

# **Syllabus: The Politics of National Memory**



**Course Information**  
PSCI 4373  
The Politics of National Memory

**Fall 2025**  
Professor Shema Mbyirukira  
Tuesdays 6:30-9:30 PM

## Faculty Contact Information

**Lead Professor (Eckington):** [Prof. Shema Mbyirukira, JD](#)  
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## Lecturer Contact Information

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**Lecturer (Georgetown):** [Prof. Malcolm Warbrick](#)  
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**Lecturer (Howard):** [Dr. Mary Nugent, Ph.D.](#)  
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*Note:* Please use only your University of Texas at Dallas account to email Archer Center faculty.

Faculty will make themselves available for office hours by appointment, either individually or with a group of students, as requested. Please reach out to faculty via email to establish a time to do so if you wish.

## Course Description

*Course overview:* This course uses the monuments, memorials, and museums between Arlington National Cemetery and Capitol Hill as a classroom to examine the stories that the United States has told about itself. In each class, we explore these sites of memory and analyze the historical context, political stakes, and ideological structures behind these narratives. This enables us to engage with difficult but essential civic questions related to our historical legacy, national identity, and responsibilities to each other. In doing so, students will cultivate a lifelong relationship with the nation's capital; build their competence and enthusiasm to make sense of historical sites and narratives beyond Washington, D.C.; sharpen the critical thinking skills; and enhance their confidence and effectiveness as leaders in civic life.

*Course format:* In addition to engaging in weekly lectures, discussions, and activities with the entire class, you will meet each week with your assigned Neighborhood Group and lecturer. Each lecturer leads a Neighborhood Group of twelve students. For their Neighborhood Group, the lecturer will assess each student's engagement and written assignments. Your assigned lecturer is available to answer questions and to address concerns. To schedule an appointment, please contact them directly. You are also

welcome to meet with the other lecturers to discuss the course and your academic and professional interests.

## Student Learning Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Recognize how sites of memory have bolstered different historical narratives and advanced wide-ranging political interests throughout U.S. history.
- Critically analyze the creation, meaning, and impact of complex monuments, memorials, and museums.
- Engage in constructive, civic conversations about how we understand, represent, and respond to the nation's historical legacy.

## Calendar of Classes and Assignments

1. FOUNDATION: LAYING THE GROUNDWORK IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL				
SESSION	MEETING DATE	LOCATION and Lecturer	REFLECTION PROMPTS	ASSIGNMENT
Orientation week: Sunrise Class	Tuesday, August 26, 7:30 – 8:30 AM	Lincoln Memorial with all faculty		
Week 1: Our Archives	Tuesday, September 2, 6:30 – 9:30 PM	Archer Center with all faculty	How do we tell the story of our own lives and the lives of others?  What challenges do we encounter when seeking to understand and share these narratives?	By <b>Tuesday, September 2 at 12 PM</b> , submit your five images as one Word or PDF file to the eLearning assignment.
Week 2: Designing D.C., Imagining the Nation	Tuesday, September 9, 6:30 – 9:30 PM	Archer Center with Derek O'Leary	What vision of the nation and its people was embedded in	<i>Read:</i> Sarah Luria, <a href="#">“George Washington’s Romance: Plotting the Federal City, 1791-</a>

		(Academic Director)	<p>the design of D.C.?</p> <p>To what extent does our physical environment influence our identity, society, and politics?</p> <p>How would you design the ideal national capital?</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>1800</u></a>” in <i>Capital Speculations: Writing and Building Washington, D.C.</i> (2006): pgs. 5-37. 45-60 minutes.</p> <p>View: <a href="#"><u>The Washington Family</u></a>, by Edward Savage (1796), National Gallery of Art, D.C.</p> <p><a href="#"><u>1800 Plan of the City of Washington</u></a></p>
Week 3: Creating the National Mall	Tuesday, September 16, 6:30 – 9:30 PM	Meet at Washington Monument, then to Archer Center	<p>How and why did the National Mall take its current form?</p> <p>What is the visitor’s experience of moving through the National Mall?</p> <p>What role, if any, should monuments play in our society? Who should establish national monuments and their content, and how?</p>	<p>Read: Kirk Savage, “<a href="#"><u>Introduction</u></a>” in <i>Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape</i> (2009): pgs. 1-22. 30-45 minutes.</p> <p>Walt Whitman, <a href="#"><u>Washington’s Monument</u></a>, February, 1885.</p>
First critical reflection essay due by 11:59 PM on Sunday, September 20.				
2. CONSTRUCTION: BUILDING THE MONUMENTAL LANDSCAPE				

