

SECOND LIFE TOUR ASSIGNMENT

Second Life: This program is the creation of Linden Lab, who developed it in 2002. It is an online “world”, or “massive multiplayer world [MMO]”. There are a number of MMO/MMORPGs on the internet, the most famous probably being Everquest(EQ) and World of Warcraft (WOW). Second Life (SL) is very different in that it isn’t a game, so there are no goals, no monsters to pound on, no experience points to score or puzzles to solve. It is a free-form world—Linden Lab developed the ‘world’, the landscape, the physics (gravity etc.) and a set of tools to build digital objects, and then stepped back. What you see when you log in (except for Orientation Island proper) is built (coded) by player-participants, called “Residents” in SL-speak. Everything you see, from roads, to trees, to houses, etc. has been developed and generated by Residents.

Uniquely Linden Lab has given them the intellectual property rights to anything they design, so they legally own the creative properties of their designs. Linden Lab controls the economy (the Linden Dollar, L\$) and their main economic stream is from leasing property. You **NO NOT** have to pay anything to play Second Life. You only pay if you want to have control of land so you can put structures or things on it. So the residents made everything you see around them. If they leave SL, or quit paying their monthly rent, then the structures are “de-rezzed” and disappear, and the property is put back up for sale.

When you are new to SL this is really the key factor to remember: ALL the content you view/interact with after you leave the initial training “island” was generated by participants, not game developers.

The second key factor to remember is that there are no non-player characters (NPCs) unlike gaming MMORPGs, so anyone you see in SL (regardless of whatever form they are in) is another Real Life person (RL).

This same laissez-faire approach also applies to social dynamics and social controls. Unlike gaming environments such as WOW, Linden Lab has basically no interest or inclination to be at all involved in what residents get up to in SL. As a result there are no fixed, formalized rules of social behavior that are monitored, nor is there any structure to what you will find or interact with. There are very clear normative patterns in SL, but they have been developed and are enforced by Residents, and vary tremendously from place to place. The main function of SL is as a place for social interaction, but there are also very strong and complex symbolic factors at play, as you can see with the complexity and diversity of structures around you.

Developed in San Francisco in 2000-2001, SL was initially almost entirely American in resident population. By 2006 Europeans, especially British, French and Germans had become 35% of the total population (which had grown to around 5-600,000). The latest demographics from mid-2010 show that currently only about 25% of the Residents are from North America, with approximately 40% from Europe and the rest from Asia (largely Japan, Korea and most recently China) and Brazil. Though misleading, the current statistics are still thought provoking:

As of August 18, 2011 (23:45 SLT), Second Life had: 24,816,427 registered Residents; 37,104 Residents online at that moment; 999,000 Residents logged in at least once in the last 30 days; \$475,000 US spent per month in SL; 28,304,000 transactions in-world last month; 191 Residents made over \$5,000 US last

month; current estimated value of real estate in-world (based on real estate values 8/18/11)—Private land= \$5.125 million US / Mainland [Linden] land= \$1.017 million US.

“Participants launch Second Life’s software on their personal computers, log in, and then use their mice and keyboards to roam endless landscapes and cityscapes, chat with friends, create virtual homes on plots of imaginary land, and conduct real business...

Second Life hurls all this to the extreme end of the playing field. In fact, it’s a stretch to call it a game because the residents, as players prefer to be called, create everything. Unlike in other virtual worlds, Second Life’s technology lets people create objects like clothes or storefronts from scratch, LEGO-style, rather than simply pluck avatar outfits or ready-made buildings from a menu. That means residents can build anything they can imagine, from notary services to candles that burn down to pools of wax.”(1) Hof 2006

“Linden Lab provides only the rolling landscape on which the more ambitious of SL’s residents build. As Philip Rosedale, the founder and chief executive of Linden Lab, puts it, “It’s very interesting to be inside somebody else’s vision of what the world should look like. Unless you’re concerned with taste and smell, Second Life provides an almost perfect canvas for creating escapist environments.”... But Linden Lab went one step further when, in 2003, early in Second Life’s existence, the company granted its residents the intellectual property rights to the things they created on the Grid.

