

Assignment

For writers, dealing with place can be an intensely *personal* affair. Our memories, our bonds to others and the world, our sense of ourselves, are all intimately tied up with geography. One danger (but also benefit) of this connection is *nostalgia*, the advantages and disadvantages of which can perhaps be seen in our chief reading for this unit, Kevin Baker's "When Rockport Was My Own." But these characteristics are shared more broadly by all "memoirs," a term I've given this project.

For your first paper, I invite you to write a short memoir, or essay, about a place or places from your past. "Past" here is relative: your place will likely not be as distant from you as Rockport is for the middle-aged Baker. Your focus can be a place prominent in your life, or a site only glanced at, seen once or not at all. It can be a town, a building, a room, a neighborhood, a coffee shop, a landscape, a footpath. It can be urban, suburban, rural. It can be unreal: a virtual place, one you always dreamed about but never saw. Your attitude to this place is also open: it can be a place you love; it can be a place you dread. Elements of narrative, analysis, description, and other genres can come into play. You're also welcome to incorporate visuals, as Baker did.

Your final paper should be around 750-1,500 words (about 3-6 pages typed, not including visuals, with double line spacing, 12-point font, and one-inch margins) and will need to be revised substantially through at least two drafts. Generative writing will be assigned to help spur your ideas, and peer response will be used to help you hone your composition.

Please remember that much of your writing in this class will be "public" to varying degrees – I will read what you write in early drafts, and several classmates will as well. And through our course blog, your final paper may be more broadly available. Talk to me if you're concerned about your or other people's privacy – I will also be on the lookout for issues connected to the *publicity* of your writing in this course.

The key due dates for this assignment are

- W 9/11: initial draft of essay due (bring 2 copies to class);
- M 9/16: revised draft of essay due (bring 1 copy to class);
- W 9/18: final, copyedited version of essay due, along with a reflective cover letter.

See the syllabus for policies regarding attendance and due dates.