Course Description

Urban Politics is an advanced offering in the American politics subfield. As with all courses in the American politics subfield, Urban Politics endeavors to analyze how democracy operates in the United States. This course provides a partial answer to that larger question by focusing on the politics of metropolitan areas and analyzing a variety of factors that explain how politics is practiced and policies are promulgated at the local level. Urban politics is an inherently interdisciplinary endeavor, and to make sense of it we will read the works of historians, sociologists, geographers, and economists as well as political scientists during the semester. The course employs a political economy approach: Policy decisions made at the local level are best understood as the interaction between political and economic factors. The tension in local politics is between economic factors that move policymakers to act in one direction and political factors that may push them in another. Political authority at the municipal level is severely limited, and the demographic makeup of many metropolitan areas is highly heterogeneous. Moreover, the impact of economic globalization has also had a profound impact on the way cities operate. Governing ethnically, racially, and economically diverse regions under conditions of limited authority and with significant economic constraints (including global ones) is the story of US urban politics in contemporary times. But the tension is not a new one. So we will investigate the relationship between politics and economics from the nation’s founding until the present time to see the continuities in the urban politics narrative. Special attention will be given to the role that race has played in shaping urban politics and policies. Additionally, the concentration of vulnerable populations in inner cities has given rise to a host of public policies designed to ameliorate the conditions of America’s urban centers. To what extent have those policies been effective? Finally, we will evaluate the checkered past of federal urban policies and analyze whether President Obama’s efforts to date are similar to or different than those of his predecessors.

Readings

J. Eric Oliver, *Local Elections and the Politics of Small-Scale Democracy*, Princeton, 2012 (O)
Elizabeth Kneebone and Alan Berube, *Confronting Suburban Poverty in America*, Brookings, 2013 (KB)

Course Requirements

Two essay examinations (40%; each examination accounts for 20% of the course mark)
  Out-of-class exam, due by 11:59 PM, Friday, 25 February
  Out-of-class exam, due by 11:59 PM, Wednesday, 1 April

Comprehensive Final Examination (30%): Monday, 4 May, NOON-2:30 PM
Class Participation/Daily Work: (30%). It is essential to be prepared for class. Questions will be posed to a select number of students on each day, and your responses to the question will constitute your mark in this portion of the class. Additionally, students volunteering to answer additional questions or making insightful comments will bolster their mark in this area of the course. Additionally, several short essays will be assigned that ask you summarize readings in the Judd and Swanstrom volume and the Kantor and Judd reader that were not assigned. On occasions, there may be in-class writing assignments (these assignments can take various forms, including pop quizzes). The Supreme Autocrat (AKA HN) hopes not to have to resort to pop quizzes to ensure that the reading is being completed timely.

Grading

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<th>Grade</th>
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<td>A</td>
<td>95-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-94</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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Rules of the Game

1. Incompletes will be given only in extenuating circumstances and with the advance permission of the instructor.
2. No make-up exams will be given.
3. Failure to take exams on scheduled dates will result in a zero (0) for that exam.
4. Students must complete all work to receive course credit.
5. Students are responsible for knowing the content of the Academic Integrity policy.
6. Any student wishing to receive an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) needs to provide documentation from the University’s ADA officer.
7. One unexcused absence is allowed; excused absences are those that are granted by Dean Gabbert’s office or are for documented, extenuating circumstances (e.g., illness) that prevent you from attending class.
8. No computers or cell phones are allowed in class. All cell phones are to be placed in a basket at the beginning of class where they will remain until the end of class.
9. Your professor’s pet peeve is students who leave the classroom during class. Do not leave the classroom during class unless it is absolutely necessary.

Course Topics and Reading Assignments

13 January—Introduction to course; the array of topics that will be covered in this course; the political economy approach to the study of urban politics

15 January—Theories of Urban Governance with a focus on Peterson and Stone
   Read: KJ, pp. 1-46

20 January—The Impact of Global Capitalism on Urban Politics
   Read: KJ, pp. 47-90

22 January—Early American Cities
   Read: JS, pp. 1-47
27 January—Political Machines
   Read: JS, pp. 48-74

29 January—Reform Politics
   Read: JS, pp. 75-109

3 February—The New Deal’s Transformation of Urban Politics
   Read: JS, pp. 110-134

5 February—Size, Scope, and Bias in Local Elections
   Read: O, pp. 1-52

10 February—Who Votes in Local Elections
   Read: O, pp. 53-86

12 February—Who Runs for Local Office
   Read: O, pp. 87-115

17 February—Systematic v. Idiosyncratic Factors in Local Elections
   Read: O, pp. 116-148

19 February—Influences on the Vote Choices of Local Voters; Implications for Democracy
   Read: O, pp. 149-207

24 February—City/Suburban Divide
   Read: JS, pp. 136-173

Friday, 25 February—Exam #1 due by 11:59 PM

26 February—Federal Urban Policies and their Consequences
   Read: JS, pp. 174-226

3 March—The Rise of the Multiethnic Suburbs
   Read: KJ, pp. 226-275

5 March—The Sunbelt and Boomburbs
   Read: KJ, pp. 275-297; JS, pp. 227-249

March 10 and 12—No Class, Spring Break

17 March—Suburban Poverty by the Numbers
   Read: KB, pp. 1-54

19 March—No Class, President Davis’ Inauguration

24 March—Implications of Suburban Poverty/Fighting Poverty with Yesterday’s Policies
   Read: KB, pp. 55-95

26 March—Innovating Locally/Metropolitan Opportunity Agenda
   Read: KB, pp. 96-143
31 March—The Rise of the Fragmented Metropolis  
Read: JS, pp. 252-276; KJ, 332-355

Wednesday, 1 April—Exam #2 due by 11:59 PM

2 April—Governing the Fragmented Metropolis  
Read: JS, pp. 277-308; KJ, pp. 356-363

7 April—The Challenge of Financing Urban Governments  
Read: JS, pp. 309-338; KJ, 298-331

9 April—Governing the Diverse City  
Read: JS, pp. 372-397; KJ, 156-184

14 April—Declining Racial Divide? Paradoxes of Integration  
Read: KJ, pp. 184-225

16 April—Inheriting the Ghetto  
Read: S, pp. 1-46

21 April—Forty-Year Detour Toward Racial Equality  
Read: S, pp. 47-116

23 April—Cross-Generational Legacy of the Inherited Ghetto  
Read: S, pp. 117-165

28 April—Toward A Durable Urban Policy  
Read: S, pp. 166-199

Monday, 4 May—Final Exam, NOON-2:30 PM