The main impact of the change was that it let residents commercialize their creations without fear of negative repercussions where Linden Lab was concerned. The move was unprecedented in the history of graphical online worlds... The company, of course, still owned the bits and bytes that resided on their servers...”(205) Ladlow 2007

#### Rules/Parameters:

- You need access to a relatively recent computer that you can put a program on—**YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO USE CUH MACHINES** to access SL. You may work in teams where only 1 person is the online persona, i.e., the Avatar.
- 1<sup>st</sup> step-go to Second Life at <secondlife.com>, download the program and set up an account. I would suggest that you consider downloading the “Beta Viewer” but you may initially be more comfortable just following their directions. You will need to ‘build’ an Avatar, your representative in SL. Remember to spend a few minutes working on the Avatar, as it is “YOU” in SL and avatar appearance is a major factor in social dynamics in SL.
- Stay with a “Basic” account, do not enter credit info into the system. I don’t want you getting into the L\$/US\$ system—it’s too complicated and unnecessary for this class.
- **Remember you are there to observe—DO NOT interact with other ‘avatars’. DO NOT give out any personal information.** On your personal information clearly point out that you are a student in this class at CUH, but do you provide your real name or any other information. I want you to be entirely isolated from the SL world. You should put the [www.socialresearchsystems.com](http://www.socialresearchsystems.com) website as contact if anyone has any questions about what you are up to.

- Do the initial tutorial-when you first sign on into SL you will go through a tutorial. I strongly recommend going to the “Caledon Oxbridge University Comm. Gateway” [type into search window] as an alternative.
- REMEMBER that I expect journal entries for all your time in SL, and these should be written during or immediately after your travels, as you want to record immediate impressions.
- Only go to the locations noted below. Remember it is not a controlled game world, so there may be a number of surprises if you are not paying attention.
- Depending on location/detail it may take a while for a location to be completely defined [rezzed], be patient.
- Remember that any other individuals you see in SL are real people (somewhere) functioning in real time like yourself, so remember that standard Behavioral Science ethical field standards will be followed: Do not take pictures/record communications without their approval, do not harass or otherwise disturb/grief them, do not divulge any personal information. This is your field setting—RESPECT IT.
- The key to our visiting SL is to experience 3 dimensional structures, not play, so stay focused.
- Any notes/pictures/etc that you take “inworld” in SL, remember to erase/delete/change any individuals you interact with to protect their anonymity.
- If you want further detail or a look at the readings I am using right now for the project, you can find them at [www.socialresearchsystems.com](http://www.socialresearchsystems.com) in the OneNote files.

Research Areas (your choice but only after consultation with me):

- 1) The symbolic built environment. This is a cataloging of the structures you see why on transects, recording (via snapshot) all structures, their relationships and their apparent function. The results are then compared to other transects to see if there are patterns or persistent regional variations in mainland ownership and usage.
- 2) Perceptions of place and symbolic communication by “newbies”. How does one learn to understand symbolic communication in SL when there is no formal socialization process? This requires detailed diary keeping and introspection as one moves through the SL experience.
- 3) Does the *tatemaie-honne* perceptual pattern exhibit itself consistently in SL? Why? What are the markers? Is it group/sub-culture specific or endemic to virtual worlds in general?
- 4) Sub-groups / sub-cultures. Investigate one in depth, Consider the Goreans and Furrries to be off-limits since they have been relatively heavily studied—study some other group that strongly self-identifies, both socially and with some form of visible public markers (appearance, clothing, etc.). What is the process of socialization and acceptance? What is their self-identity? Do they have a social history?