Week 4: Service, Sacrifice, and Commemoration	Tuesday, September 23, 6:30 – 9:30 PM	Archer Center, lecture Prof. Warbrick	<p>What historical conditions led to our national cemeteries?</p> <p>What ethical considerations emerge when memorializing individuals?</p> <p>What role should the state play in crafting public memory?</p>	<p><i>Read:</i> Drew Gilpin Faust, “<a href="#">Accounting</a>,” in <i>This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War</i> (2008): pgs. 211-249. 60-90 minutes.</p>
Week 5: Monuments and Collective Memory	Tuesday, September 30, 6:30 – 9:30 PM	Meet at <a href="#">Emancipation Memorial</a> in Lincoln Park, lecture by Prof. Mbyirukira	<p>How did Douglass perceive and respond to the Freedmen’s Monument?</p> <p>What role can monuments play in educating the public and forming memory?</p> <p>How should we engage with monuments that do not reflect our worldview? How should we engage with each other when we disagree about a monument?</p>	<p><i>Read:</i> <a href="#">Frederick Douglass at the unveiling of the Freedmen’s Monument</a> (1876): pgs. 7-26. 45-60 minutes.</p> <p>Jonathan W. White and Scott Sandage, “<a href="#">What Frederick Douglass had to say about Monuments</a>” (Smithsonian Magazine, June 2020): 10 minutes.</p> <p><i>Suggested visit:</i> National Museum of African American History and Culture exhibition: “<a href="#">Defending Freedom, Defining Freedom</a>”</p>

Week 6: Possessing and Dispossessing History	Tuesday, October 7, 6:30 – 9:30 PM	Archer Center, lecture by Prof. Conrado	<p>What beliefs and practices enabled the Smithsonian to amass its collection of Native remains and artifacts?</p> <p>How do we determine who has the authority to own and make meaning of historical objects?</p> <p>How would you advise the Smithsonian to approach the question of repatriating Native remains and objects?</p>	<p><i>Read:</i> Robert E. Bieder, “<a href="#">The Representations of Indian Bodies in Nineteenth-Century American Anthropology</a>” in <i>Repatriation Reader: Who Owns American Indian Remains?</i> (2000): pgs. 19-33. 30-45 minutes.</p> <p><a href="#">Smithsonian Institution Human Remains Taskforce Report to the Secretary</a> (2024): pgs. 1-13. 30 minutes.</p> <p><i>Suggested visit:</i> <a href="#">National Museum of the American Indian</a> exhibition: “Nation to Nation: Treaties between the United States and American Indian Nations”</p>
Week 7: Memorial form and function	Tuesday, October 14, 6:30 – 9:30 PM	Meet at <a href="#">the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial</a> , then to Archer Center with all faculty.	<p>What were the distinctive challenges to creating the Vietnam Veterans Memorial?</p> <p>How does this war memorial contrast with others along the National Mall, and how does this influence the</p>	<p><i>Read:</i> Marita Sturken, “<a href="#">The Screen, the Wall, and the Image: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial</a>” (1991): pgs. 118-138. 45-60 minutes.</p> <p><i>Optional viewing:</i> <a href="#">To Heal a Nation</a> (1988). 100 minutes.</p> <p><i>Suggested visit:</i> American History Museum exhibition: “<a href="#">The Price of</a></p>

