

# BEYOND CONGRESS AND THE WHITE HOUSE: Politics, Power and Poetry

Washington, D.C. as a Textbook

*Spring Semester 2012*



*The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem....  
The genius of the United States is ...  
always most in the common people....  
Their deathless attachment to freedom...  
The terrible significance of their elections—  
The President taking off his hat to them, not they to him—  
These too are unrhymed poetry.*

Introduction to first version of Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, 1855

## Professor Contact Information

Joel L. Swerdlow, Ph.D.

[joel@jswerdlow.com](mailto:joel@jswerdlow.com)

Cell: 202-549-8111

I will always return your email or telephone call within 24 hours. If you do not hear back from me, please assume that your message was electronically lost. Please call or write again.

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## Teaching Assistant Contact Information

Anneliese Bustillo

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Cell: 281-900-7242

Feel free to call or email me at any time. I will try to respond within 24 hours.

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## Office Hours

Office hours will be held at Ebenezer's Coffeehouse (201 F St. NE) every Tuesday morning from 7-8:30. You can sign up during class hours or by writing to me; office hours will count as part of class participation grade (see below).

I am also available to meet with you on other days. We can easily schedule a time and place that works for you.

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## Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions

Acceptance into the Archer Fellowship Program

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## Course Description

In this class, we will examine politics, power, and poetry in the United States through a critical reading of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and through visits to major monuments and museums in Washington, D.C.

We will take a series of walks spanning three miles across the symbolic (and actual) core of American democracy—from Arlington National Cemetery to the Library of Congress.

Beginning at Section 60 of Arlington where many of the newest fatalities from Iraq and Afghanistan are buried, students visit a different site or sites each week. Class sessions are often conducted on-site (e.g., at the Lincoln Memorial, students volunteer to read aloud Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech as well as a speech that the Harding Administration censored when the Lincoln Memorial was dedicated). Sites visited include the Tomb of the Unknowns, JFK and RFK Gravesites (Arlington Cemetery), Lincoln Memorial, FDR Memorial, Vietnam Veterans and other war memorials, National Archives, National Air and Space Museum, National Museum of American History, Ford's Theatre, Newseum—and some surprises.

Walt Whitman will accompany us across the city; each week, we will read aloud from *Leaves of Grass*.

On this walk, we will work to identify and address the challenges and opportunities that face your generation. This quest is crucial because:

- ▮ Whether in ancient Athens, the Roman Republic, or in the modern United States, every generation, one slowly yielding to the next, either strengthens or weakens democracy. Each successive generation does so within the context of its own special and unique circumstances; its successes and failures become the story by which it is defined and remembered.
- ▮ Today’s young Americans are inheriting democracy as electronics increasingly affect thinking and behavior, often in ways we don’t understand or recognize.
- ▮ This generation, furthermore, is coming of age just as the post-World War II era of economic growth in the U.S.—which fostered the assumption that every generation would be better off than its parents—may be ending.

As this walk proceeds, we will look for power, which is what defines Washington, D.C. If you go to Hollywood, you look for movies being made. If you come to Washington, D.C. you look for power. But movies are something you can *see*. Power is invisible.

As we look for something we cannot see, we will try to find an aspect of power that is particularly difficult to discuss: the power to shape how people think and what they believe. You will also be asked to discuss particular times when, during your internships, you feel that you are in the presence of power.

## Student Learning Objectives & Outcomes

Upon completing the course, students will be able to (not in order of importance):

- Conduct research in the Library of Congress and National Archives
- Use their experiences in Washington, D.C. to strengthen their position when they form opinions about and discuss political and public policy issues
- Identify and discuss the basic components of political power in Washington, D.C.

- Describe how the “past” is an ever-changing part of the present
- Relate their internship experiences to the topic areas studied in class
- Describe how politics and public policy debates shape monuments and museums in Washington, D.C.
- Describe the importance of Washington, D.C. to America’s democratic processes

## Required Texts

- *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman, any edition  
(Each student must purchase and bring to class *every* class)
  - *Readings to Accompany a Walk Across Washington, D.C.* (2011) by Joel L. Swerdlow, Ph.D. and Anneliese Bustillo
  - *Connections to Help Answer Questions about Power in a Democracy* (2011) by Joel L. Swerdlow, Ph.D and Anneliese Bustillo  
(The last two books will be sold in class for \$40)
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## Grading Policy

Mid-Semester Review: I will meet individually with each of you to review and discuss your participation and progress to-date. At this meeting, you will be given your participation grade as of mid-term.