### Research Questions:

- Is the Second Life cultural landscape (remember that there is only the most minimal and malleable physical landscape) a direct mirror of Daily Life cultural landscapes?
- Does the Second Life manifest built environment reflect the same set of values, perceptions and central logics as in Daily Life (as per Meinig, Jackson and others)?
  - If so, whose (i.e. which cultural set) or does it reflect a more global set of shared values and perceptions?
- The built environment in Second Life is arguably streamlined, in that all aspects viewed have been intentionally acquired by the Residents, in contrast to Daily Life built environments which usually have any number of objects from prior owners/others (such as power poles, signage, landscaping, structures, etc.). Given this conscious decision making in Second Life, what choices have been made and what do they say about owners values and perception of 'ownership'?
- Given the diverse nature of the current Second Life Resident population and the cultures they come from (only 30-40% from U.S., at least 30% from Asia) why is there so little diversity in the Second Life built environment. As commentators frequently note, the mainland largely contains very mundane architecture, and very American architecture. Given the options available, why? Why are the Residents making these very conscious choices based on a culture that the majority are not a part of?
- A major challenge to Geographical and Anthropological theory is the concept of cultural primacy. If that is accurate, then why is Second Life largely an Anglo-American built environment?
- As noted in most of the works on Second Life, much of the architecture in Second Life is strikingly mundane, and the majority are, as J.B. Jackson would note, classically middle class American vernacular architecture. A large proportion of the residences appear to reflect a slightly up-scale version of reality rather than expressive opportunities. This is striking given (as noted above) the lack of price differential in structure construction or "prim" cost. There is no significant cost increase to a unique or different building (even if just in color or surface textures), so the choice for a Anglo-American vernacular norm is a reflection of owner taste and intent rather than economic or selective choice.
- As a related research question is the lack of diverse cultural or regional architecture. While the vast majority of structures are Anglo-American, the majority of the SL residents are not Anglo-American. For those individuals from outside the Anglo-American region, why the desire to mundanely reflect another existence? Is this a reflection of globalization? Is the 'subdivision'/strip mall the life goal that people in the rest of the world want to 'play out' in their fantasy worlds?

- What do the structures, objects and locations in Second Life symbolically say about their owner-Residents? What perception of the Second Life synthetic world does it communicate? What shared values and symbolic are present in the Second Life community?

## SECOND LIFE UNIQUE LOCATIONS

AS OF 8.10.11

**\* = Recommended Initial Stops**

*** Caledon Oxbridge Help Center (steampunk)	92, 198, 28 (I)
Sandbox Island (M)	140, 175, 27
Linden Village (Linden Lab)(M)	183, 205, 45
* Freebie Land(M)	54, 244, 38
Svarga	7, 124, 22 (I)
Greece/Athens (modern)(I)	93, 101, 21
4 Directions Tribal (NatAm/NewAge)(I)	139, 71, 21
* Bora Bora Beach (HI/Poly theme resort)(I)	43, 85, 22
Denghu (HI/Poly theme area)(I)	204, 227, 121
Yumas Castle (HI/Poly beach/surfing)(I)	52, 96, 21
* Inverness City(Scottish)(I)	192, 64, 1001
Scotland (Scottish)(I)	192, 181, 24
Dublin (mod Ireland)(I)	232, 174, 25
Amsterdam (mod)(I)	90, 26, 25
Denmark (mod)(I)	138, 113, 22
Virtual Railway Consort.(M)	128, 184, 30
Vintage Village (1930 Europe)(I)	69, 94, 70
* Mother Road (route 66)(I)	17, 118, 23
Acorn Valley (Furries)(M)	36, 126, 39

