
SYLLABUS

Washington History, Institutions & Rituals

Myth vs. Reality

Fall 2021

University of California Washington Center

Professor: Marc Sandalow

Marc Sandalow

Office: 323

(202) 974-6204

msandalow@ucdc.edu

Office hours: Wednesday and Thursday 2-5 (or anytime by appointment)

OVERVIEW

Much is said about Washington, D.C. Much of it is wrong. This course will immerse students in the history, institutions, demographics, and rituals of nation's capital. You will learn about Washington's transformation from a remote federal city to the world's most powerful capital. We will analyze the accuracy of Washington's depiction throughout history, how it is represented – and misrepresented -- in modern culture, and why it is ridiculed by politicians who yearn to work there. We will examine the glorification and vilification of Washington in literature and film and assess the truth behind popular Washington myths. We will probe Washington policy debates and rituals and survey the research tools used to separate fact from fiction. And we will discuss the demographics of a city which contains some of the nation's wealthiest and most impoverished neighborhoods.

You will have an opportunity to study and visit monuments and museums, as well as iconic institutions as the National Portrait Gallery and Ben's Chili Bowl. The elective contains a mix of lectures, readings, discussions, field trips and guest speakers to experience as much of Washington as possible in a single term. Readings will include scholarly writing, literature, and journalistic accounts, aimed at offering insight into the workings and role of the capital. Students will be required to use primary sources to determine the validity of Washington conceptions and misconceptions.

Regular discussion of contemporary policy and politics, as well as student internships, will provide a window to understand how Washington works.

COURSE GOALS

Students will emerge with a sophisticated understanding of Washington's evolution and a strong sense of the institutions, individuals and interest groups that drive the federal government. They will experience the city's cultural offerings and urban challenges. They will gain insights into why the nation holds Washington in low esteem and develop skills to determine which stereotypes are based in fact. Students will also emerge with a deeper understanding of the role of public service and citizenship and the contributions of their own internship.

CLASS HOURS

The course will meet each Thursday from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Hours may be adjusted periodically to accommodate speakers, field trips, or individual conferences. Please inform the instructor prior to class if you will be absent.

INSTRUCTOR

Marc Sandalow (msandalow@ucdc.edu) is Associate Academic Director of the University of California's Washington Program. He is the author of three books, including "Madam Speaker," a biography of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. He is working on a historical guide to George Washington sites in the Washington area. He has been a journalist for 30 years, including 21 years at the *San Francisco Chronicle* where he covered California politics and spent a decade as the paper's Washington Bureau Chief. He is a former columnist and contributing editor for the *California Journal*, and is currently a political analyst for KCBS radio in San Francisco as well as Hearst Argyle television stations. He has been with the University of California's Washington Center since 2008.

OFFICE HOURS

My office is room 323. I will be available from 2 to 5 each Wednesday and Thursday. In addition, you are free to make an appointment, either in person or on Zoom, any other time during the week. My door is often closed or only cracked open even when I am there. **Feel free to knock or schedule an appointment anytime.**

COURSE MATERIAL

Reading material will be available in Canvas, distributed by e-mail, or available for check-out at Res Life on the 4th floor. Avid reading of newspapers, blogs and policy magazines will enhance the course, your internship, and the Washington experience.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is mandatory. If you cannot make a class because of an internship commitment, opportunity or illness, please let me know in advance. Failure to attend without advance notice will affect your participation grade.

ASSIGNMENTS

E-mail all written assignments to me at msandalow@ucdc.edu or marc.sandalow@ucdc.edu (they are the same.) Include your name and the assignment name in the subject line. If possible, attach as a WORD document (no PDF's) Hard copies are not necessary.

1. **HISTORICAL LANDMARK REVIEW:** Students will choose a Washington landmark from the National Park Service’s Register of Historic Places. They will then write a comparative description of the based on: 1) Historic registry application 2) Internet description 3) site visit. (3-5 pages)
2. **WASHINGTON STEREOTYPE REVIEW** Students will examine a Washington stereotype of their choice, historical or contemporary, and conduct original research to assess the roots and accuracy of the stereotype. (3-5 pages)
3. **WASHINGTON POP MEDIA EVALUATION** Each student will select a book, movie, television show or any form of pop media which features, or takes place in, Washington. Write a review which describes how the book perpetuates, dispels, or confirms a Washington stereotype or myth. Explain with research and analysis the accuracy of the book, movie or show. Use your own experience from your term in Washington to evaluate its validity. The central point of the review should be the accuracy its portrayal. 1500-2000 words (3-5 pages)
4. **SHORT ASSIGNMENTS:** To be assigned on some but not all, weeks. Assignments may include original research into a historic landmark, a review of presidential portraits, and a census report on your hometown.
5. **WASHINGTON BOOK REPORT:** You will read a book of your choice, fiction or non-fiction, featuring Washington D.C. and write a one-page memo on its contents. A list of suggestions will be provided. (2 pages)
6. **ORAL PRESENTATION “MOCK” PUBLIC INTEREST SPEECH:**
Each student will deliver a one-minute talk on an organization of your choice that begins with the sentence: “*I believe that (name of organization) is good for America.*” You may select any organization which meets the following two criteria: 1) the organization must have a Washington presence and 2) you must personally find its work reprehensible.

For example, you might argue that “The Tobacco Council is good for America because it fights to preserve the right of Americans to engage in a relaxing and legal activity.” You would go on to explain what the council does and why its activities serve the greater good.

