
SYLLABUS

Washington History, Institutions & Rituals

Myth vs. Reality

Fall 2022

University of California Washington Center

Professor: Marc Sandalow

Thursdays 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. room 1104

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[Book 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 so many Americans, particularly the politicians who yearn to work there. We will examine the glorification and vilification of Washington in literature and film and, using primary sources, 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 iconic institutions such as the National Portrait Gallery and Ben's Chili Bowl. The course combines 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.

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. Students will gain insights into why the nation holds Washington in low esteem and develop skills using data and other primary research resources 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 meets every Wednesday from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Minor adjustments may be necessary to accommodate speakers. **It is important that your internship supervisor understands that Thursday is a class day.** Please inform me by e-mail prior to class if you cannot attend.

INSTRUCTOR

Marc Sandalow (msandalow@ucdc.edu) is Associate 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 has been a journalist for over 30 years, including 21 years at the *San Francisco Chronicle* where he covered California politics and spent more than a decade as the paper's Washington Bureau Chief. He was a contributing editor the *California Journal*, and has been published in multiple outlets including the *Sacramento Bee*, *Campaigns and Elections*, and *CalMatters*. He is currently a political analyst for KCBS radio in San Francisco and Hearst Television and writes a regular column for the *San Francisco Examiner*. He has been with the University of California's Washington Program since 2008.

OFFICE HOURS

I am available for both in-person and Zoom meetings most days. Late morning and late afternoon are usually best. You can [schedule an appointment](#) (link is also at the bottom of my email signature) and you are also welcome to stop by my office without an appointment any day after 11 a.m. Feel free to knock if the door is closed or just cracked open. If I don't respond, it means I am either occupied or not there.

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 AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance is mandatory. If you cannot make 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. Lively discussions are an important element of the course. Speaking up, while encouraged, is not the only way to contribute. Other contributions might include active participation in group activities, attending office hours, sending the professor interesting items to discuss that week, or anything to demonstrate your engagement.

I will call on students who do not voluntarily participate. Attendance is mandatory.

CLASS ETIQUETTE

I encourage open and lively discussion each week. That means challenging conventional wisdom and at times raising contrarian ideas to promote discussion and thought. I hope class will be regarded as a safe space for students to voice opinions, play devil's advocate and challenge each other -- and the professor -- without fear of judgment. Treat your classmates with respect and try not to take challenges to your ideas as personal criticism.

Do not hesitate to bring to my attention anything I say that you find to foolish, overly provocative, or offensive, let alone typos or mistakes in written material. Student input is invaluable to my perpetually evolving course.

Using electronic devices during class is permitted for class purposes only (group assignments, fact-checking the professor, monitoring current events.) I am far less tolerant of social media browsing or posts during class.

To comply with UCDC rules, all students must remain masked during class. We will take regular breaks to allow students time to return to their apartments, remove their masks and check their phones.

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. INTERNSHIP PUBLIC SERVICE PAPER.** Students will write a short paper describing how the organization or office they are interning for serves the public interest. What is the overarching goal of the work? Whom does the work benefit? Is society better off because of its work? (3-5 pages)
- 2. 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. (3-5 pages)
- 3. REFORM WASHINGTON MEMO:** Students will select a proposal to reform Washington from a list (term limits for members of Congress, end the Electoral College, abolish campaign spending, etc.) write a memo, backed by research, supporting, or rejecting the proposal. (3-6 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.(3 pages)
- 5. WASHINGTON BOOK REPORT:** You will read a book featuring Washington D.C. and write a short essay 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. Internship paper 20%
2. Pop media review 20%
3. Washington reform memo 20%
4. Short assignments (including book review and presentation) 20%
5. Class participation 20%

The typical grade in my class is between an A- and B+. A’s are reserved for exceptional work and grades below a B- are quite rare for students who complete all the assignments. I will sometimes provide two grades on an assignment, for example A-/B+, which means that the grade is in between the two.

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. There are other ways to contribute.

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 22 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's Speaker Series September 26

(Washington, D.C. Swamp to Scandal)

2. September 28 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 6 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 13 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 20 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

Internship public service assignment due

6. October 27 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 3 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 10 ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Pop media paper due

9. November 17 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

Book Review Due Monday, November 21

NOVEMBER 24: No Class Happy Thanksgiving

10. December 1 WASHINGTON AND THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY

THEME: Will the Washington we know be recognizable in 50 years?

READINGS: TBD

Reform memo due