

Syllabus: The Washington Mall and The American Experience

ARSC 3370

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Class Time: Thursday 10AM

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At the epicenter of our capital city is the Washington Mall with its surrounding symbols, monuments, theaters, and diversified population reflecting the complex tapestry of American culture and history. The Mall is a central gathering point for spirited protest marches and cultural events. Millions of visitors traverse this space each year wandering over it just as we earlier wandered across a vast continent. This course seeks to examine the American experience through the lens of our National Mall. We will utilize its many historic sites and the keepers of their memories to illuminate who we are as a people and how from many we are one.

As a part of the *Discovery Tier* of Marquette's curriculum this course will reveal how the Mall weaves together the diversity of ideas and peoples that enrich our nation and its culture. It helps us understand how a myriad of individual contributions and sacrifices have produced a robust, if sometimes raucous national community (*DT: individuals and communities*). As we visit larger themes that course through our history, we will see how they are expressed in places (monuments, museums, statues, gardens, vistas) on the Mall itself. We will also examine the important role the Mall has played in giving voice to those who have been denied freedoms and opportunities, and those who seek attention for their cause (*DT: Basic needs and Justice*). The Mall is surrounded by museums and sites that tell stories about the artistic, technological, political, scientific, and environmental aspects of our society, arousing our curiosity and expanding our knowledge (*DT: cognition, memory, and intelligence*). And, though the National Mall has its own boundaries, its 300 acres serves as a metaphorical reflection of how the American experience at its essence is one that seeks to eliminate boundaries and to realize each individual's possibility and potential (*DT: crossing boundaries*). The Mall reflects how as a nation we remain a work in progress, and what our obligations are as individual citizens to make this a more perfect union.

September 3: Capitals (Aspin Center)

Introduction: The actual physical site chosen for our capital in fulfillment of Article One Section eight of the Constitution, was a source of debate among the Founders. The argument over the geographic site best suited for the capital city reflected their alternative views about the role of the federal government. At this inflection point in our nation's history we might have a very different debate than the one that occurred in 1790. After all, what is a capital and does it any longer require a physical space? What is a capital's purpose? And is having a centralized physical space relevant to your futures?

Theme: Defining a Capital

Reading: Beautiful Trouble, by Duncan Maisel

L'Enfant's Washington Described, by Pamela Scott

The Compromise of 1790 by Jacob E. Cooke (basis for role play)

Virtual Tour: The Capitol: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvgq1awXNzs>

September 10: Federalism (Aspin Center)

Competing Visions: L'Enfant had a distinct view of the architecture of a democratic capital. So too did Hamilton and Jefferson each have their own distinct philosophical visions of the nature of government. Both their visions were grounded in Enlightenment principles. Though Hamilton's view is largely

attributed to the growth of our nation's capital, the Mall itself can be viewed as very much a Jeffersonian derivative.

Theme: Straddling the Hamiltonian-Jefferson Divide

Readings: Making of Democracy and the Jefferson- Hamilton Debates, by Scott Montgomery and Dan Chirot

Thomas Jefferson's Agrarian Vision and the Changing Nature of Property, by Lisa Krall

Virtual Tour: Monticello: <http://explorer.monticello.org/virtualtour/>

September 17: Liberalism (FDR Memorial)

New Deal: We shall start our exploration of the Mall at the FDR Memorial. From there we will look out and see both the Washington and Jefferson memorials and contemplate how far our vision of government's role has expanded. The FDR memorial serves as an effective representation of how our federal government was called upon to rescue a failed market and the many functions it assumed to restart the economy. The New Deal legacy reshaped the nation's social contract and changed perceptions regarding government's place in our society.

Theme: Expanding the Social Contract

Readings: The Roosevelt Era by Isser Wolloch

Remembering Roosevelt by Marc Shell

The Choreography of Memory by Reuben Rainey

Virtual Tour: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2sosqtr39c>

September 24: Freedom (Aspin Center, Belmont-Paul Women's Museum & March to the Capitol Steps)

A Democratic Space: Protests are essential to a functioning democracy; perhaps because they illuminate how it is failing to function for all of its citizens. From Coxe's March to Occupy Washington, the mall, just as L'Enfant had intended, became an inviting space for the exercise of our first amendment freedom to petition our government. We shall visit the Belmont Paul national monument and see how Alice Paul's March on Washington in 1913 fueled the momentum for adoption of the 19th amendment. Today the successors to the suffragettes continue to have to press their case for income and leadership equality, and to end sexual harassment in the workplace.

Theme: Petitioning Government

Readings: Marching on Washington by Lucy Barber

Hope, Fear and Anxiety: Coxe in Washington by Jerry Prout

Alice Paul's National Demonstration by Lucy Barber

Shattering the Highest and Hardest Glass Ceiling by Janseet Hora

Role Play: Coxe's Speech on Capitol Steps

Virtual Tour: The Capitol

http://www.virtually-anywhere.net/tours/aoc/highlights/vtour/index.html?startscene=scene_National_Statuary_Hall

October 1: Equality (MLK Memorial)

Slavery: Prior to the Civil War, Washington D.C. was a center for slave trade, yet also a safe harbor for abolitionists. Before he signed the Emancipation proclamation, Lincoln signed the D.C. Emancipation Act. A century later African Americans would March on Washington to demonstrate how freedoms promised in the 13th-15th

amendments were freedoms denied. Today we are still having a racial reckoning and the frank awakening too long deferred.

