

POLS 305: Urban Politics and Government

Fall 2009
T/Th 5:30-6:45 pm
Ford Hall 305

Instructor: Joshua D. Ambrosius
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Office hours: Wed 11am-12pm (select dates), 30-45 min after class, or by appointment

Course Summary

This course poses and seeks to answer the question, “what is urban politics?” As the students will discover, urban politics means many things. The course is divided into three sections: (1) the question itself; (2) potential answers to such a question; and (3) practical policy implications. Students will become well-versed in the major topics, theories, and scholars of urban politics and government, broadly defined but primarily restricted to the U.S. context (except for one “global” session). Particular emphasis is placed on the subfields’ roots in broader political philosophy and social science; empirical urban political theory; the exercise of power in cities; issues of development/growth; and persistent urban problems and their potential policy solutions. A group project provides the students the opportunity to engage in “real-world” urban issues and decision-making facing the Louisville Metro community. The instructor strives to find the median between scholarship and practicality, and will provide guidance for those wishing to pursue a career in urban politics/policy or graduate work in the subfield.

Required Readings

(1) Jonathan Davies and David Imbroscio, eds (D&I). 2009. *Theories of Urban Politics (second edition)*. SAGE. ISBN: 978-1412921626.

(Please note that you must acquire the **2nd edition** of this text. The 1st edition published in 1995 contains completely different content by different authors and will not suffice for the course.)

(2) David Miller. 2002. *The Regional Governing of Metropolitan America*. Westview. ISBN: 978-0813398075.

(3) CQ Researcher. 2009. *Urban Issues: Selections from CQ Researcher (fourth edition)*. CQ Press (SAGE). ISBN: 978-0872896109.

(Must get **4th edition** of this text.)

(4) Other required articles will be emailed in PDF or available on Blackboard—please print and bring to each class session for referral (unless otherwise noted in cases of extreme length).

Recommended/Suggested Readings (the “classics” if you would like to delve further into the material—we will read sections of these or related materials by the authors or others, provided in PDF free of charge—exam questions may be based on these works so it’s advised that you become familiar with their contents)

Floyd Hunter. 1953. *Community Power Structure: A Study of Decision Makers*. Univ. of North Carolina.

Robert Dahl. 1961. *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*. Yale Univ.

Paul Peterson. 1981. *City Limits*. Univ. of Chicago.

John Logan and Harvey Molotch. 1987. *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*. Univ. of California.

Clarence Stone. 1989. *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta 1946-1988*. Univ. of Kansas.

Robert Putnam. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon & Schuster.

Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf, and Todd Swanstrom. 2004. *Place Matters: Metropolitcs for the Twenty-first Century* (2nd edition). Univ. of Kansas.

Journals in urban politics and urban studies/affairs: *Urban Affairs Review*, *Journal of Urban Affairs*, *Urban Studies*, *City and Community*, *Housing Policy Debate* (HPD is free online) (you can browse at library or online using your library account or *Google Scholar*)

Grading/Attendance Policies and Course Philosophy

25%- Six 2-page responses to readings—either assigned in class as “pop” quizzes or take-home assignments (proxy for class participation—one may be eliminated from grading consideration)

25%- In-class mid-term exam—short answer and essay

25%- Group presentation of case study project with PowerPoint presentation and 3-5 page policy memo/position paper (more information on this assignment will be distributed later in the course)

25%- Final exam (cumulative and in-class, but topics/questions provided in advance)—complete two of three essay responses

Each of the four components is worth twenty-five points for a total of one-hundred points. Extra points may be available for those who exceed class participation expectations or by counting the sixth short paper towards one’s grade. The instructor will use the + and - option in grading.

This is a “critical thinking” course—not simple memorization of trivia. However, students are expected to understand the concepts/arguments and know the major players from the assigned readings. In the end, each student should understand the issues involved in urban politics and the main ideas of the major works of the field. Thus, the assignments are designed to ensure that you keep up with the readings and course content—and that you engage the material critically.

Class attendance is mandatory. Course notes/slides will NOT be distributed outside class. Missing more than two sessions without an acceptable/serious excuse will result in lowering of one’s grade by five points for each additional session missed. The possibility of “pop” essays and the distribution of assignments and/or lecture notes in class are meant as incentives to attend each and every session. Two-page homework papers and the group policy memos will NOT be accepted late. In the event that you will not be able to attend class, will be a few minutes late, or did not have access to a printer, the assignment must be e-mailed to the instructor prior to the start of class on the due date to be considered on-time. Always avoid plagiarism in any form—unidentified quotes, paraphrases, or summaries of others’ material. *The instructor will search the web for any suspiciously-written or spelled (i.e., use of UK English) material!* Plagiarism will result in failure of the assignment, and maybe the course, and could result in further disciplinary action by the university including suspension or expulsion.

Feel free to seek guidance or discuss your status in the course with the instructor at any point throughout the semester. He is here to help you learn and succeed in this course, your program of study, and future careers/lives. Those who see this course as a burden or waste of time should enroll elsewhere. While undergraduate study is a rigorous endeavor, I will strive to make this course an enjoyable, multi-media experience incorporating lectures, PowerPoint slides, discussion, video clips, political cartoons, and possibly one or more guest speakers.

