LDST 390: Research Workshop on Contemporary Richmond Politics

Spring 2014

Wednesdays, 3-5:40 pm

Dr. Thad Williamson

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Jepson Hall 134

Purpose of the Course

This class will be an intensive exploration of contemporary Richmond politics, with particular focus on the City’s current comprehensive anti-poverty initiative. How does (can, should) a city with a poverty rate of 27%, sharply limited fiscal resources, and many inherited structural difficulties go about trying to mount a coherent and consequential effort to reduce poverty and improve quality-of-life and economic opportunities in low-income areas? That is a complicated question, and one city leaders and many citizens are now grappling with. Students in this class will be grappling with it too.

This is a research seminar. A strong emphasis will be placed on learning how to conduct in-depth research on contemporary policy issues, and then present it to peers and others in an appropriate manner. There is also a strong community-based learning component in the course. Students will also have the opportunity to observe the political process firsthand and interact with select civic and political leaders in the City of Richmond. Through their research, students will also have the opportunity to add their own insights and findings to the ongoing policy process in Richmond.

The class will meet on UR main campus through Feb 12, and at UR Downtown from Feb 19 subsequently. Transportation will be arranged to and from UR Downtown.

Course Requirements

1. Attendance at each class meeting. Professional preparation for class, including completion of the class reading prior to class and drafting a 600-750 word weekly response paper, due at the start of class. Active participation during each class meeting. Response papers may be revised after class up until Friday at 5 p.m. each week (via email).
2. Attend a total of six public meetings in Richmond over the course of the semester, including two City Council meetings, one School Board meeting, one meeting of the Maggie L. Walker Initiative for Expanding Opportunity and Fighting Poverty, and two other approved public or community meetings. Write brief summary of each meeting attended.
3. Three class field trips outside regular class times (dates and locations TBD).
4. Work with one or two other students on an in-depth research project addressing a specific policy issue or set of issues. Present your findings in class. Produce a final policy “white paper” (detailed policy memorandum). This may be written individual or in collaboration.
with other students in your group. Final products should be 20-25 pages per number of authors.

5. Regularly read the front page, editorial (local content only), and “Metro” section of the Richmond Times-Dispatch (i.e. daily); read Style Weekly (front news section, feature story when relevant, Back Page when relevant) and Richmond Free Press (scan issue for pertinent articles) weekly. Keeping up with local publications is part of your ongoing research, and you will be expected to know what is going on in the city.

6. The class as a whole may be invited to make a final presentation to a select audience of local citizens at the end of the class. (Would be special evening session.)

Grade Elements

15%--Active participation in class meetings and field trips

5%--Write-ups of public meetings attended

35%--Weekly response papers

10%--Group class presentation

35%--Final white paper project

Research Groups will focus on these policy areas:

1. Downtown economic development and land use
2. Workforce development/social enterprise strategies
3. Early childhood and elementary education; parental engagement
4. Middle school, high school, and vocational education
5. Affordable housing and community development
6. Transportation and ecological sustainability

Students should inform the instructor of their top three choices by the end of the second week of class. Every effort will be made to give each student one of their top choices, but this is not assured. The date of research presentations for each group will be drawn randomly in class on January 29.

Each research group will go in depth into each area (beyond what is presented in anti-poverty report or other documents explored prior to spring break); this is to be cutting edge research based on multiple methods. In consultation with the instructor, students in each research group will select primary documents for classmates to read. We will also have guest speakers in each class session after the break.
Jepson School of Leadership Studies Policies

Awarding of Credit

To be successful in this course, a student should expect to devote 10-14 hours each week, including class time and time spent on course-related activities.  
http://registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/academic-credit.html

Disability Accommodations

Students with a Disability Accommodation Notice should contact their instructors as early in the semester as possible to discuss arrangements for completing course assignments and exams.  
http://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/disability-services/policies.html

Honor System

The Jepson School supports the provisions of the Honor System. The shortened version of the honor pledge is: “I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work.”  
http://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/honor/

Religious Observance

Students should notify their instructors within the first two weeks of classes if they will need accommodations for religious observance.  http://registrar.richmond.edu/planning/religiousobs.html
Plan of Study

January 15, **Overview of Poverty in Richmond**

Mayor’s Anti-Poverty Commission Report + brief summary of Walker Initiative implementation plan

January 22, **Thinking Critically About Social Science and Poverty Research**

Alice O’Connor *Poverty Knowledge*; all students read chapters 1, 10 and 11 and one selected chapters between chapter 2 and 9; Judith Levine, *Ain’t No Trust: How Boyfriends, Bosses and Bureaucrats Fail Low-Income Mothers and Why It Matters*, Chapter 1

January 29, **Richmond’s Postwar History I**


February 5, **Richmond’s Postwar History II**


February 12, **Richmond’s Postwar History III**

Thad Williamson & Amy Howard, political history of Richmond 1985-present; book chapters on Rachel Flynn and Tim Kaine, Doug Wilder, and Dwight Jones; related documents. Invited guest (second hour of class): Michael Paul Williams

**February 14: Each Research Group Meets With Instructor By or Before This Date to Discuss Class Plan**

February 19, **Maggie L. Walker Initiative Implementation Plan Detail I: Economic Development and Workforce Development.**

Implementation plan + related documents; Chapter 2 of “Ain’t No Making It.”. Invited guest: (Jamison Manion, Robert Dortch)

February 26, **Maggie L. Walker Initiative Implementation Detail, II: Education**

Invited guests: (Harold Fitrer, Kim Bridges)

**February 28: Each Research Group Submits Draft Proposal for Class Plan After Spring Break**

March 5, **Maggie L. Walker Initiative Implementation Detail, III: Housing and Transportation**

Housing and Transportation. Invited guests (second hour of class): Amy Howard, Rev. Ben Campbell.
March 7: Research Group Class Plans Finalized After Feedback from Instructor

SPRING BREAK

Student Presentations Begin; Reading Assignments to be Announced Guest Speakers TBD

March 19, Student Group I
March 26, Student Group II
April 2, Student Group III
April 9, Student Group IV
April 16, Student Group V
April 23, Student Group VI

Final “White Paper” Due Thursday May 1 at Noon.