Syllabus
6805. Section 16 (3 SCH)
Metro Washington Research Seminar
Tuesdays, 6:10 p.m.
MPA 603
Royce Hanson, Research Professor

Description: This research seminar is focused on analysis of metropolitan policies and politics, using the Washington Metropolitan Area as its laboratory. It will explore the national capital region’s urban history, political economy, culture, functions in an advanced economy, and their implications for regional and local governance. Comparison of the region’s role with other major metropolitan areas in the United States, and with the national capitals of other advanced nations. Possible topics include: regional institutions that work; effect of wars, race, and poverty on regional settlement patterns and local political economies; regional, national and international role of the area’s economic sectors; politics and economics of regional infrastructure and federal facility location decisions; implications of dispersion of federal facilities for the constitutional status of the District of Columbia; role of regional institutions in the advancement of arts and sciences; management of the Washington region’s iconography.

Objectives: To stimulate and guide research on the development, functions, governance, culture, political economy and role in national and international urban systems of the national capital region; provide a forum for discussion and critique of that research; and to use the Washington Metropolitan Area as a laboratory for exploration of critical issues of urban policy and politics.

Seminar Sessions: Approximately half of each meeting of the seminar will be devoted to discussion of an aspect of the history, development, governance, or urban functions of the national capital region. The remainder of a session will involve reports on and critique of research progress, discussion of areas of overlapping and mutual interest, and presentation of final papers. Session topics include:

1. Founding the capital city and its development prior to World War I.
2. Interwar suburbanization—sewers, streetcars, the New Deal, and segregation.
4. Suburbanization of the federal establishment
5. Metropolitan problems: new institutions and infrastructure
6. Diversification of the regional economy
7. Race, class, and the regional political economy
8. The function of the Washington region in the national urban system
9. A metropolis of symbols: the national role of the capital’s iconography

10. Washington in literature and the arts

11. Dilemmas of regional governance

12. Comparison with other great capitals

13. Is a “federal city” an obsolete constitutional idea?

Requirements: Each seminar participant will prepare a paper on an aspect of the region, e.g.: economy, governance, demography, infrastructure, development, culture, urban functions, etc., of the national capital region. Following is a non-exclusive sample of possible research papers.

- Effects of racial policies and practices on suburbanization
- Location of federal facilities on suburban political economies
- Effect of sewers, highways, Metro, or airports on development patterns
- The economic or political role of the independent sector in the Washington region
- The role of the federal government as a basic industry
- Regional water supply and distribution
- Lobbying as a regional industry
- Beltway bandits and the regional economy
- The political and economic role of the development industry
- The technology sector and regional politics
- The geography of the performing arts
- The political geography of the federal civil service

A Preliminary Bibliography: The following titles are a sampling of the existing literature on the national capital region.


__________________________. February 2004. Happy to Grow: Development and Planning in Fairfax County, Virginia


Schrag, Zachary M. *The Great Society Subway*. Johns Hopkins University Press.


Also see research reports of:

George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis

George Washington Institute of Public Policy Center for Washington Area Studies