Framing documents: 20 points

Four times during the semester, you will prepare a one-page document that provides an analytical frame for our in-class discussion of a text. Framing documents give you practice with critical thinking about representations of cities. In just about 500 words, you will contextualize texts, ask critical questions, and identify relevant evidence and concepts -- core analytical practices of literary and cultural studies. In other words, framing documents not only encourage thoughtful reading, they also help you learn critical thinking strategies that you could apply to other texts and in other contexts. Your framing documents also help shape our class discussions; I will regularly use your questions and insights to shape our in-class discussions.

A framing document is not an essay. Instead, you should simply answer these questions:

- How does this text deepen, contradict, complicate, or extend the discussions we've been having about representations of cities?
- What should we focus on when we discuss this text? Pose a question or two about the text or its ideas about urban life or identify a quality or specific moment of the text.
- What specific passages or aspects, ways of reading, or comparisons with other texts will help us dig into the issues you want us to explore?

You'll sign up for your slots during the first week or so of class. Framing documents are due 24 hours before class, and you'll post them on our Canvas site.

A few tips:

- Do your own critical reading and analysis. Don't do background research, and don't borrow ideas from Wikipedia or SparkNotes (that could earn you an honors code violation report). The point of this assignment is for you to engage thoughtfully with the text and the course.
- Because I'm your audience, you don't need to summarize the text.
- You don't need an introduction or conclusion. You really can just answer the questions.
- If you quote from the text, put the page number in parentheses at the end of the quote so that others can find the passage easily during class discussion.
- And yes, I really mean it when I say you can only write one page. To do this well, you will need to focus on just one or two key ideas and choose your words carefully.

I will grade these using a checklist, assigning one point for each of the following:

___ Accuracy – shows understanding but also attention to details of the text
___ Connections – suggests links with other readings or ideas
___ Generative – questions or problems that will get us thinking
___ Specific – concrete ideas about how to use the text as the basis for discussion
___ Insightful – demonstrates critical and/or creative thinking