Class details
Washington DC: Culture and Politics in the City
January Session 2013
Location to be confirmed.

Instructor Details
January 7-25, 2013
Msf4@nyu.edu
Cell: 917-749-2276
Office hours by appointment.

Prerequisites
NOTE: THERE IS A MANDATORY SITE ORIENTATION JANUARY 6-7, 2012

Class Description
This course provides an introduction to key themes in urban studies, focusing on a selected set of issues that are particularly relevant to Washington D.C. Each class will begin with an hour long lecture that places the readings and visits in a historical, national, and/or global context. We will use the remainder of our class time for seminar discussions and, on occasion, class trips and speakers.

We will read classic and important contemporary works in urban studies, with a particular focus on urban culture and politics. We will also read historical and ethnographic case studies of classic and emerging issues, such as: diversity and community; urban growth and gentrification; artistic movements and politics; monuments and nationalism; the Presidential Inauguration and rituals.

We will also conduct a series of visits to the places we discuss in the seminar, take tours of city’s neighborhoods, cultural and governmental institutions, and have guest lectures from local experts in history, culture, politics, and the economy.

Desired Outcomes
You will begin to learn major themes and debates in urban studies including how urban life conditions the production and reproduction of culture and politics. and the relation of such processes to larger structures of capitalism, globalization, and social movements.

You will begin to develop the methodological skills to identify and analyze changes in the structure and culture of urban life in relations to shifts in the economy.

You will begin to understand how cities, including Washington D.C. are grounded in structures 

inequality and power, and how urban dwellers, individually and collectively, reproduce, resist, and sometimes change such structures through everyday practice.

**Assessment Components**

**Participation and Attendance (20%)**: As this is a lecture and seminar, your active and informed participation in class discussion is expected. All assigned reading must be completed by the date for which it is assigned, and you should come to each class prepared to participate in the discussion.

Each student will also act as a discussion leader for one of the day’s readings. The discussion leader schedule will be determined in class. Your effectiveness and preparation as a discussion leader will be reflected in your participation grade.

**Two Reflection Papers (40%)**: There will be two brief, 3-page papers (750 words) that address questions and issues relevant to urban culture, politics, and power.

**Final paper and presentation (40%)**: A 15 page paper, drawn on fieldwork and/or library research, on a specific city topic, chosen in consultation with the professor will be due at the end of the semester. Students will be given a list of topics, but may propose others. All the papers will focus, in some capacity, on the role of Washington D.C. in terms of the local, national, and global. You will be expected not only to give an overview of your topic, but also to analyze it as a researcher using the readings, discussions and methods covered in the seminar as well as scholarly secondary sources. Each student will also give a related presentation at the end of the semester. The final paper and presentation combined account for 40% of the seminar grade.

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

**Grade Expectations**

**Grade A**: The student makes excellent use of empirical and theoretical material and offers well-structured arguments in his/her work. The student writes comprehensive essays / exam questions and his/her work shows strong evidence of critical thought and extensive reading.

**Grade B**: The candidate shows a good understanding of the problem and has demonstrated the ability to formulate and execute a coherent research strategy.

**Grade C**: The work is acceptable and shows a basic grasp of the research problem. However, the work fails to organize findings coherently and is in need of improvement.

**Grade D**: The work passes because some relevant points are made. However, there may be a problem of poor definition, lack of critical awareness, poor research.
**Grade F:** The work shows that the research problem is not understood; there is little or no critical awareness and the research is clearly negligible.

NYU Washington, DC uses the following scale of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numerical Range</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-94</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>93-90</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>89-87</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>86-84</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>83-80</td>
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<td>79-77</td>
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<td>76-74</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>73-70</td>
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<td>69-67</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>65-66</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>Below 65</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Attendance Policy**

NYU Washington, DC has a strict policy about course attendance. **No unexcused absences are permitted.** All medical-based absence requests MUST be presented by the student to the Program Manager for Student Life (Candice Clawson) before or during the class that is missed. Candice can help arrange doctor's appointments. In case of a longer-lasting illness, medical documentation must be provided. **All non-medical absence requests must be presented by the student to the Program Manager for Academic Affairs (Lauren Sinclair).** Non-medical requests should be made in advance of the intended absence.

