

Washington Focus Seminar
“Knowing Washington DC”
UCI UCDC 180 / UCR HASS 191W

SYLLABUS

Professor Randolph C. Head
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Class meetings: Thursdays, 10 AM – 1 PM
Room 317

Office hours, Room 339: Tuesday 5-7 PM or by appointment
(evening appointments are available),
or drop by my office anytime I am there.

Course Theme

What do you know about Washington, DC? What do people in Washington DC – residents, political actors, visitors – know? This course will explore our city through various reflections of these two questions, bringing them together in light of the unique information environment that makes Washington the vital local, national and global nexus that it is.

Our analysis will include readings, films, online material, and visits to sites where knowledge of different kinds about the city is mediated to various audiences. By thinking hard about who is communicating what to whom in various Washington DC circuits, the course will provide you with a richer understanding of what goes on in Washington, and improve your ability to act in an informed way as a denizen of Washington, and of the nation and world. Along the way, the course will connect to your internships and the professor’s research into knowledge systems.

Course ethic

I urge you all to participate in all course activities according to the following set of principles:

1. **Think hard!** The goal of this course is not to transfer any particular information, but to have you practice and reflect on how the mind’s work can contribute to your internship, to your personal vocation, and to the general good.
2. **Go find out!** The Washington knowledge environment is rich and multilayered. You will succeed in the course and in Washington (or wherever your future takes you) if you reach out to explore that environment through the media, the web, through books and articles, and through interactions with informants, approaching all of these critically but with sympathy for the diverse positions of the many different people involved.
3. **Civil discourse.** People in Washington and around the nation disagree, often passionately, about policy and about the truth. This course is intended to provide a space to focus on Washington and its contentious reality without being part of the contention.

Rather, the Washington Focus seminar is a place to work out, explain and refine your understanding of the city and the world, persuasively and passionately but with respect for the diversity of opinions among the others participating.

4. **Intellectual honesty.** Intellectual honesty has two parts, internal and external. Internal intellectual honesty means that you believe that what you are saying or writing is true or justified. External intellectual honesty requires giving credit for all ideas, texts, words, images and any other stimulus you received from another. Avoid **plagiarism** by providing a reference – in a form appropriate to the perspective you are writing or speaking in – for **any** material you take directly from another source. Avoid **copyright infringement** by following the rules for fair use in an educational setting, which allows use of copyrighted material, but not in ways that would harm the copyright holder.

5. **Confidentiality and discretion.** Many of you work at internship sites where confidential material of various kinds may circulate. Please remember that you should **never** violate the confidence of your workspace for this class, and should respect that all members of the class probably have some information they cannot discuss. To ensure that you're not 'leaking', make it a habit to reflect consciously before telling stories or using information you acquired at your internship. Often, it's all right to do so: but **only** after conscious thought.

Course assignments

The course consists of weekly meetings for discussion, presentation, and field trips. Attendance is required. Assigned reading should be done **before** each class meeting. Participation, engagement, and in-class contributions are a vital part of the course for every student.

In addition, students will write a series of short assignments, make an in-class presentation, and write one longer paper. You may choose one of three perspectives for each of your written and presentation assignments:

The literary: making use of language (or images, sounds, and media) to **evoke the city's reality** for your audience, and to engage your audience with some vital aspect of the 'real' Washington.

The scholarly: by framing questions and seeking out evidence, perform a **critical analysis** of an aspect of Washington as a nexus of communication and cultural capital.

The policy-oriented: **propose specific steps** that an institution you identify with should take to communicate and activate its agenda, in light of the Washington knowledge environment.

Whatever form you choose, all essays should have a thesis that you seek to convey, and should make use of suitable evidence (with citation)!

Requirements and grading:

1. Attendance, reading, and participation (25%)

Attendance at each class meeting is required. If a high-priority event at your internship site conflicts with attendance, please contact Prof. Head *in advance as early as possible* to make arrangements. For *emergencies and illnesses*, please inform Prof. Head as early as possible.