### Final Grades:

Participation (Class discussions and presentations): 50 percent

Assignments (Journals, Art Work essay, etc.): 50 percent

Students who complete all assignments satisfactorily and in a timely manner will receive a **B**. Students who display excellence in written work and class participation will receive an **A- or an A**. Students who fail to satisfactorily complete assigned projects or to attend all classes (unless excused) will receive **lower than a B**. The grading scale will include + and - grades, although your home institution may limit grading to simple letter grades for GPA purposes. Students are encouraged to discuss with faculty how they might display excellence in the course.

Students are required to attend every class and organized Archer function, and to conduct themselves according to University rules. Excuses for compelling personal or work-related reasons must be granted *beforehand*. Unexcused absences and late work will result in lower grades. Opportunities for extra credit and special assignments will be made available throughout the semester.

## Participation

The model for this class is a graduate seminar, modified so that much of your work in class is done as part of a team. You must participate in class with questions, answers and by engaging in discussions. More opportunities to participate will come by volunteering

to read from your journal and by assuming a role in activities such as court hearings that we will conduct in class.

### The Thin-Book Book Club (voluntary)

This Club will be explained further during our first class session. Club members will choose one book and participate in a discussion of the ideas that it presents. All books are thin, which does not, of course, mean that they are easy to read or comprehend. Membership in the Book Club is voluntary, but book presentations can improve the “participation” component of your grade. **If you are the kind of student who does not participate much in class discussions, you are urged to join.**

### Invited Speakers

During the semester, subject area experts may speak for a portion of the class. These will be people whose life experiences and accomplishments are relevant to the class agenda. In addition, all speakers will also be people who can help students in their efforts to network.

## Assignments

**Please Note:** This class requires that you handle changes in the formal schedule and assignments. Weather conditions or an emerging issue may trigger shifts in the syllabus. We will establish a cell phone/email system to reach you.

### Journal

You will maintain a Journal about the sites you visit each week. It should record your thoughts, reactions and ideas. Journals will always be due by **noon each Monday.**

Email your journal entries directly to me, **marked with “Archer Journal”** and that week’s topic. Please include the journal *inside* the text of the email.

Each journal entry must include: 1) at least one idea, observation, question or other thoughts worthy of discussion in class; and 2) portions of a poem by Walt Whitman that you feel is in any way related to that journal entry.

Each week, I will select at random five journals for grading and class discussion. If your journal is selected, I will write to you with questions and comments that will help you prepare for class. (Of course, no material from your journals will be used in class without your prior permission.)

### Art Work

Visit the Smithsonian American Art Museum & National Portrait Gallery and find one or more works that relate to your internship. Write a journal entry that explains why you chose this work of art and, if possible, include a copy of the artwork. Bring this journal entry to your mid-semester reviews on **March 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>.** Select students will be asked to present their artwork to class later in the semester. **You are strongly**

**advised not to use PowerPoint.** We will schedule presentations as the class progresses.

Writing Boot Camp (voluntary)

Participation in this boot camp is unrelated to your grade. The boot camp is designed to help you improve your writing, and it is open to everyone. Boot camp will meet four times throughout the semester at Ebenezer's Coffeehouse, lasting from 7:00-8:00am (anyone who arrives at 7:01 will be considered late and must wait until the next session to participate).

You may attend as many sessions as you like, and each attending student is required to bring one essay (e.g. a law school or a graduate school application essay).

Guarantee: If you come to boot camp, are willing to address difficult issues and work hard, your writing will improve.

**Before the first class, you must:**

- Buy *Leaves of Grass*
- Read Plato's Cave (from Book VII of *The Republic*) and also be familiar with what Plato says in Chapter VIII about the strengths and weaknesses of democracy
- Watch the movie *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*
- Obtain a Reader Identification Card at the Library of Congress.
- Submit a journal entry addressing (due Monday, January 10<sup>th</sup> at noon):
  - Your feelings and thoughts from visiting; 1) the Main Reading Room of the Library of Congress and 2) Section 60, the Tomb of the Unknowns and the JFK Gravesite at Arlington Cemetery and 3) the top of the Old Post Office Tower.
  - As per instructions for journal entries given above, be sure to include a quote from Walt Whitman.

## Calendar

Reading assignments for each class will be given the previous week. These assignments may include a portion of *Leaves of Grass*, a selection from *Readings*, and other material as may seem appropriate.

### **Wednesday, January 11<sup>th</sup> – The Archer Center**

Meet the Professor—in three sessions (sign-ups will be planned by Ana)  
5:45pm-6:45pm, 6:45pm-7:45pm, 7:45pm-8:45pm

### **Wednesday, January 18<sup>th</sup> –The Archer Center**

5:45pm-8:45pm

### **Wednesday, January 25<sup>th</sup> – No Class**

Moved to Saturday

### **Saturday, January 28<sup>th</sup> – The Newseum, The National Museum of American History**

10:30am-1:30pm

Please meet at the Newseum Group Entrance on C St.