Unexcused absences will be penalized by deducting 3% from the student’s final course mark. Unexcused absences from exams are not permitted and will result in failure of the exam. If you are granted an excused absence from examination (with authorization, as above), your instructor will decide how you will make up the assessment component, if at all (by make-up examination, extra coursework, or an increased weighting on an alternate assessment component, etc.).

NYU Washington, DC expects students to arrive to class promptly (both at the beginning and after any breaks), to be attentive, and to remain for the duration of the class. If full class attendance becomes a problem, it is the prerogative of each instructor to deduct from the final grade for late arrival and early departure. Being more than 10 minutes late counts as an unexcused absence.

Please note that for classes involving a field trip or other external visit, transportation difficulties are never grounds for an excused absence. It is the student’s responsibility to arrive at the announced meeting point in a punctual and timely fashion. Staff members may always be reached by cell phone for advice regarding public transportation.

**Late Submission of Work**

(1) Written work due in class must be submitted during the class time to the professor.

(2) Late work should be submitted **in person** to the instructor or to the Program Manager for Academic Affairs (Lauren Sinclair), who will write on the essay or other work the date and time of submission, in the presence of the student. Work cannot be left for Lauren under the door or on her desk, in her absence. If Lauren is not in her office, another member of the administrative staff can accept the work and write the date and time of submission on the
work, again only in the physical presence of the student.

(3) Work submitted within 5 weekdays after the submission time without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 10 points on the 100 point scale.

(4) Without an approved extension, written work submitted more than 5 weekdays following the session date fails and is given a zero.

(5) Please note: end of semester essays must be submitted on time.

(6) If for whatever reason you feel you cannot submit any written work in time, you should discuss this with Lauren.

(7) Students who are late for a written exam have no automatic right to take extra time or to write the exam on another day.

Students with Disabilities

Accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or see their website (http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-andwellness/students-with-disabilities.html) for further information.

Plagiarism Policy

The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

NYU Washington, DC takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. All your written work must be submitted as a hard copy AND in electronic form to the instructor. Your instructor may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form.

It is also an offense to submit work for assignments from two different courses that is substantially the same (be it oral presentations or written work). If there is an overlap of the subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you MUST inform your professor.

For guidelines on academic honesty, clarification of the definition of plagiarism, examples of procedures and sanctions, and resources to support proper citation, please see: http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html
http://gls.nyu.edu/page/gls.academicintegrity
http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity

WEEK ONE: URBAN FOUNDATIONS
Session 1

*Orientation and Lecture on Cities and Urbanism as a Way of Life*


Session 2

*Urban Culture, Politics, and Fieldwork*

- Lecture and discussion on urban culture, politics, and fieldwork
- Smelch, George and Sharon Bohn Gmelch. “Student Fieldworkers in Village and City” in *Urban Life*. pp. 82-96
- Brief tour of and discussion about city: downtown, public spaces, government and financial institutions

Session 3

*The History of Race in Washington DC*

- Lecture: Race, Power, and Difference in Cities
- Introducing Division and Difference in *The Blackwell Cities Reader*. Pp. 171-5
- Bechert, James. “The Rise and Fall of Washington Inhabited Alleys” in *Alley Life in*
“Ghetto Culture” and Community – Washington DC

Friday, January 11

Lecture: Race, Power, and Difference in Contemporary Cities

- Transporting black men to good jobs October 5, 2012 | By Algernon Austin
- Black metropolitan unemployment in 2011: Las Vegas’s rate rises significantly July 2, 2012 | By Algernon Austin

Guest Speaker:
Algernon Austin: Director | Program on Race, Ethnicity and the Economy Economic Policy Institute

*Session 5*

Monday, January 14

Week Two: Urban Culture and Power

Urban Culture, Power, and the Art Economy

- Short essay (3 pages) due: First impressions of the urban environment in Washington D.C. Include thick descriptions and photographic documentation of city. Draw on two of the class readings in your analysis.
- Lecture and discussion on culture, power, place in Washington DC.
- Zukin, Sharon. *The Cultures of Cities*. Chapters 1 (1-48); Chapter Four (pp. 109-52).

