Semester in Washington
Spring 2018

RPOS 341  Washington in Perspective: From Federal City to the Nation’s Capital

RPOS 342  Washington Internship

Professor Meredith Weiss

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Course description
This class takes Washington, DC as a natural laboratory for learning about perennial themes of history, politics, and society: how cities develop and change, how nations establish and promote identities and symbols, how societies memorialize past episodes and leaders, and how a national capital balances the sometimes-divergent interests of its local residents and nationwide stakeholders. After kicking off the semester with a tour of Washington, DC, the course combines a wide range of assigned readings and in-class lecture and discussion with alumni talks, site visits, and team projects.

Course objectives
Students will learn about the history, architecture, and culture of the city of Washington—both the nation’s capital and the “real” city. They will learn how national politics has affected the city’s growth, both within and outside the federal core. They will also learn how to interpret historical and contemporary architectural and planning decisions as interpretations of national self-understanding. To solidify learning about these interactions, individual and team assignments will use (or critique) the theses in assigned readings by applying them to structured observations of the city’s buildings, neighborhoods, infrastructure, and spaces.

Class times
Meetings for RPOS 341 and 495z will be back-to-back on Fridays, starting at 9:00am (unless otherwise notified), in the 1st floor classroom at the Woodley Park residence hall. Some classes will involve (or be supplanted by) field trips. Ending times will vary; students are expected to be available all day each Friday for required activities.

Books & readings
Recommended: Grant Reeher and Mark Mariani, eds. The Insider’s Guide to Political Internships: What to Do Once You’re in the Door (Westview 2002).

  • To be purchased and read before you arrive in Washington.
Also recommended: Any good guide book to Washington, DC.

One other book is listed on the syllabus for POS 495Z. All other required readings will be available on Blackboard.

**COURSE POLICIES RPOS 341, 342, & 495Z**

*Attendance*
Attendance and active participation in class is expected every week, barring legitimate medical excuses (following UAlbany guidelines). Any unexcused absence or lateness may result in a reduction in the student’s final grade. Family visits are not acceptable reasons for missing class.

*Internet and laptops*
Students will need to conduct online research to complete the assignments in this course. Use of laptops for note-taking is permitted, though discouraged, and laptops may be used for some in-class group work. However, use of any electronic device during class (including laptops) for non-class-related purposes is prohibited, and may result in loss of classroom laptop privileges and/or temporary confiscation of the device in question.

*Academic Honesty*
Students are expected to adhere to the University at Albany’s regulations concerning academic honesty: [http://www.albany.edu/eltl/academic_integrity.php](http://www.albany.edu/eltl/academic_integrity.php). Read these guidelines carefully, make sure you understand all provisions, and follow them in all your courses. Pay particular attention to the need for citations even when paraphrasing or summarizing material. Violation of these rules will result in severe penalty (usually failing the assignment and/or the course, depending on the violation) as well as referral to the appropriate academic authorities.

*Accommodating disabilities*
Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, medical, cognitive, learning and mental health (psychiatric) disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Disability Resource Center (518-442-5490; drc@albany.edu). Upon verification and after the registration process is complete, the DRC will provide you with a letter that informs me that you are a student with a disability registered with the DRC and list the recommended reasonable accommodations. Please submit these letters within the first two weeks of the semester (in person, so we can discuss appropriate arrangements).

*Papers & assignments*
Short papers for RPOS 341 should be 2-3 pages each. Internship logs and informational interview write-ups for RPOS 342 should be 1-2 pages each.

Papers must be typed, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins, in 12-point Times New Roman (or closely comparable) font. Proofread carefully. Given the professional orientation of this program, points will be deducted for sloppy work (poor grammar, typos, etc.).

All RPOS 341 papers and assignments are due (hard copy) on the date on which they are listed
the syllabus, unless otherwise noted in class. RPOS 342 logs and write-ups should be submitted via email by the date indicated. Late papers will incur a penalty of ⅓ grade (e.g., from a B+ to a B) per calendar day late.

Grading
RPOS 341 (3 credits)
Individual work
- 4 short papers @ 10% each (4 papers) or 5% (lowest-scoring paper) 45% total
- Class preparation and participation 10%
Team work
- 3 team presentations @ 15% each 45%

Grading scale

RPOS 342 (9 credits, S/U)
A grade of S requires:
- Satisfactory performance and punctual attendance for internship
- Completion of all 4 internship logs, 2 informational interviews and write-ups, and internship evaluation

COURSE SCHEDULE RPOS 341 & 342
Readings and assignments/papers are due on the date for which they are listed.
Note that some extracts may include more than the required portion; students are welcome, but not required, to read further.