			<p>visitor's experience?</p> <p>What type of memorial, if any, would be appropriate for the wars that have taken place during your lifetime?</p>	<a href="#">Freedom: Americans at War</a>
<b>Second critical reflection essay due by 11:59 PM on Sunday, October 19.</b>				
<b>3. REVISION: EXAMINING OUR HISTORICAL LEGACY</b>				
<p>Week 8: Women: A part and apart</p>	<p>Tuesday, October 21, 6:30 – 9:30 PM</p>	<p>Meet at General Lafayette Statue in <a href="#">Lafayette Square</a>, then Archer Center, lecture by Dr. Nugent</p>		<p><i>Read:</i> <a href="#">Public Law 116-217</a> (2020). Five minutes.</p> <p><a href="#">Executive Order on Recognizing and Honoring Women's History</a> (2024). Five minutes</p> <p><a href="#">Public Law 118-226</a>: "Women's Suffrage National Monument Location Act."</p>
<p>Week 9: The Challenge of History Education</p>	<p>Tuesday, October 28, 6:30 – 9:30 PM</p>	<p>Archer Center with guest speaker</p>		<p><i>Read:</i> <a href="#">American Lesson Plan: Teaching US History in Secondary Schools</a> (American Historical Association, 2024). Introduction, pgs. 7-15, and Conclusion, pgs. 182-186.</p>
<p>Week 10: Expanding National History</p>	<p>Tuesday, November 4, 6:30 – 9:30 PM</p>	<p>Archer Center with guest speaker</p>		<p><i>Read:</i> <a href="#">Willful Neglect: The Smithsonian Institution and U.S. Latinos</a> (1994 Report</p>



				<p>by Smithsonian Institution Task Force on Latino Issues)</p> <p><a href="#">S.1267 - National Museum of the American Latino Act</a></p> <p><a href="#">“Inside the Controversy Over the National Museum of the American Latino”</a> (Time, 2023). 10 minutes.</p>
<b>Third critical reflection essay due by 11:59 PM on Sunday, November 9.</b>				
<b>4. VISION: IMAGINING OUR FUTURE HISTORY</b>				
Week 11: Final project workshop	Tuesday, November 11, 6:30 – 9:30 PM	Archer Center with all faculty		<i>Review:</i> Final project options
Week 12: Final project workshop	Tuesday, November 18, 6:30 – 9:30 PM	Archer Center with all faculty		Continue collaborating with your group on your final project. Meet with lecturer to discuss status during class.
Week 13: Final project Presentations	Tuesday, November 25, 6:30 – 9:30 PM	Archer Center with all faculty		<b>Final paper and presentation due by 6 PM on November 25</b>
Week 14: Sunset Class	Tuesday, December 2, 4:30 – 6 PM	U.S. Capitol with all faculty		



## Critical Reflection Essays and Engagement (75 points)

*Instructions:* After each of the three course sections—Foundation, Construction, and Revision—you will submit a short essay (500-750 words). Each writing assignment will require you to synthesize and apply what you have learned during that section to a specific site in DC. **Your grade for each of these assignments will reflect both your essay and your classroom engagement during the classes for that section.**

1. Critical Reflection Essay #1 (Foundation): Due September 20, 11:59 PM (25 points)
2. Critical Reflection Essay #2 (Construction): Due October 19, 11:59 PM (25 points)
3. Critical Reflection Essay #3 (Revision): Due November 9, 11:59 PM (25 points)

## Final Project (25 points)

*Due:* November 25, 6 PM.

*Instructions:* Your final project is a group-based assignment. Through active collaboration, your group will apply your insights from the course to address one of the four options below. Each option requires that your group:

- Submit a five-page written proposal and a five-to-eight-slide presentation
- Deliver a ten-minute presentation to the full class.

With your group of four people, you will address one of the following four options for your final project. Detailed instructions and a rubric will be provided.

- 1) National Statuary Hall Collection
- 2) Smithsonian Museums
- 3) Monuments of the National Mall
- 4) 250<sup>th</sup> Commemorations

Two full sessions are reserved for your team to work on this project and seek support from the professor who is leading that final project option. You may also require time outside of class for additional research, site visits in DC, and work on your paper and presentation.

Your proposal and your presentation will each be assessed according to a rubric. Please consult these rubrics as your team develops your project.

## Grading Policy

Total points	Requirement
75	Critical reflection essays and engagement (25 points each)
25	Final project

Grade	Point range	Description
A+	98-100	Exemplary work that exceeds expectations
A	94-97	Impressive work that meets expectations
A-	90-93	Great work with only minor areas for improvement
B+	87-89	Strong work with at least one area for improvement
B	84-86	Work meets expectations with more than one area for improvement
B-	80-83	Work meets expectations but with ample room for improvement
C+	77-79	Below-expectations work that requires various improvements
C	74-76	Inadequate work that requires extensive improvements
C-	70-73	Unsatisfactory work that requires substantial improvements
D+	67-69	Work significantly below expectations with major deficiencies
D	64-66	Work significantly below expectations with major deficiencies
D-	60-63	Work significantly below expectations with major deficiencies
F	59 and below	Work largely or entirely incomplete

Midterm grades will be posted by **October 18**. Final grades will be reported to your home UT System institution by **December 19, 2025**, and posted in accordance with their respective grade submission deadlines.

