking about freedom, fortress-like fences, and security. Like a more traditional web or mapping exercise, the goal is to include as many terms as possible. After the film, the students will remove the tracing paper and begin to make connections between the terms and concepts they have written. Because this is a spatial exercise, they will also make connections between different spaces and neighborhoods in the city that would otherwise seem separate or disparate. Finally, ask the students to start forming conclusions about the connections and relationships they made. The class will end with the students writing a sentence or group of sentences about a specific relationship they created.

### In-class activity:

The purpose of this activity is to teach mapping as a tool to develop a research question.

1. Take one of the Greater Los Angeles Tourism maps and take a sheet of trace paper. Place the tracing paper over the map.
2. While watching *Reyner Banham Loves Los Angeles*, follow him around the city. When he visits a place in the city, write down anything he mentions. The goal is to develop as many terms as possible. When he is in the Watts neighborhood, note that he is talking about segregation, protest, and the failure of the Pacific Electric Railway Company in the 1920s. When he visits a gated neighborhood, note that he is talking about fortress-like fences, freedom, and security. You may already have your own assumptions about some neighborhoods in Los Angeles, so feel free to include your own terms on the map while watching. Jot these terms down quickly, move into another space, jot some more down, and just keep moving around and jotting. Do not worry about what you write, you can choose to keep or toss out these ideas when the activity is over.
3. After the film, remove the tracing paper from the map. Much like the form of Los Angeles, you will now have your own industrial suburban network of terms and concepts.
4. Make your own roads and highways. Look for concepts and terms that might be related.
  - a. Start to circle terms that seem related and then draw a line connecting the circles. Find some more, circle them, and draw more lines to connect them with what you think is closely related. When you run out of terms that associate, start with another term. Look for concepts and terms that might relate to that term. Circle them and then link them with a connecting line. Continue this process until you have found all the associated terms. Some of the terms might end up uncircled, but these can also be useful to you. There may be parts of the city that have been left blank; why? (Note: You can use different colored pens/pencils/chalk for this part if you like. If that's not possible, try to vary the kind of line you use to encircle the topics; use a wavy line, a straight line, a dashed line, a dotted line, a zigzaggy line, etc. to see what goes with what.) (See: <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/brainstorming/>)
5. At this point, start to form conclusions. Choose a set of connections or relationships that interest you and write out a sentence or group of sentences about their relationship. Does a specific question emerge? Is there something about these specific terms that interest you?



Abstract:

This in-class activity is designed to teach mapping as a tool to develop a research question. It also incorporates a spatial element into the brainstorming process in order to make connections between concepts and terms that could otherwise seem separate or disparate. After the activity, the students will take part in a short writing exercise to begin forming conclusions about the connections and relationships they made.

Keywords: Urban History, Film, Brainstorming, Space, Research Question