

# American Studies 50/History 50

## Washington, D.C.: History, Culture, and Politics

George Washington University. Fall 2001.

Monroe 205. Monday, Wednesday, 4:10 – 5:25 pm.

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## Readings

Carl Abbott, *Political Terrain: Washington, D.C., from Tidewater Town to Global Metropolis*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

Howard Gillette Jr., *Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, D. C.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

*Washington History*. Articles on electronic reserve, via Prometheus.

## Assignments

### 1. Tour Review. Due September 17. (15%)

Find and take part in a guided tour of some building or neighborhood in the Washington area, excluding buildings on or adjacent to the Mall or the GWU campus, and museum tours focusing on artifacts made outside the region. The easiest way to find a tour is to visit <http://www.dcheritage.org>, a clearinghouse for tours of the city.

Write a 900-1200 word review of the tour. The review should describe the building or neighborhood, describe the presentation of the building or neighborhood made by the tour leader, and evaluate the appropriateness of the tour design. Students are encouraged, but not required, to send copies of their reviews to Kathryn S. Smith, Executive Director, DC Heritage Tourism Coalition, 1250 H Street, NW Suite 850, Washington, DC 20005

### 2. Reading Response. Variable due dates. (15%)

Each student will write a 900-1200 word essay based on the readings for one of the five discussion sessions of the course. The essay should comment on the readings, using them as the basis for an original argument. Be sure to present a clear thesis statement near the beginning of your essay. And read critically—consider how each author treats the period in question, and what gets left out. For guidelines on critical reading, please see my page at <http://www.columbia.edu/~zms2/teaching/book.html>

Once you have completed your essay, you should post it to the appropriate session on the course Prometheus page so that other students may see it prior to the discussion. Responses are due on Prometheus 48 hours prior to the start of the discussion class.

### 3. Research Paper. Topics due September 26. Drafts due November 5. Final papers due November 28. (40%)

The major assignment for this course is an original research paper of 2750-3500 words (roughly 10-12 pages) on some topic concerning the history of Washington, D.C. Papers will

be evaluated on the originality and strength of their arguments, their use of primary sources to support those arguments, and their clarity of writing, including their thesis statements.

The assignment will be submitted in four stages:

- On September 26, students will submit a one- or two-paragraph description of their topics, including the question they hope to answer. In addition, the topic paper should list at least some of the primary sources to be used to answer the question.
- On November 5, students will submit a rough draft of their papers to the instructor. Ideally, the research will be complete, so that the revision of the papers can focus on improving the logic and presentation of the paper. I will provide comments on these drafts as soon as possible.
- On November 28, students will submit their final drafts.
- Also on November 28, and for the remaining three sessions of the course, students will give 10-minute presentations of their research projects.

#### **4. Final exam. (30%)**

The exam will test your broad understanding of the history of Washington, based on course readings, lectures, and your fellow students' presentations.

### **Course Schedule**

#### *August*

27. Course Introduction.

#### **Unit One: What kind of capital?**

29. The Potomac before the Constitution

#### *September*

3. LABOR DAY (NO CLASS)

5. The Creation of Washington, D.C.

10. Tour of Special Collections. **Meet in Special Collections, Gelman Library 207.**

12. Failure to Thrive.

17. Discussion:

Abbott, 1-52. Gillette, ix-26. Bowling, "Introduction." Hawkings. "The Landscape of the Federal City: A 1792 Walking Tour." DiGiacomantonio, "All the President's Men."  
Scott, "L'Enfant's Washington Described."

TOUR REVIEWS DUE

#### **Unit Two: Congress and the City**

19. The Slavery Debate

24. Civil War

26. Reconstruction

TOPICS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

*October*

1. Discussion:  
Abbott, 53-92. Gillette, 27-68. Klaus, "Some of the Smartest Folks Here." Vlach, "Evidence of Slave Housing In Washington." Corrigan, "Making the Most of an Opportunity: Slaves and the Catholic Church In Early Washington.

**Unit Three: City of Offices**

3. Engineering Washington
8. COLUMBUS DAY (NO CLASS)
10. The McMillan Plan
15. The rise of the clerk
17. Discussion:  
Abbott, 93-131. Gillette, 69-108. Belanger, "The Railroad in the Park."
- 18-20. *D.C. Historical Studies Conference (optional)*

**Unit Four: Segregated Washington**

22. International Washington, 1900-1940
24. Negro Washington, 1913-1940
29. New Deal and World War II
31. Discussion:  
Gillette, 109-150. Clark-Lewis, "Duty and Fast Living." Buchholz, "Josephine: The Washington Diary of a War Worker." Pacifico, "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work. Smith, "Remembering U Street."

*November*

**Unit Five: The Reinvention of Washington**

5. The Challenge of the Suburbs.  
DRAFTS DUE
7. Civil Rights
12. Washington under Home Rule
14. Discussion:  
Abbott, 133-184. Gillette, 151-214. Hechinger, "Black and Blue." White, "Dividing Highway"
19. Tour or speaker: TBA
21. THANKSGIVING (NO CLASS)
26. Washington in 2001
28. PAPERS DUE. Presentations

*December*

3. Presentations
5. Presentations
10. (FINAL CLASS): Presentations