*Note:* UT System campuses vary in their use of the +/- grading scale. Grades for students enrolled at campuses that do not follow this system will be reported as follows: A (90-100), B (80-89), C (70-79), D (60-69), F (59 or lower).

# Course Policies

## Attendance

You are expected to attend and actively participate in every session. If you are unable to attend a session, it is your professional responsibility to inform the Lecturer in charge of their Neighborhood Group at least 24 hours before the expected absence. Exceptions will be allowed in the case of documented emergencies.

## Classroom Citizenship

All students and faculty must adhere to the Guiding Principles for Archer Fellows.

1. Archer Fellows represent not only themselves, but their home institutions, the Archer Center, the UT System, and the State of Texas.
2. The Archer Center expects all Archer Fellows to abide by the highest standards of conduct, demonstrating the utmost integrity, character, respect, and professionalism.
3. The Archer Center is committed to ensuring an enriching cohort and learning environment by selecting students with varying interests, fields of study, and political perspectives.
4. The Archer Center is committed to bringing together students who value constructive and respectful dialogue among individuals and groups with varying ideas.
5. Archer Fellows are expected to respect varying political, personal, and religious beliefs within the cohort and throughout the program.
6. As an educational program, the Archer Center sees all aspects of the Archer Fellowship experience as an opportunity for learning, from the application and internship search process to the academic, networking, professional, and fellowship opportunities provided throughout the semester.
7. The Archer Center and Archer Fellows have a shared commitment to open, honest, and timely communication.

## Class Recordings

Unless the AccessAbility Resource Center has approved the student to record the instruction, students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved AccessAbility

Resource Center accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

## Reporting Sexual Misconduct and Sharing Confidential Information

Students considering sharing personal information in email or in person should be aware that all University staff, faculty, teaching assistants/associates, and graduate/research assistants are required by UT Dallas policy to report information about sexual misconduct to the UT Dallas Title IX Coordinator. Per university policy, Sexual Misconduct Policy - [UTDBP3102](#), faculty have been informed that they must identify the student to the UT Dallas Title IX Coordinator. Students who wish to have confidential discussions of incidents related to sexual harassment or sexual misconduct should contact the following confidential resources, including, but not limited to:

1. the Student Counseling Center (972-883-2575 or the 24/7 Crisis Hotline at 972-UTD-TALK or 972-883-8255),
2. a health care provider in the Student Health Center (972-883-2747),
3. a clergyperson (or other legally recognized religious advisor) of their choice, or
4. an off-campus resource (e.g., a rape crisis center, doctor, psychologist).

Students who are sexually assaulted, harassed, or are victims of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, or stalking, are encouraged to directly report these incidents to the Title IX Coordinator by making a [report](#) online or by calling the Title IX Coordinator at 972-883-2306. Students may also contact the [UTD Police Department \(UTDPD\)](#) for emergency assistance; criminal reporting and investigation; information or assistance regarding protective orders or forensic sexual assault exams; or to request a police escort. In case of emergency, call 911. For non-emergency situations, students can reach the UT Dallas Police Department by calling 972-883-2222. For more information about available support and resources, students can visit the [Office of Institutional Compliance \(Support Services & Resources\)](#) webpage.

## Pregnancy and Parenting

UT Dallas is committed to providing support and resources for pregnant and parenting students, faculty, and staff in accordance with Title IX, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Texas Education Code Section 51.982, and other applicable federal and state laws. Pregnant and parenting students are encouraged to complete the [Pregnant and Parenting Self-Identification Form](#) located on the [Office of Institutional Compliance's website](#). Submitting this form allows for a coordinated University effort to help facilitate support for pregnant and

parenting students, such as early registration for parenting students and accommodations for pregnant students. For more information about the services and resources available to pregnant and parenting students, visit the [Pregnant & Parenting Resources page](#) and the [Student Pregnancy and Parenting Nondiscrimination Policy](#).