Details are subject to change!

Recommended pre-reading before arrival in Washington
- Reeher & Mariani, at least chapters 1-3, 6, 8, and 15

Week 1 Orientation and Introduction to Washington
Saturday–Wednesday, 20-24 January
- Move into apartments at WISH

Wednesday, 24 January, 6:30-8:00pm
- Introductory meeting at WISH

Thursday, 25 January
- Professional development orientation (led by Yalitza Negron)
- Welcome reception, 6:00-8:00pm (US Chamber of Commerce, 430 1st St. SE)
- Recommended reading:
Friday, 26 January, 9:00am-4:00pm (meet at WISH)

- **Tour of DC** (bring a map of the city or guidebook—or at least consult GoogleMaps)
- **Reading:**
  - Fogle, *Washington, DC’s Hidden History*: Introduction
  - Hyra, *Race, Class, and Politics in the Cappuccino City* (chap. 1)
    - This chapter introduces several themes to which we will return later in the semester; keep these historical developments and ideas in mind (whatever your own perspectives on them) as we explore the city and proceed through the semester.

**Week 2**  
**Research skills**

29 January  First day of internships

2 February

- **Internship log #1 (RPOS 342):** initial impressions and expectations; *include the name and email address of your direct supervisor at your internship*
- Choose memorials and plan team visits for 17 February: Lincoln, Jefferson, FDR, WWII, Vietnam War, Korean War, Martin Luther King

**Week 3**  
**The First Century: From Founding to Federal City to National Capital**

9 February

- **Reading:**
  - Smith, *Washington at Home*: p. xiii-xvi
  - Ellis, *Founding Brothers*: pp. 48-52 (top)
  - Map of the District of Columbia, 1800
  - *Visions for the Millennium*: pp. 1-3 + front/back cover
  - Penczer, *Washington National Mall*: pp. 7-19 (remainder is for week 5)
  - Young, *The Washington Community*: Prologue + chap. 1
  - Lewis, *District of Columbia*: pp. 15-21
  - Bowling, Federal Town to National Capital

- **Short paper #1:** See reading prompt

**Week 4**  
**Team Presentations #1:** Memorials and Their Controversies

16 February

- Each team will present one memorial (30 minutes total per team): describe the structure/site (including photos), discuss the genesis of the plans, assess how the design embodies the memorial’s objectives, detail and analyze the controversies surrounding the memorial’s construction and/or design. In doing so, think about and test the theses in Clement and Savage (last week). See instructions on Blackboard for full details.

- **Informational interview write-up #1 (RPOS 342):** Who you met, how you located them, what you learned, where you should go from here (in terms of skills as well as
further interviews). Interview write-ups may be submitted early.

**Week 5**  
**From the McMillan Plan and City Beautiful through the New Deal**  
23 February

- **Reading:**
  - Population spreadsheet
  - Lewis, *District of Columbia*: pp. 27-33
  - Penczer, *History of the National Mall*: pp. 20-49 (see Week 3)
  - Wilson, Architecture and the Reinterpretation of the Past
  - Clement, City Thinking, City Spaces
  - Savage, *Monument Wars*: Introduction

- **Short paper #2:** See reading prompt

**Week 6**  
**Interpreting History**  
2 March

- **Smithsonian Castle visit** (meeting with Richard Kurin), 1:00-2:00pm
  - Come prepared with questions for Richard Kurin based on reading (and thinking ahead to upcoming presentations)

- **Reading:**
  - Post, *Who Owns America’s Past*: Preface
  - Henderson, Blockbuster Brown
  - Kurin, *Reflections of a Culture Broker*: ch. 1, 2, 15

- **Short paper #3:** See reading prompt

- **Internship log #2 (RPOS 342):** Do not just describe what you did, but discuss something you learned since the last log (from work you have done, conversations with colleagues, current policy debates with which your organization is engaging, etc.)