Participation means taking part in the discussion on the basis of completed preparation, contributing ideas, facts, opinions and positions in keeping with an ethic of civil discourse. I will also include discussion during my office hours as part of your course participation.

Short reading assignments or movie assignments for reading *before* each class are listed in the syllabus. These form the essential shared foundation for discussion each week. One way to find a topic for your short writing assignments is to pick one point from the reading that you found intriguing or unexpected (or disturbing or mistaken), and exploring it in a pithy essay.

The formal assignments are only part of your preparation requirement. In addition, you should spend at least **2 hours per week** pursuing deeper engagement with the Washington information environment. I strongly recommend avid reading of the major national media and Washington papers on a regular basis. In addition, I encourage you to explore the world of theoretical, political and policy blogs about national and local politics. Find three or four blogs or outlets that you find lively and filled with persuasive posts and comments, and draw on these as you seek topics for short assignments or perspectives on each week's theme. Ask people at your internship site, your peers and your professors for suggestions what to read, and make sure to explore outlets that convey positions you disagree with, too.

Access to material

Many of the shorter readings will be available in a **reader** that will be available for purchase. Details will be given in the first class. Most of these readings will also be available in the UCDC course e-reserves; you will have access to these once you arrive in Washington, and will have time to do the first week's reading.

I recommend **buying** the Katherine Graham reading (Katherine Graham, *Personal History* [Vintage, 1998]): it is abundantly available on line for the cost of shipping (~\$4.00), which is less than the cost of including it in the reader; because of the length of the passages assigned, fair use does not allow us to make it available in our e-reserves.

2. Short writing assignments (25%)

One goal of this course is to give students practice in writing quick but penetrating short pieces, as people working in Washington often have to do. The goal of these pieces is not to be comprehensive, but rather to address a single point in a literary, scholarly, or policy-oriented way. These short essays should run around 300-500 words (about one to two pages, double-spaced). They can be longer if you wish, but should not be shorter.

Essays are due by **7 PM the Tuesday before each class** (by e-mail to Prof. Head). Students who wrote particularly impressive short pieces may be asked to pitch them orally to the class during discussion. I will often provide topic suggestions, but you are welcome to write on any Washington issue relevant to each week's theme. You may choose as your topic a single point from the reading, a related issue you discovered in the news or other media, or you may develop a topic by connecting the week's general theme to your work at your internship site.

Each short assignment (during weeks 2-10) can earn up to 5 points, and the maximum that can be earned for all of them is 25 points. (Thus, you do not need to submit a short assignment every week – but please DO pace yourself through the quarter.)

3. Oral presentation (20%)

Each student will make a short oral presentation in class. Presentations will be scheduled to begin in week 5, after you have settled into the city and your internship. You should present a feature of your own Washington knowledge environment that you have discovered, and that you think is revealing, important, or problematic. I will begin discussing topics as soon as the course starts; a **one-paragraph topic proposal is due on January 31** (bring to class).

Presentations should be about 10 minutes. If you want to use graphics, multimedia or handouts, please consult with Prof. Head in advance.

4. Washington focus paper (30%)

Each student will write one longer and more formal paper – ca. 2500 words of main text – that goes into a topic of your choice in greater depth. The best topics will link your internship and the goals of the organization you are working for to some feature of the larger Washington knowledge environment. Your papers may take an analytic or policy perspective. Each paper must build on significant additional research and reading, must develop a critical analysis of an issue of interest to you, and argue a thesis clearly and coherently. Formal citation (MLA, Chicago, or Social Science) and a reference list are required.

Each student should visit Prof. Head in office hours or by appointment to discuss this paper's topic **before February 21**.

Course Schedule

Week 1 – January 10 – Introduction: Knowing Washington DC

Reading: Sam Smith, *Captive Capital: Colonial Life in Modern Washington* (1974), Ch. 1: “Life inside a monument,” pp. 3-36.

Jill Connors, ed., *Growing Up in Washington, D.C.: An Oral History*, Ch. 1, “Belonging to a Community,” pp. 25-51.