## Nondiscrimination

UT Dallas prohibits all forms of discrimination (including harassment) based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, national origin, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. UT Dallas further prohibits all forms of sex-based discrimination (including sex-based harassment). Students who believe they have been discriminated against or harassed in violation of University policy, or who believe that someone else has been discriminated against or harassed, are encouraged to directly report these incidents to the Office of Institution Compliance by making a [report](#) online or by calling the Office of Institution Compliance at 972-883-2306. For more information, see the University's [Nondiscrimination Policy](#) and [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#). For additional information about available support and resources, see the Office of [Institutional Compliance \(Support Services & Resources\)](#) webpage.

## Technical Support

If you experience any issues with your UT Dallas account, contact the UT Dallas [Office of Information Technology Help Desk](#) or call 972-883-2911.

UT Dallas provides eLearning technical support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through [UTD eLearning Helpdesk](#). The services include a toll-free telephone number, 1-866-588-3192, for immediate assistance, Educational Technology Services (eLearning) is available by [email](#) to request services. They also have an online chat service.

## Student Conduct and Discipline

The University of Texas System [Regents' Rule 50101](#) and UT 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 Student Complaints Resources within the online [UT Dallas Undergraduate Catalog](#), and the [Graduate Catalog](#).

UT Dallas administers student discipline within the procedures of recognized and established due process. Procedures are defined and described in the ([Student Code of Conduct, UTDSP5003](#)). Copies of these rules and regulations are available to students in the Office of Community Standards and Conduct, where staff members are available to assist students in interpreting the rules and regulations (SSB 4.400, 972-883-6330) and online at [their webpage](#).

A student at the University neither loses their 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 its standards of conduct whether such conduct takes place on or off campus, or whether civil or criminal penalties are also imposed for such conduct.

## Social Media Use

The [Student Code of Conduct](#) includes behaviors conducted via any digital platform. Students may not use any digital platform to seek or provide unauthorized assistance for any assignment done for academic credit. Students may not use any digital platform to impersonate or represent any person other than themselves. Please consult with your instructor regarding authorized assistance.

## 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 demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work. Additional information is provided within their website.

**Academic Dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty can occur in relation to any type of work submitted for academic credit or as a requirement for a class. It can include individual work or a group project. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, and collaboration/collusion. In order to avoid academic dishonesty, it is important for students to fully understand the expectations of their professors. This is best accomplished through asking clarifying questions if an individual does not completely understand the requirements of an assignment.

Additional information related to academic dishonesty and tips on how to avoid dishonesty may be found [on their website](#).

## Military-Affiliated Students

At the University of Texas at Dallas, we are committed to supporting our military and veteran students and their spouses and dependents as they pursue their academic goals. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by those who have served, we strive to create a welcoming and supportive environment. Please contact your instructor if you are on active duty, called to serve, or if any aspect of your current or past military service, or your family situation, makes it challenging to meet the course requirements or affects your academic progress. Your instructor is committed to supporting you and will work with you to address any complications.

The Military and Veteran Center ([MVC](#)) offers a range of resources and referrals to campus and community partners, ensuring that our military and veteran students can access the assistance they need. Whether it is academic advising, financial aid, or personal support, the MVC is dedicated to helping our students succeed and thrive in their educational journey.

## Student Grievance Procedures

Procedures for student grievances are found in the university policy [UTDSP5005](#). In attempting to resolve any student grievance regarding disputes over grades, application of degree plan, graduation/degree program requirements, and thesis/and dissertation committee, adviser actions and/or decisions, evaluations, and/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 originated.

## Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The University of Texas at Dallas is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. The syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. If you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (2008), you are required to register with the [AccessAbility Resource Center \(ARC\)](#), located in the Administration Building, Suite 2.224. They can be reached by [email](#), calling 972-883-2098, or at their [website](#). To receive academic accommodations for this class, please register and request services by completing the Request for Services form with the proper documentation and meeting with the Director of ARC at the beginning of the semester.



## Religious Holy Days

UT Dallas will excuse a student from class or other required activities, including examinations and travel time, for the observance of a religious holy day for a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property tax under Section 11.20, of the *Texas Tax Code*.

Students are encouraged to notify the instructor or activity sponsor as soon as possible regarding the absence, preferably in advance of the assignment.

Excused students will be allowed to take missed exams or complete assignments 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 school's vice or associate dean, who serve as the President's designees for these rules. The vice or associate deans must take into account the legislative intent of *Texas Education Code* 51.911(b), and the student and instructor will abide by the decision of the vice or associate dean.

This information is also included in the online UT Dallas [Undergraduate Catalog](#), and the [Graduate Catalog](#).