

THE POLITICS OF NATIONAL MEMORY

Fall Semester, 2018

Joel L. Swerdlow, PhD



“Every argument about the past is about the future.”

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Email Guidelines

Please put "Archer" in subject line for emails.

I will always return your email or telephone call within 24 hours. If you do not hear from me, please assume your message or email never arrived, and call or write again.

Office Hours

Monday, 11AM - 2PM and 4 - 6 PM

Tuesday, 4-6 PM

And any day (including weekends) by appointment.

Course Pre-requisites/Other Restrictions

Acceptance into the Archer Fellowship Program

Course Description

This course focuses on the politics of national memory by fostering an ongoing conversation about the meaning of the American Republic and the historical memory found in memorials, monuments, and museums in Washington, D.C. The course will explore political and artistic controversies that have shaped the design and building of many monuments, memorials, and museums that define the architectural landscape of the nation's capital. Along with visiting many of these sites, the course will involve a critical discussion in the classroom of the monuments, museums, and memorials in light of primary texts. Students will engage in critical reflection about their personal experience of Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and many of the structures that do so much to define this city and national memory today.

Readings, experiences and discussions—triggered by seeing originals of our Founding documents—will address three questions:

- What is American democracy?
- What power does each individual have within this democracy?
- What does democracy mean for each individual's personal dreams?

Student Learning Objectives & Outcomes

After completing the course students will be able to:

1. Describe and explain the development of Washington, D.C., and the National Mall as places of historical memory.
2. Describe the political controversies that have shaped the building of major national memorials, monuments and museums in Washington, D.C.
3. Critically evaluate the goals and objectives of national memorials, monuments and museums in light of different political and historical contexts.
4. Understand through personal participation the process through which complex ideas, historic evidence and personal experience are woven together to formulate a useful and testable overall theory that stimulates discussion and invites improvements.
5. Use Washington DC to construct a working, practical definition of "democracy"; what makes American democracy unique; and how American democracy evolves in response to technological, demographic and other changes in society.

Suggest a book, short story or essay

Each student is encouraged to bring and discuss with me (preferably early in the semester) something from their own reading that they think would benefit the entire class.

Additional Requirement: You must obtain a Reader Card at the Library of Congress and Research Card at the National Archives—bring both cards to class on September 5

Grading Policy and Participation

All classes are mandatory. Unexcused absences will result in a lower grade.

The core of this class is your journal and class discussions. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the material. The model for this class is a graduate seminar. You are expected to participate in class with questions and ideas, and by engaging in debates and discussions. More opportunities to participate will come by volunteering to make presentations; read from your journal; and take the lead during class discussions and activities.

It is assumed you are all honors-level students who will attend all classes and complete your journal and all other assignments satisfactorily and in a timely manner. All excuses for compelling personal or work-related reasons must be granted *beforehand*. Even one unexcused absence or late work *will* result in lower grades. Students will at all times conduct themselves according to their home University's rules.

Half of your grade will come from your journal and half from class discussions—both of which will strictly require that you complete the readings (see below). Students who complete all assigned projects SATISFACTORILY AND in a timely manner will receive a B. Students who display excellence through written work and through class participation will receive an A. Students who fail to SATISFACTORILY complete assigned projects or to attend classes will receive lower than a B. Students are encouraged to discuss with faculty how they might display excellence in the course.

Midterm grades will be discussed with each student 7-8 weeks into the semester.

Final grades will be reported to your home UT System institution by May xx 2018, and posted in accordance with their respective grade submission deadlines.

There will be no scheduled tests, but unannounced quizzes will be conducted to help ensure that students are keeping up-to-date with all assignments.

Archer Plus

Throughout the semester, students will be given an opportunity to read, write and participate in discussions that carry ideas from the class into much deeper levels. Such “Archer Plus” activities are voluntary and have no impact of grade.

Electronics in Class

You may take notes on your laptop or mobile device and *with prior permission* use a laptop or phone to explore something related to class discussion (simply raise your hand and ask). A zero-tolerance policy for other uses of electronics will be enforced. You will be *asked to leave immediately* if you break this rule.

Invited Speakers

Experts or other notable people may be invited to speak for a portion of a class if their experiences and accomplishments relate to the class agenda. All speakers will be able to help students to network.

Site Visits

Often, before, during or after a class at a site, you will be required to visit other sites.