The instructor reserves the right to revise this syllabus as needed throughout the semester.

Course Outline and Reading Assignments

I. What is urban politics (UP)?

(1) Tue, Aug 25: About the course; brainstorming UP; entrance survey

(2) Thur, Aug 27: Defining UP: from ancients to moderns
-D&I Preface, Intro, and Ch. 1

II. UP is _____

(3) Tue, Sept 1: Local politics and government (in the U.S.)
-Miller Chs. 2-3

(4) Thur, Sept 3: City and/or machine politics

-Wikipedia or Google, “Political machine”; Gosnell, “The Political Party versus the Political Machine”

(5) Tue, Sept 8: Racial/black/minority politics
-D&I Ch. 12

(6) Thur, Sept 10: All about (community) power
-D&I Ch. 2; Bachrach and Baratz, “Two Faces of Power”

(7) Tue, Sept 15: Class (Marxist) politics
-D&I Ch. 4; Shapiro, “On the Second Edition of Lukes’ Third Face”

(8) Thur, Sept 17: Developmental/growth politics (Public choice, *City Limits*, and growth machine)
-Molotch, “The City as a Growth Machine”; Peterson excerpts; Tiebout, “A Pure Theory of Local Expenditures”

(9) Tue, Sept 22: Regime politics
-D&I Ch. 3

(10) Thur, Sept 24: Postmodern and/or gendered politics
-D&I Chs. 5, 13 (browse over these chapters); Dear and Flusty, “Postmodern Urbanism”; Digeser, “The Fourth Face of Power”

(11) Tue, Sept 29: Global politics (globalization and comparative UP)
-D&I Ch. 10; United Nations, *State of World Population 2007: Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth* (this is a long report, so just browse—no need to print)

(12) Thus, Oct 1: Neighborhood/community politics (including social capital/movements)
-D&I Chs. 14, 15 (browse); Putnam, “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital”

(13) Tue, Oct 6: Church (cultural and religious) politics
-Sharp, “Revitalizing Urban Research”; Ramsay, “Redeeming the City”; Brown, et al., “The culture wars and urban electoral politics”; Ambrosius, “Why Urbanists Need Religion” in *Urban News*, Spring 2009

(14) Thur, Oct 8: A political science subfield: criticisms; versus “mainstream” political science
-Judd, “Everything is Always Going to Hell”; Sapotichne, et al., “Is Urban Politics a Black Hole?”; *Urban News*, Spring 2008 issue

Tue, Oct 13: Mid-term break—No Class

(15) Thur, Oct 15: *Midterm exam*; midterm survey

III. Urban problems (P) and policy solutions (S)

- (16) Tue, Oct 20: *Assign group project*; potential guest speaker
-Savitch, et al., “Civic Culture and Corporate Regime in Louisville”; CQ Researcher (scan)
- (17) Thur, Oct 22: What is urban policy? (historical overview and approaches)
-Briggs, “Urban Policy Next”
- (18) Tue, Oct 27: P: Concentration of poverty and segregation/discrimination
-D&I Ch. 11; Teitz and Chapple, “The Causes of Inner-City Poverty”
- (19) Thur, Oct 29: S: Deconcentration of poverty and spatial inclusion
-Imbroscio, “United and Actuated by Some Common Impulse of Passion”; Dreier, et al., excerpts
- (20) Tue, Nov 3: P: Suburbanization and sprawl
-Miller Ch. 4; Mieszkowski and Mills, “The Causes of Metropolitan Suburbanization”; Brueckner, “Urban Sprawl: Diagnosis and Remedies”; Dreier, et al., excerpts
- (21) Thur, Nov 5: S: Regionalism (government and governance—Louisville case study)
-D&I Ch. 7; Miller Chs. 6-8 (browse); Savitch and Vogel, “Suburbs without a City”; Dreier, et al., excerpts
- (22) Tue, Nov 10: P/S?: Gentrification, new urbanism, and the creative class
-Florida, “Cities and the Creative Class”; Zukin, “Gentrification”; Bohl, “New Urbanism and the City”
- (23) Thur, Nov 12: Bush “urban policy”?; “faith-based” policy approaches
-Hendrickson, “Bush and the Cities”; Persons, “National Politics and Charitable Choice as Urban Policy”
- (24) Tue, Nov 17: Presentation of group projects
- (25) Thur, Nov 19: Presentation of group projects, contd.
- (24) Tue, Nov 24: Night at the Movies—extended session 5:30-7:30
-Clapp, “Are You Talking to Me?”; Muzzio, “Decent People Shouldn’t Live Here”; Halper & Muzzio, “Hobbes in the City” (pick one of these to read for this session—you will be comparing the film we watch to the article you read in a 2-pager due next session)
- Thur, Nov 26: Thanksgiving holiday—No Class
- (28) Tue, Dec 1: Future of UP and policy—both scholarship and practice; careers and/or graduate school options in urban government, politics, and/or policy
-D&I Ch. 16; Obama-Biden, “Supporting Urban Prosperity”

(29) Thur, Dec 3: Review/questions and answers; course evaluation and exit survey

Tue, Dec 8: Reading day—No Class

(29) Thur, Dec 10: Scheduled *Final exam*—extended time 5:30-8:00 pm