Theme: Searching for Social Justice

Readings: A Great Occasion for Display by Mitch Kachun

Slavery in an Urban Area-District of Columbia by Sammy Mill

From Civil Rights to Economic Security by Matthew Forstater

Virtual Tours: Belmont House:

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/belmont-paul-virtual-tour.htm>

MLK:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPufv3NUjKs>

October 8: Preservation (Aspin Center- A.M PM Roosevelt Island)

Conservationism: Jefferson established the future capital in what was then a rural swamp, inhabited at its boundaries by Native Americans sandwiched between two small trading posts, Alexandria and Georgetown. Early paintings of the area show what we would now consider an idyllic environment. While Washington itself is largely immune from industrial pollution, in 1970 it became a central gathering point in the nation's first Earth Day. Today the Mall abuts EPA's headquarters, and is home to the National Arboretum and several discrete spaces devoted to the preservation of birds, wild flowers, and the urban environment.

Theme: Preserving our Planet

Readings: Theodore Roosevelt Island by Marry Curry

Earth Day Speech Gaylord Nelson

The EPA: Nationalizing Pollution Control by Richard Andrews

Virtual Tour: Muir and Roosevelt:

<https://www.pbs.org/video/the-national-parks-the-creation-of-yosemite-national-park/>

Theodore Roosevelt Island:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThGN37-5I98>

October 12: Assignment 1 Due

October 15: Caring (Lincoln Cottage)

Health Care: Like President Lincoln we will take a brief refuge from the Mall to visit the Soldier's Home, a rather plain looking Gothic cottage on a hillside in northeast D.C. Lincoln would often ride out to the cottage alone, allowing him to visit wounded soldiers in the various makeshift infirmaries along the way. In addition to a growing War Department that helped manage the Union's military, the nation's capital became a *de facto* medical center during the war. We will discuss this as the pretext for subsequent initiatives to care for our nation's veterans as part of a rapid trajectory in both medical science and government's now dominant role in health care and medical research.

Theme: Democratizing public health

Readings: Walt Whitman and Lincoln by Clarence Brown

Military Medical History and the Civil War by Dale Smith

Hospital Nuns from the Civil War Until Today by Mary Pat Kelly

Clara Barton's Civil War Apartments by Gary Scott

Government and Ideology in Recent US Political History

by Lawrence Brown

Virtual Tour: Lincoln's Cottage

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nmrgTB6vew>

October 22: Discovery (Udvar-Hazy Air and Space Museum)

Invention: Americans have long had a love affair with discovery. Jefferson sent explorers Lewis and Clark on a mission to reveal the natural wonders of a vast interior space. John Kennedy mobilized the scientific community to put a man on the moon within a decade. From Ben Franklin to Thomas Edison to Steven Jobs technological advance is celebrated and commercialized. Both these aspects are evident within the vast Smithsonian complex on the Mall and provide a window into technology's many contributions, as well as its darker side. We will visit the sister museum to the air and space museum in Virginia.

Theme: Encouraging discovery

Readings: Foreshadowing Manifest Destiny by Joel Kovarsky

National Science Foundation by Detlev Bronk

The Technology Trap: The Road to Riches by Carl Benedikt Frey

Virtual Tour: <https://airandspace.si.edu/anywhere>

October 29 Sacrifice (World War II, Korean, and Vietnam Memorials)

National Service: The Mall has several monuments to honor America's soldiers. Today we have a voluntary military service. But that was not always the case. During the Civil War the nation instituted its first draft, immediately subject to distortion when wealthy northerners paid for their replacements. The draft became particularly controversial during the unpopular Vietnam War. Today proponents of renewing conscription argue that if a democracy is worth preserving it is worth dying for. Opponents argue our democracy first needs to be reformed from within and citizenship redefined. The pandemic has given new dimension to the question of citizenship and its importance of our democracy is to sustain itself.

Theme: Pondering the meaning of citizenship

Readings: Citizenship by Lauren Berlant

Citizenship in Wartime by Sigal Ben-Porath

Interview: On the Construction of American Citizenship by Jill Lepore

<https://www.aclu.org/podcast/jill-lepore-construction-american-citizenship-ep-25>

November 5 Capitalism (Anderson House)

Economy: The Washington region now boasts [seven](#) of the wealthiest counties in the nation, and yet the capital itself is neither an industrial or financial center. Nonetheless, since Mark Twain's satiric treatment of Gilded Age wealth, the capital has reflected the ascendance of the United States economy as the world's number one economic power and its rich culture indebted to the contributions of the rich and powerful (universities, culture, foundations). However, it also reflects the disparities in opportunity and income experienced on a national scale. The home of Larz Anderson, a wealthy late nineteenth century ambassador will be our point of departure for discussing economic justice.

Theme: Reinvigorating a middle class

Readings: Washington and its Sites by Mark Twain (Chapter 24 *The Gilded Age*)

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3178/3178-h/3178-h.htm#ch24>

American Foundation Leaders, Inderjeet Parmar

The Astonishing Concentration of High Income Earners in Washington D.C.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2013/12/map-the-astonishing-concentration-of-high-income-earners-around-washington-dc/282457/>

Is Capitalism Worth Saving? Interview w Richard Pearlstein

<https://www.vox.com/2019/1/2/18130630/american-capitalism-neoliberalism-steven-pearlstein>

November 12: Summary

Synthesis: We have only touched on many of the broad and sweeping themes that define the American experience. But if America is exceptional it is arguably because over two and half centuries our many values and beliefs, cultures and religions, have been allowed to take their own circuitous course, often colliding with one another, often causing social and political conflicts, once even a Civil War. We shall take a deep breath, perhaps at one end of the Mall or the other, and discuss what it is we now see as we view this space conceived by a French architect and envision what it may be like in 2076.

November 19: **Presentations**

November 26: Thanksgiving Break

December 2 Final Paper Due