### **Wednesday, February 1<sup>st</sup> – The Archer Center**

5:45pm-8:45pm

### **Wednesday, February 8<sup>th</sup> – No Class**

Moved to Saturday

### **Saturday, February 11<sup>th</sup> – The National Museum of the American Indian, The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum**

10:30am-1:30pm

Please meet at NMAI at the benches inside the first floor rotunda

### **Wednesday, February 15<sup>th</sup> – The Archer Center**

5:45pm-8:45pm

### **Thursday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> – The Archer Center**

Class moved due to conflict

5:45pm-8:45pm

### **Wednesday, February 29<sup>th</sup> – No Class**

Moved to Saturday

### **Saturday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> – The National Museum of the Natural History**

10:30am-1:30pm

Please meet behind the elephant in the main rotunda

**Tuesday and Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> – The Archer Center**

Mid-Semester Reviews, by appointment

\*Art Work Essay Due

**Wednesday, March 14<sup>th</sup> – Spring Break: No Class**

Enjoy the break!

**Wednesday, March 21<sup>st</sup> – Ford’s Theatre**

6:30pm-10:00pm (*1776* begins at 7:30pm)

Please meet in the lobby

**Wednesday, March 28<sup>th</sup> – Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial**

6:30pm-9:00pm

Please meet by the statue of the three soldiers

**Wednesday, April 4<sup>th</sup> – The Archer Center**

5:45pm-8:45pm

**Tuesday, April 10<sup>th</sup> – The Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial, The Jefferson Memorial**

Class moved due to conflict

6:30pm-9:00pm

Please meet at the FDR Memorial by the rocks just inside the “Third Term” section

**Wednesday, April 18<sup>th</sup> – The Lincoln Memorial, The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial**

6:30pm-9:00pm

Please meet at the top of the steps of the Lincoln Memorial

**Tuesday, April 24<sup>th</sup> – The Archer Center**

5:45pm-8:45pm

**Good Luck on Your Future Work and Studies**

## Technical Support

If you experience any problems with your UTD account you may send an email to: [assist@utdallas.edu](mailto:assist@utdallas.edu) or call the UTD Computer Helpdesk at 972-883-2911.

## Field Trip Policies

### Off-campus Instruction and Course Activities

Off-campus, out-of-state, and foreign instruction and activities are subject to state law and University policies and procedures regarding travel and risk-related activities. Information regarding these rules and regulations may be found at the website address [http://www.utdallas.edu/BusinessAffairs/Travel\\_Risk\\_Activities.htm](http://www.utdallas.edu/BusinessAffairs/Travel_Risk_Activities.htm). Additional information is available from the office of the school dean. Below is a description of any travel and/or risk-related activity associated with this course.

## Student Conduct & Discipline

The University of Texas System and The University of Texas at Dallas have rules and regulations for the orderly and efficient conduct of their business. It is the responsibility of each student and each student organization to be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations which govern student conduct and activities. General information on student conduct and discipline is contained in the UTD printed publication, *A to Z Guide*, which is provided to all registered students each academic year.

The University of Texas at Dallas administers student discipline within the procedures of recognized and established due process. Procedures are defined and described in the *Rules and Regulations, Series 50000, Board of Regents, The University of Texas System*, and in Title V, Rules on Student Services and Activities of the university's *Handbook of Operating Procedures*. Copies of these rules and regulations are available to students in the Office of the Dean of Students, where staff members are available to assist students in interpreting the rules and regulations (SU 1.602, 972/883-6391) and online at <http://www.utdallas.edu/judicialaffairs/UTDJudicialAffairs-HOPV.html>

A student at the university neither loses the rights nor escapes the responsibilities of citizenship. He or she is expected to obey federal, state, and local laws as well as the Regents' Rules, university regulations, and administrative rules. Students are subject to discipline for violating the standards of conduct whether such conduct takes place on or off campus, or whether civil or criminal penalties are also imposed for such conduct.

## Academic Integrity

The faculty expects from its students a high level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic degree depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student for that degree, it is imperative that a student demonstrate a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work.

Scholastic Dishonesty, any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

Plagiarism, especially from the web, from portions of papers for other classes, and from any other source is unacceptable and will be dealt with under the university's policy on plagiarism (see general catalog for details). This course will use the resources of turnitin.com, which searches the web for possible plagiarism and is over 90% effective.

### Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials, including music and software. Copying, displaying, reproducing, or distributing copyrighted works may infringe the copyright owner's rights and such infringement is subject to appropriate disciplinary action as well as criminal penalties provided by federal law. Usage of such material is only appropriate when that usage constitutes "fair use" under the Copyright Act. As a UT Dallas student, you are required to follow the institution's copyright policy (Policy Memorandum 84-I.3-46). For more information about the fair use exemption, see <http://www.utsystem.edu/ogc/intellectualproperty/copypol2.htm>

### Email Use

The University of Texas at Dallas recognizes the value and efficiency of communication between faculty/staff and students through electronic mail. At the same time, email raises some issues concerning security and the identity of each individual in an email exchange. The university encourages all official student email correspondence be sent only to a student's U.T. Dallas email address and that faculty and staff consider email from students official only if it originates from a UTD student account. This allows the university to maintain a high degree of confidence in the identity of all individual corresponding and the security of the transmitted information. UTD furnishes each student with a free email account that is to be used in all communication with university personnel. The Department of Information Resources at U.T. Dallas provides a method for students to have their U.T. Dallas mail forwarded to other accounts.

### Withdrawal from Class

The administration of this institution has set deadlines for withdrawal of any college-level courses. These dates and times are published in that semester's course catalog. Administration procedures must be followed. It is the student's responsibility to handle withdrawal requirements from any class. In other words, I cannot drop or withdraw any student. You must do the proper paperwork to ensure that you will not receive a final grade of "F" in a course if you choose not to attend the class once you are enrolled.

## Student Grievance Procedures

Procedures for student grievances are found in Title V, Rules on Student Services and Activities, of the university's *Handbook of Operating Procedures*.

In attempting to resolve any student grievance regarding grades, evaluations, or other fulfillments of academic responsibility, it is the obligation of the student first to make a serious effort to resolve the matter with the instructor, supervisor, administrator, or committee with whom the grievance originates (hereafter called "the respondent"). Individual faculty members retain primary responsibility for assigning grades and evaluations. If the matter cannot be resolved at that level, the grievance must be submitted in writing to the respondent with a copy of the respondent's School Dean. If the matter is not resolved by the written response provided by the respondent, the student may submit a written appeal to the School Dean. If the grievance is not resolved by the School Dean's decision, the student may make a written appeal to the Dean of Graduate or Undergraduate Education, and the dean will appoint and convene an Academic Appeals Panel. The decision of the Academic Appeals Panel is final. The results of the academic appeals process will be distributed to all involved parties.

Copies of these rules and regulations are available to students in the Office of the Dean of Students, where staff members are available to assist students in interpreting the rules and regulations.

## Incomplete Grade Policy

As per university policy, incomplete grades will be granted only for work unavoidably missed at the semester's end and only if 70% of the course work has been completed. An incomplete grade must be resolved within eight (8) weeks from the first day of the subsequent long semester. If the required work to complete the course and to remove the incomplete grade is not submitted by the specified deadline, the incomplete grade is changed automatically to a grade of **F**.

## Disability Services

The goal of Disability Services is to provide students with disabilities educational opportunities equal to those of their non-disabled peers. Disability Services is located in room 1.610 in the Student Union. Office hours are Monday and Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.; Monday and Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.; and Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

The contact information for the Office of Disability Services is:

The University of Texas at Dallas, SU 22

PO Box 830688

Richardson, Texas 75083-0688

(972) 883-2098 (voice or TTY)

[disabilityservice@utdallas.edu](mailto:disabilityservice@utdallas.edu)

If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of this course, please meet with the Coordinator of Disability Services. The Coordinator is available to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. If you determine that formal, disability-related accommodations are necessary, it is very important that you be registered with Disability Services to notify them of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. Disability Services can then plan how best to coordinate your accommodations.

It is the student's responsibility to notify his or her professors of the need for such an accommodation. Disability Services provides students with letters to present to faculty members to verify that the student has a disability and needs accommodations. Individuals requiring special accommodation should contact the professor after class or during office hours.

### Religious Holy Days

The University of Texas at Dallas will excuse a student from class or other required activities for the travel to and observance of a religious holy day for a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property tax under Section 11.20, Tax Code, Texas Code Annotated.

The student is encouraged to notify the instructor or activity sponsor as soon as possible regarding the absence, preferably in advance of the assignment. The student, so excused, will be allowed to take the exam or complete the assignment within a reasonable time after the absence: a period equal to the length of the absence, up to a maximum of one week. A student who notifies the instructor and completes any missed exam or assignment may not be penalized for the absence. A student who fails to complete the exam or assignment within the prescribed period may receive a failing grade for that exam or assignment.

If a student or an instructor disagrees about the nature of the absence [i.e., for the purpose of observing a religious holy day] or if there is similar disagreement about whether the student has been given a reasonable time to complete any missed assignments or examinations, either the student or the instructor may request a ruling from the chief executive officer of the institution, or his or her designee. The chief executive officer or designee must take into account the legislative intent of TEC 51.911(b), and the student and instructor will abide by the decision of the chief executive officer or designee.

These descriptions and timelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.