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## The Rhetorical Landscape of Public Memory in Alabama

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## The Rhetorical Landscape of Public Memory in Alabama

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Project Description: Public memory studies is interdisciplinary by its very nature. With the recent moving of the confederate statue from downtown Huntsville to the cemetery, as well as similar actions all over the South, this issue is a very current one. There exist several indexes of the standing historical markers, memorials, monuments, and museums throughout Alabama. Items from Alabama's past have been preserved for their cultural, historical, and sociological value. However, these indexes only provide what history is being commemorated and where it is being commemorated. They do not make arguments concerning how historical events are being interpreted and presented to the public. The focus of this project is to collectively examine how the state of Alabama is crafting its public memory. How are we collectively presenting our past through lenses of race, gender, culture, economics, heritage, and power?

Let me be clear about what this project is not. We will not be trying to verify "truth" between what happened in the past and what is being presented in the present. We will not be arguing over what historical events should be commemorated or not. We also are not just creating a current list of all sites of commemoration throughout Alabama. Rather, we want to examine HOW is Alabama telling its narratives through these markers, memorials, monuments, and museums. We want to look at the communicative and persuasive tactics that are being used.

Communication scholars have written extensively on how markers, memorials, monuments, and museums function rhetorically to tell their narratives. I have presented a few conference papers looking at how specific memory sites in Alabama function. The objective of this project is to make an evaluation of the public memory work in Alabama, to present that work at an academic conference, and ultimately to publish this work.

Student Duties, Contributions, and Outcomes: The RCEU student will have three major tasks. First, the student will compile a master list of all public memory sites in Alabama to include all public historical markers, memorials, monuments, and museums. The student will conduct research primarily online by examining listings on government websites, historical

organizations' websites, and through official websites of some of the sites themselves. We will not examine any privately owned items or places not accessible to the general public. However, we will include sites commemorating Alabama history, regional history, and national history. Second, the student will codify each item/place for what is being commemorated, and how it is being presented to the public. The student will use Zotero to collect and codify all research. Finally, the student will write a research paper summarizing all their findings. I will then

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combine the student's ideas with my own to create a paper to be submitted to an academic conference. After receiving feedback, we will revise the paper and submit it to an academic journal. Both my name and the student's name will be on both papers. Specific outcomes for the student will include gaining experience with conducting cultural, historical, and sociological research, performing close textual analysis of texts, synthesizing a wide amount of information, and crafting arguments over the rhetorical work of these memory sites.

Student Selection Criteria: Junior or senior status in a major within the College of Arts, Humanities, & Social Sciences is preferred. Experience writing papers including historical research is also preferred. There are no prerequisite classes.

Project Mentorship: The RCEU student and I will meet at least once a week, and more often when necessary. We will use a shared Dropbox folder for both of us to update the elements we are working on. I will provide some theoretical understanding of rhetoric how public memory works persuasively at the beginning of the collaboration. Our meetings will entail discussing the strategy for finding and analyzing Alabama memory sites, the results of the previous week's research, and an ongoing discussion of what the student is finding or not finding so that we can carefully craft our arguments.

Safety and Contingency Plan: Should we not be able to meet face-to-face, we would be able to meet via Zoom and still achieve every outcome for this project.