*Session 6*

Tuesday, January 15

Urban Music, Dance, and Culture: Go-Go Live

- Lecture and Discussion on the arts and politics of cities
- Guest Speaker: Natalie Hopkins.

*Session 7*

Wednesday, January 16

Communities and the Diversity of Cities: U Street

- Lecture and seminar discussion of the community question in cities, and the problem of dealing with diversity and segmentation in the urban environment.

*Session 8*

Thursday, January 17

Gentrification and the Politics of Place: Mt Vernon

Lecture: Gentrification in Cities

- [http://sociologyinmyneighborhood.blogspot.com/](http://sociologyinmyneighborhood.blogspot.com/)
- Neighborhood Tour / Lecture – of U Street, Mt. Vernon and Columbia Heights led by Professor Johanna Baker, George Mason Sociology and Anthropology Department

**Session 9**

**Urban Ecology and the Environment**

- Lecture on the relationship between the urban and rural environment

- Guest Speaker: Cassie Meador, Director of Dance Exchange will talk about her project – How to Lose a Mountain – based on her 500 mile walk exploring the energy sources that power her home starting at her house in the Takoma neighborhood of Washington, DC


**Week Three: Urban Politics, Nationalism, and the Global**

**Session 10**

**Monday, January 21**

- Short paper (3 pages) Analysis of a neighborhoods, redevelopment, and emerging artistic and political scenes in Washington DC, drawing on at least two of the class readings from week two.

**Session 11**

**Tuesday, January 22**

- Memorial Mania and Public Feeling in America
  - *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* by Erika Doss, University of Chicago Press (2010) – Introduction; Chapters 1-3 on Statue Mania to Memorial Mania; Grief, and Fear
  - Lecture on memorials and American nationalism and militarism

**Session 12**

**Wednesday, January 23**

- Destination Culture, Tourism, and Museums
• Lecture on tourism, museum culture and display
• Visit to the Smithsonian National Museum of American History
  Guest speaker: Eric S. Hintz, Historian, Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation National Museum of American HistorySmithsonian Institution

**Session 13**
Thursday,
January 24

**Urban Performance, Politics, and the American Cultural Imagination**

• Discussion and Lecture on performance and politics in urban America.
• Note: Class will attend rehearsal/performance at Dance Exchange the weekend of January 18.

**Session 14**
Wrap Up and Final Presentations of Final Papers in Class
Friday,
January 25

**Your Instructor**

Melissa Fisher, PhD is a Visiting Scholar at New York University’s Department of Social and Cultural Analysis, is the author of *Wall Street Women* (Duke University Press). Previous publications include co-editing *Frontiers of Capital: Ethnographic Reflections on the New Economy*, also by Duke University Press. She has taught at Columbia University, New York University, and Georgetown University. Prof. Fisher is an invited member of Govermark, a network of international scholars engaged in research on market actors as policy actors, based out of the Stockholm Center for Organizational Research at the University of Stockholm. Prof. Fisher is serving as a Visiting Scholar at New York University's Department of Social and Cultural Analysis during the fall 2012 semester and is the author of *Wall Street Women* (Duke University Press). Previous publications include co-editing Frontiers of Capital: Ethnographic Reflections on the New Economy, also by Duke University Press. She has taught at Columbia University, New York University, and Georgetown University. In addition, Prof. Fisher has worked as a business anthropologist and consultant for a range of corporate and not-for-profit organizations, including the National Council for Research on Women (NCRW), BBDO Worldwide Advertising, and Batten and Company. She has also been the keynote speaker at both business and academic venues, including the Critical Finance Conferences at the University of Amsterdam. Her current ethnographic work focuses on the creation and implementation of the Gender Equality Principles Initiative by Calvert Investments, a socially responsible investment firm headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland. Fisher earned her Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from Columbia University and BA from Barnard College.