GRADING

1. Historic stereotype review 20%
2. Washington stereotype review 20%
3. Pop media review 20%
4. Short assignments (including book review and presentation) 20%
5. Class participation 20%
6. *Content, research and clarity are the most important qualities, of all writing assignments, though careful writing, grammar, a lack of typos and other details also count. Late papers will be penalized one-third a grade each day.*

Attendance and participation in class are critical. If you must miss class let me know in advance. Force yourself to speak in class if participation does not come naturally, or speak to me about it.

PLAGIARISM

All work must be original. Any words taken directly from another source should be placed inside quotation marks and attributed. Disregard for this policy will result in severe grading penalties and possible failure. It is the responsibility of the writer to make sure all submissions contain no sentences or phrases lifted verbatim from another source.

University policies

Sexual Harassment: The University of California is committed to creating and maintaining a community where all individuals who participate in University programs and activities can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Every member of the community should be aware that the University prohibits sexual harassment and sexual violence, and that such behavior violates both law and University policy. The University will respond promptly and effectively to reports of sexual harassment and sexual violence, and will take appropriate action to prevent, to correct, and when necessary, to discipline behavior that violates this policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence.

Students who wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct should contact UCDC's Counseling Services at UCDCCounseling@gmail.com. To report sexual misconduct or ask questions about UCDC policies and procedures regarding sexual misconduct, please contact the UCDC Title IX administrator, Josh Brimmeier (202-974-6214 or josh.brimmeier@ucdc.edu). Because the University of California is legally obligated to investigate reports of sexual misconduct, the confidentiality of reported misconduct cannot be guaranteed.

Disabilities: In compliance with the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Public Law 93- 112) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-336), University of California policy prohibits unlawful discrimination on the basis of disability in its programs, services, and activities. If you require accommodation for class, please let me know at our first meeting (if not earlier) so the necessary arrangements can be made.

Policy on Academic Misconduct: UCDC has a zero-tolerance policy for cheating, plagiarism, and any other form of dishonesty. Students should refer to their home campus Student Code of Conduct for the regulations that apply to them. The burden is on each student to know what behaviors constitute cheating and plagiarism. Ignorance of these behaviors is not an adequate defense.

WEEK- BY-WEEK SCHEDULE

(dates may change based on availability of speakers)

- 1. September 23 WASHINGTON: REALITY AND MYTH**
THEME: Overview of Washington institutions and misconceptions.
Introductions and course expectations/survey
How the world perceives and misperceives Washington

Students should attend the Monday Night Forum (*Washington: From Swamp to Scandal*)

- 2. September 30 HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE FEDERAL CITY**
THEME: The rise and role of the federal city
Washington's selection as capital.
Evolution from sleepy town to world power to political scapegoat

READING:

1. *Founding Brothers: the Revolutionary Generation* Joseph Ellis “The Dinner” (Chapter 2)
2. *The Grand Idea: George Washington’s Potomac and the Race West* Joel Achenbach (Chapter 9)
3. *The Federalist Papers No. 43, Publius*
4. *The Anti-Federalist Papers No. 43, The Federal Farmer*

3. October 7 SERVING THE PUBLIC INTEREST

THEME: Primer on Washington policy making for the public interest and profit

Discussion of citizenship and distinctions between public and private interest

Discussion of policy issue (TBD) as illustration of how Washington works

Movie Excerpt: “Thank You For Smoking.”

READINGS:

1. *A Theory of Justice: The Veil of Ignorance*, John Rawls
2. *Institutional Corruption Defined*, Lawrence Lessig, *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics*, Oct. 2013
3. *Lobbying for the People: The Political Behavior of Public Interest Groups*, Jeffrey M Berry chapter 1
4. *Lobbyists are Good People, Too* Lanny Davis

4. October 14 WASHINGTON AS SYMBOL IN LITERATURE & POPULAR CULTURE:

THEME: How Washington is (mis)portrayed.

Evolving attitudes and misconceptions

READING:

1. *Hollywood on the Potomac: Getting it all Wrong and Yet Getting it Right*, Mike Canning
2. *The 100 Best Washington Movies Ever*, *Washington Magazine*

5. October 21 HARD CHOICES: POLICY vs. POLITICS vs. BULLSHIT

THEME: Why Washington Policy is more complicated than it appears.

- READING:
1. *On Bullshit*, Frankfurter, H.G. Frankfurt, Princeton University Press, 2005
 2. *The Government-Citizen Disconnect*, Suzanne Mettler, Russell Sage Foundation, 2018

6. October 28 A CAPITAL DIVIDED: THE OTHER WASHINGTON

THEME: Exploring poor, powerless and monument-free Washington

READING: *Urban Odyssey: A Multicultural History of Washington D.C.*, Chapter 13 (The Latino Community: Creating an Identity in the Nation’s Capital. Olivia Cadaval, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996

VIEWING: [The Nine Lives of Marion Barry](#)

7. November 4 FIELD TRIP TO BEN’S CHILD BOWL

Guest Speaker: Dr. Bernard Demczuk

Readings: *Chocolate City: A History of Race and Democracy in the Nation’s Capital*, Chris Myers Asch & George Derek Musgrove (chapter to be assigned.)

8. November 11 ORAL PRESENTATIONS

9. November 18 ARTS AND CULTURE: A FEDERAL LUXURY OR RESPONSIBILITY?
THEME: The scope, importance and politics of Washington's arts and museums

VISIT TO NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY: Talk on presidential portraits

Readings:

1. *The Thorny Path to a National Black Museum*, Kate Taylor
2. *The Enola Gay Controversy: History, Memory and the Politics of Presentation*, Michael J. Hogan
3. *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* Kirk Savage

10. December 2 WASHINGTON AFTER TRUMP

THEME: Trump's stewardship of Washington and the quest for bipartisanship.

READINGS: TBD