- Choose museums and plan team visits for 24 March: American History, Natural History, American Indian, National Gallery of Art, Air & Space, National Portrait Gallery, National Building Museum, Women in the Arts

**Week 7**  
**Trauma, Identity, and Public Space**  
9 March

- **Holocaust Museum visit**, 3:00-4:30pm

- **Guest lecturer:** Barry Trachtenberg

- **Reading:**
  - *Holocaust memorialization*
    - Stier, Torah and Taboo
    - Young, America’s Holocaust
    - Flanzbaum, Americanization of the Holocaust
  - Recommended: *Who has a claim on public space?*
    - Cadaval & Finnegan, “Our Voices in the Nation’s Capital”

**Week 8**  
**No class**  
16 March
Week 9  Team Presentations #2: Museums
23 March
- Each team will present one museum (30 minutes total per team): describe the structure/site (including photos), discuss the genesis of the plans, assess how the content/focus embodies the museum’s objectives, detail and analyze the process of or controversies around the museum’s construction and/or design. See instructions on Blackboard for full details.

Week 10  No class
30 March

Week 11  6 April
- Internship log #3 (RPOS 342): As for log #2, discuss what you have learned in the interim, what skills you’re developing, new challenges you have encountered, etc., as well as expectations or goals you have set for yourself as you enter your final month

Week 12  African-American Washington: An Overview through the 1960s
13 April
- National Museum of African-American History & Culture visit, 2:30-4:00pm
- Reading:
  - Population spreadsheet: Racial/Ethnic Makeup of Washington, DC
  - Lewis, District of Columbia: chap. 2
  - Borchert, Rise and Fall of Washington’s Inhabited Alleys
  - Richards, Public School Governance in DC
  - Schaffer, The 1968 Washington Riots in History and Memory
  - Review Hyra reading from Week 1
- Short paper #4: See reading prompt
- Choose neighborhoods and plan team visits for 27 April: Georgetown, Downtown/Pennsylvania Ave, Dupont Circle/Kalorama/Adams Morgan, Shaw/U St/LeDroit Park, Mt Pleasant/Columbia Heights, Navy Yard/Capitol Hill/Waterfront

Week 13  A Modern City of Neighborhoods in a Growing Metropolitan Region
21 April  UAlbany alumni/student Service Day (details TBC)
20 April
- Guest lecturer: Paul Jutton, 1:30-3:00pm, National Capital Planning Commission (401 9th St NW)
- Reading:
  - Politics
    - Self-government timeline
    - Wikipedia (!), DC Home Rule
    - Stout, Barry obituary
    - Schwartzman & Mellnik, White Voters
    - DeBonis & Davis, Muriel Bowser Sworn In
- Want to learn more about statehood efforts? See https://www.dcvote.org
  - Neighborhoods
    - Smith, *Washington at Home*: Introduction
    - Muller, DC neighborhoods in 1979
    - Gringlas, *Old Confronts New*
  - Architecture
    - *Visions for the Millennium*: pp. 8-10
    - Helfrich, Modernism for Washington?
    - DeBonis, DC Planners
  - City and Region
    - Schrag, How Metro Shapes DC
    - Brookings, Overview of DC Region
    - Widdicombe, The Fall and Rise of Downtown DC
    - Sandalow, The “New Washington”
    - Interested in transportation issues? See http://www.yptwdc.com

- **Short paper #5**: See reading prompt

**Week 14**

Team Presentations #3: Neighborhoods

26 April  Final day of internships
- Farewell party, 6:00-8:00pm, hosted by Arie Lipnick (800 P St NW)

27 April
- Reading (to get you started):
  - Smith, *Washington at Home*: ch. 1 (Georgetown), 2 (Capitol Hill), 3 (Downtown), 10 (Dupont), 11 (Shaw), 12 (Mt Pleasant), 13 (LeDroit Park), 14 (Columbia Heights), 16 (Kalorama), 25 (Adams Morgan)
  - Fitzpatrick & Goodwin, *Guide to Black Washington*: ch. 9-11 (Shaw/U St)
  - Fogle, *Hidden History*: ch. 2 (Capitol Hill), 3 (Georgetown), 4 (Downtown), 7 (Mt Pleasant/Adams Morgan), 8 (Shaw/U St)

- Informational interview write-up #2 (RPOS 342)
- Internship log #4 (RPOS342): Reflect not just on what you have learned or accomplished since log #3, but also more broadly, on where you have come over the course of your internship, from your initial expectations to the skills, knowledge, or perspectives you now have. What do you see as your next steps? On a separate page (that can be shared with future students), also comment on the internship itself: would you recommend this position for a future UAlbany student, how were the logistics, etc. (This log may be slightly longer than the previous ones.)

**Week 15**

1-3 May  Site visits TBD

4 May  Final class session