



A view of Trapani, Sicily from a cable car that brings visitors to the mountain-top town of Erice.

## BUILD A MEDIEVAL PORT CITY<sup>1</sup>

### Overview of the assignment.

Drawing upon the readings, lectures, and discussions of the class to this point, you should gather in groups of four to create **an ideal medieval port city and panegyric text describing your city**. Use any media you wish to design and present your city to the class (poster board, a cardboard/found objects model, PowerPoint, SketchUp). I strongly discourage you from spending money on this project (max. \$10). Instead, I value creativity and thoughtful engagement with the cities that we have 'visited' together to inspire your design.

As a group, you should focus your attention on imaginative details and the functionality of an original urban plan. Under the section "The Considerations" of this prompt, I've included a list of features to guide your group as you imagine a natural landscape and waterscape and create a city plan. Take careful notes as you plan to justify your decisions, which will help you as you write a descriptive text— a panegyric of approx. 1500-2000 words – about your city that you will deliver to the class.

The panegyric is meant to accompany your model, a way to help the audience understand **the prominent features of your city's location, infrastructure, and monuments in a vivid and captivating manner**. Please review the panegyric writing that we've studied together, like al-Idrisi's *Book of Roger* (c.1154). You can be as hyperbolic as you wish, so long as you justify and celebrate the features – both natural and built – that you have included in your city and the purpose(s) they serve your imaginary citizens and visitors. You may wish to include the imagined mythological founding or history of your illustrious city or discuss how it has grown or changed organically or intentionally.

Both the model and the panegyric will be submitted for a group grade. Please submit your panegyric text with full annotations. Use either footnotes or endnotes and a *scholarly voice* to demonstrate from where you've drawn elements of your city based on the reading that we've done. For example, if you include a sentence praising the strength of the city's wall circuit, then add a footnote that 1) explains the purpose of walls and 2) identifies examples of wall circuits that informed your design (e.g. Ravenna). Another example: If your group decides to design a series of ports along a river, rather than a single deep harbor, indicate which urban models/systems that we've studied or that you've researched, which inspired your selection. Briefly stated, as I read your

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<sup>1</sup> Kristen Strehle modelled this assignment on the "Future City Project" designed by the Washington Chapter of the American Planning Association. Updated 4 December 2020. Please use this assignment and acknowledge the sources.

panegyric text, I want to understand from where you are getting the ideas for your city based on past readings and lectures or independent research.

On the day of presentations, you will bring your models to share with the class. Presentations will last approximately 8 minutes with 5 additional minutes for group critique and Q&A. We will have plenty of time to look at everyone's work and ask questions together. You may incorporate any suggestions into your project before the final submission.

### Presentation Grading Rubric

- Does the group demonstrate a creative and thoughtful engagement with the course material?

2                      4                      6                      8                      10

- Does the group focus on imaginative details & the functionality of an original urban plan?

2                      4                      6                      8                      10

- Does the group highlight the city's prominent features in a creative speech of praise?

2                      4                      6                      8                      10

- Does the group effectively demonstrate their vision in the form of a model?

2                      4                      6                      8                      10

- Has the group successfully worked together to create an ideal medieval port city?

2                      4                      6                      8                      10

### Panegyric Grading Rubric

- Does the text provide a detailed and richly textured description of the city?

2                      4                      6                      8                      10

- Is the organization and direction of the text clear to the reader? Does each paragraph successfully build on the previous one?

2                      4                      6                      8                      10

- Are the sentence structures varied to produce a sense of wonder and awe in the reader? Or has repetition been strategically used to emphasize certain aspects?

2                      4                      6                      8                      10

- Has the group carefully annotated the text to show evidence of their research of medieval cities?

2                      4                      6                      8                      10

- Has the group edited the text for grammar and orthography errors?

2                      4                      6                      8                      10

## Initial Steps

Gather in groups of four and take the rest of class time (10" per section) to familiarize yourselves with the kinds of features and questions that you'll consider as you design your medieval port city. Think about how you'd like to divide your tasks so that the burden of design and annotation (research) falls fairly among members.

Group members & email addresses:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

•After you review "The Considerations" decide when you will next meet together: [*date*]\_\_\_\_\_

•Then determine at least three specific and achievable tasks that you will discuss at that meeting:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

## The Considerations

Teams will work together to create **an ideal medieval port city**.

1) Think about the elements that define your city:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> city's name        | <input type="checkbox"/> location                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> geography          | <input type="checkbox"/> history                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> climate            | <input type="checkbox"/> population size            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> build-able land    | <input type="checkbox"/> relationship with the port |
| <input type="checkbox"/> kind of government |   |

Notes:

2) Next, design your city based on the land use and the natural site of the city. You must decide upon the relationship of town's center and port, whether or not the city has walls or another mechanism of protection, how it takes advantage of or modifies its natural surroundings.

Decide where to organize and develop:

- |   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> merchant lodging | <input type="checkbox"/> the port           | <input type="checkbox"/> warehouses        | <input type="checkbox"/> hospitals       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> houses           | <input type="checkbox"/> schools            | <input type="checkbox"/> places of worship | <input type="checkbox"/> gates/portals   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> stores/workshops | <input type="checkbox"/> parks              | <input type="checkbox"/> sporting arenas   | <input type="checkbox"/> libraries       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> treasury         | <input type="checkbox"/> palace (if needed) | <input type="checkbox"/> cemetery          | <input type="checkbox"/> anything else?? |

Notes:

3) Does your imaginative ideal city have ancient foundations or are did you raze old architecture and infrastructure to install a new plan? A bit of both? Think about how inhabitants and visitors – and their carts, wagons, and processions– might engage within and between different neighborhoods. How will your infrastructure take these elements into consideration?

- walls
- sewer system
- water system
- roads

Notes:

What additional aspects of the city might be missing from this list? It may help to review the syllabus and refresh your memories regarding the kinds of cities and monuments that we've discussed so far.