Legend of Zero (Airplanes)(I) 112, 117, 23

## ASIAN

- \* Kowloon (asia urban/grunge) 146, 11, 24 (I)
- Taiwan (mod asian) 125, 190, 23 (I)
- Fantasy China (china) 128, 70, 35 (I)
- \* Kyoto Bakumatsu (japan) 128, 128, 23 (I)
- Havelock Shrine (japan) 225, 135, 192 (M)
- Amatsu Shrine (japan) 41, 99, 23 (I)
- Tsunami Store/castle (japan) 53, 208, 24 (I)
- \* Kansai-Hosoi Mura store/Matsumoto Castle (japan) 133, 171, 29 (I)
- Kurotsubaki store/town (japan) 37, 181, 26
- AMM Design (Asian design)(I) 69, 112, 63
- \* Little Kyoto (japan)(M) 107, 161, 62
- Nagasaki Bakumatsu (1900 japan)(I) 191, 46, 22
- \*\* Ginza (Tokyo 1930)(M) 132, 22, 154
- Pontocho (mod Kyoto)(M) 113, 123, 24
- Chinese Tea House (china architect)(M) 131, 156, 34
- Great Wall (China)(I) 131, 15, 24
- Borobudur Temple (Indonesia)(M) 181, 128, 1000
- Kannonji Imports (Buddha art)(I) 249, 174, 22
- Tian Xia Hui (Chinese palace)(I) 197, 247, 33
- Sukhavati-Pure Land Buddhist(M) 212, 197, 26

## FANTASY (Tolkein etc.)

- \* Pteron (fantasy) 236, 129, 32 (I)

Mythopoeia store (fantasy) 73, 23, 40 (I)  
Krillian Mystara (fantasy) 174, 107, 27 (I)  
Cerridwen gallery (fantasy) 73, 123, 674 (I)  
\* Fairy Castle Weddings (fantasy) (M) 54, 149, 135

### STEAMPUNK/NEO-VICTORIAN

Persnickety Architecture/furniture (steampunk) 174, 157, 31 (I)  
\*\*\* Caledon Oxbridge Help Center (steampunk) 92, 198, 28 (I)  
Caledon Gallery 81, 205, 86 (I)  
Rosser Landing (steampunk) 71, 180, 23 (I)  
\* Steelhead City (steampunk)(I) 207, 206, 23  
Steampunk/Fantasy Mall (I) 134, 132, 24

### SCI-FI

\* Bladerunner City (SciFi) 127, 130, 433 (I)  
Ocean City (scifi) 9, 205, 22 (I)  
Space Park (scifi)(M) 34, 218, 1560  
Risk City (scifi)(I) 121, 100, 30  
Atlantis (scifi)(I) 127, 191, 5  
Dome (club-scifi)(M) 132, 173, 66  
\* Spaceport (scifi)(I) 175, 148, 113

### ART-DISPLAYS/GALLERIES

\* Mysterious Wave (surreal art) 212, 125, 22 (I)  
\* Un Jour main store (art display) 169, 69, 21  
Muse Isle-Alice display (literature) 73, 123, 674 (I)

Dresden Gallery 120,128, 27  
China (mod art)(I) 105, 100, 1994  
Little China (clothes)(I) 137, 99, 39  
Beloved Guest Gallery(M) 114, 208, 132  
\*\* Chelsea, NYC (art galleries/urban grunge)(M) 43, 125, 99

### MUSEUMS-EDUCATIONAL

\* Macellam (Roman) 27, 118, 29  
Museum Island 211, 151, 22  
\* CSW (South Wales Univ.) 103, 127, 23  
Clemson Univ-Archaeology(I) 141, 130, 28  
Egypt (I) 156, 76, 447  
Mayan/Aztec (I) 205, 208, 1101  
Alexandria (Ptolemaic Egypt)(I) 135, 92, 1500  
Raymaker Field Studies (Arch)(I) 102, 176, 37  
USMP-Maccu Picchu (I) 204, 2, 31  
\* Spartan Empire (Greek)(I) 240, 239, 24  
El Presidio (M) 123, 178, 32  
Okapi Archaeological Res. (I) 20, 205, 23  
Roma (Roman) (I) 29, 57, 29  
Roman Homes (I) 75, 110, 33  
\* Locus Amoenus (roman architect)(I) 47, 132, 25  
Space Planetarium (ed)(M) 198, 1, 101

### ARCHITECTURE/ID

\* Villas (Europ. Homes)(I) 176, 64, 23

Chazza (neo-Mayan)(M) 239, 85, 92

Aja Asian Wares (archaeol. Objects)(M) 45, 165, 99

\* AARISS-3D Design (ID)(M) 151, 144, 57

Jameson Architects(I) 79, 183, 21

## SECOND LIFE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

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R. Bordner 8/11

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