Week 2 – January 17 - Inaugurations! Washington ritual and ceremony

Writing: short assignments due by 7 PM Tuesday, January 15, (if you submit one this week) and every Tuesday. Up to 5 points each, up to 25 points total.

Reading: Karlyn K. Campbell and Kathleen H. Jamieson, “Inaugurating the Presidency,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (1985).

Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus* (1988, originally 1967)

Read/watch:

Inaugural speeches*:

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1932

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MX_v0zxM23Q

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/fdrfirstinaugural.html>

John F. Kennedy, 1960

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLmiOEK59n8>

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkinaugural.htm>

Ronald W. Reagan, 1980

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpPt7xGx4Xo>

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/ronaldreagandfirstinaugural.html>

Barack H. Obama, 2008

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjnygQ02aW4>

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Barack_Obama%27s_Inaugural_Address

* speeches and texts are also available at many other sites

In class, we will discuss the nature of public political ceremonies, the audience for the next inaugural speech, and what elements it should, *in your judgment*, contain.

Week 3 – January 24 – Why Washington City? A historical perspective with modern resonance.

Reading: Joseph Ellis. *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*, Ch. 2: “The Dinner,” pp. 48-80.

Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government*, Ch. 1: “President Thomas Jefferson in Washington City,” pp. 4-47.

Week 4 – January 31 – Civil War Washington

Writing: One-paragraph topic proposal for your presentation and paper

In-class guest: Dr. Robert Sutton, Chief Historian, National Park Service. Dr. Sutton is an expert on the Civil War era, and headed several regional parks before becoming Chief Historian.

Reading: TBA

Week 5 – February 7 – African American Washington

Reading: Genna Rae McNeil, *Groundwork: Charles Hamilton Houston and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, Ch. XII: “Racism must go!”, pp. 176-193.

Francis Allen, “Remembering Shelley v. Kramer: Of Public and Private Worlds,” *Washington University Law Review* 67, 3 (1989), pp. 709-735 [Note: *Shelley v Kramer* is a parallel case, argued and decided together with *Hurd v Hodge*].

Hurd vs. Hodge (District Court and Supreme Court cases): Read the main decision and at least 2 *amicus curiae* briefs (available on the UCDC server). Part of the assignment is figuring out how to navigate a legal case and its paperwork!

In class guests: Alumni Panel: finding your way in Washington

Week 6 – February 14 – **Field trip:** Newseum: media (and sponsorship!) in action

[NOTE: as an exception, short essay assignments for this week are due **Sunday, Feb. 17, by 5 PM**, so that you can respond to the Newseum lecture and tour.]

Reading: Katherine Graham, *Personal History*, Chs. 21-22, pp. 416-459.

Week 7 – February 21 – Can Washington correct its own faults? (The Watergate scandal)

Watch: *All the President's Men* [We will schedule an evening showing before class]

Reading: Katherine Graham, *Personal History*, Chs. 23-24, pp. 460-508.

Beverly Gage, “Deep Throat, Watergate, and the Bureaucratic Politics of the FBI,” *Journal of Policy History* 24 (2012), pp. 157-183.

Michael Schudson, chapter on “Memory Contested” in *Watergate in American Memory* (1993), pp. 88-103.

Browsing: Look on the Web for information and interpretations of Watergate.

Week 8 – February 28 – Media and punditry: a new environment

Browsing: your 4 (or more) favorite pundits online on the budget and debt ceiling negotiations

In class: I will **call on you** to report what ‘your’ sources have been arguing.

How do different types of media outlet – professional journalists at newspapers-of-record, partisan web sites, individual or group blogs, thematic bloggers – shape our understanding of what’s happening in Washington and global politics? We will discuss negotiations between the Washington parties and their backers over the Federal budget and deficit (the Federal debt ceiling, the sequester, and the pending Continuing Resolution), as well as whatever new events have come up since the quarter started.

Week 9 – March 7 – Washington doing its work

In-class guest: TBA (we will have a guest with experience in the Federal agencies and departments who can talk about their role in our larger system. Reading will depend on the guest’s identity).

Week 10 – March 14 – Course conclusion