Journals

Students will each keep a journal that focuses on what you think, feel and experience at each of the sites you visit as part of this class. **Journal entries must also demonstrate that you have completed the required readings.**

Among the goals is for you to have a memoir of your semester in Washington, DC. Please note:

1. All entries must be in the same email thread with me (each Archer has his or her own thread); The journal must be a single thread, so it captures your walks through Washington, DC as the semester unfolds
2. Questions and assignments may augment journal entries at various sites;
3. All content must be in the body of the email, *not* sent as attachments; photos and videos (which you may include) can be attached; your journal will be kept confidential; I may ask you to share an idea, etc. with the class;
4. There are no length limits; journal entries can be as short or long, and as visual, as you want;
5. My responses to journal entries will focus on content, not writing—which is expected to meet basic standards of grammar and clarity.

Adjustments Due to Weather

For our visits to outdoor sites, please be prepared for outdoor weather conditions by dressing appropriately (e.g. rain protection and comfortable walking shoes). In cases of extreme weather, classes will be at The Archer Center; you will be notified via text message or email by 3 pm the day of the scheduled site visit. Whether we meet outside, or inside a museum, you must be on time so the entire class does not have to wait. Plan your travel; the subway running late, or that you got lost are *not* valid excuses.

Readings

Copies and/or links will be provided, but all, with the exception of SOTU (which was created for this class) are inexpensive and easily available via Alibris, ABE, Amazon, etc.

James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (1963)—to be read by the deadline for you to visit the Museum of African-American History and Culture

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism* (1835) —to be read before we take the Basin Walk

Fred Downs, *Aftermath* (1985)—to be read before we take the War Walk

Abraham Lincoln, *SOTU* (1861-1865)—to be read before we visit the Lincoln Memorial

Thomas Mann, *The Coming Victory of Democracy* (1938)—to be read before we visit the Holocaust Museum

Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway, *The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future* —a novel (2014): to be read before we take the Science Walk

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND:

To read these books—and think about how they relate to our class site visits and discussions—will be strictly required.

All the books are deep in content, but quite thin—to read all of them carefully will not be difficult if you budget your time well—but cannot be done if you wait until the last minute.

In class discussions you may be called upon to answer questions about the readings even if you do not raise your hand.

Readings will also be included in journal assignments.

You may, of course, begin and complete reading any of these books whenever you want. But, anyone who does not complete these readings by the date assigned will learn much less—the class will be taught on the assumption that assigned reading has been completed.

Calendar

Writing Workshop—Part I (voluntary) August 22

At least a week before the Writing Workshops, you must submit to me something (minimum two pages) that you think is (among) your best writing—something on which you have worked hard to make it an excellent as possible.

Readings:

- Martin Luther King, Jr., *“Letter from Birmingham Jail”*
- Abraham Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address*

National Archives and Nearby Sites Thursday, August 23 Friday, August 24

We will begin at the National Archives, where we will see, among other things, originals of the Declaration of independence, U.S. Constitution, and Bill of Rights. The walk will continue to at least a half-dozen other sites—including the place where “security men” hired by the White House tried to assault and beat antiwar demonstrators.

Friday, August 31 Newseum and Holocaust Memorial Museum

Wednesday, September 5 Lincoln Memorial

Before class—

Visit:

- The “Emancipation” statue in Lincoln Park—the only memorial to Abraham Lincoln in Washington, DC built by people who knew him.
- Ford’s Theater and the Peterson House (across the street)

Wednesday, September 12
Writing Workshop—Part II (voluntary)

Open only to those who did NOT attend the first Workshop—a few people may be allowed to participate in both

Monday, September 17
Basin Walk

We start at the Jefferson Memorial, and walk (in order) to the George Mason; FDR; and Martin Luther King, Jr Memorials

Monday –Tuesday, September 24-25
Basin Walk, continued

Monday-Tuesday, October 1-2
Archer Center

Before class, visit the Museum of African-American History and Culture

Tuesday, October 9
Ford's Theater

Friday, October 12
Science Walk

We will start at the Natural History Museum and continue to the Air&Space Museum and the Botanical Gardens

**October 15-16
War Walk**

We will meet at the World War I memorial, and walk to the WWII, Korean War, and Vietnam War memorials.

Before class, visit Arlington National Cemetery; you must go to:

- Graves of four Kennedy brothers
- Memorial to the Confederate Dead
- Tomb of the Civil War unknowns
- Tomb of the Unknown soldier
- Mrs. Lee's rose garden
- Section 60

**October 22-23
War Walk, continued**

**October 29-30
Archer Center
Lecture**

**November 5 & Wednesday November 7th—Pre-and Post-Congressional Elections Discussion (combination of Chin & Swerdlow classes)
Archer Center**

CONGRATULATIONS!!!! ENJOY YOUR VACATION!!!!!!