POLS 8160: Urban Politics
Spring 2005

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Focus & Organization
This seminar focuses on local politics in the United States. Its basic aim is to equip you for research and teaching by familiarizing you with the major theoretical perspectives, research findings, and controversies in the literature. You already should have completed POLS 6100 and 7010 or should bring to the course comparable background in sociology, geography, economics, or history. As an 8000-level seminar, the major expectation is that you will do original research for the course.

Reading
Assigned reading is a combination of scholarly articles, books, and book chapters. If your background is limited, you also might find it helpful to consult one of the leading textbooks: Judd and Swanson’s City Politics or Harrigan and Vogel’s Political Change in the Metropolis. You are responsible for retrieving articles via Electronic Journals or JSTOR – or even in hard copy in the library stacks! Those not available on line are on reserve (marked “[R]” below). The reading assigned for each week is subject to change. The following books have been ordered through local bookstores:


For each week, the syllabus also includes material that supplements assigned reading. It is a mix of “classic” works, more general reading that might be useful background for a research paper, and a few narrower works that are either frequently cited or are related to topics that we will not have time to cover.

Urban scholarship readily crosses the boundaries of traditional academic disciplines. Thus, “keeping up” frequently means moving beyond the major political science journals, which vary in the degree to which they publish urban research. The two major interdisciplinary journals in the United States that public social science research on urban politics and policy are Urban Affairs Review and the Journal of Urban Affairs (there are several others in Europe). Beyond these, there are specialized journals in some disciplines, e.g., Urban Geography, Journal of Urban History, City & Community (sociology). Urban research is also found in a wide range of journals in public policy, public administration, planning, sociology, geography, and economics.

Evaluation
This is a research seminar, so you will be evaluated on both your analysis of extant scholarship and your ability to craft your own research. The former involves class discussion (10%), critical essays (20%) written during the semester, and a final exam (30%). The major task is a research paper or design (40%). All of your written work must conform to the style used in the American Political Science Review, which
follows closely the guidelines in The Chicago Manual of Style. Late or poorly done work may be penalized up to one letter grade.

The essays are critical analyses of assigned reading that are distributed electronically to the entire seminar by 5:00 PM on Tuesday before our Thursday class. You choices must be approved in advance. Two of the essays (5% each) should cover an assigned article and should not exceed three double-spaced pages. The third essay (10%) should cover one of the assigned books and should not exceed five double-spaced pages.

Discussion is evaluated based on your critical analysis of assigned reading. You will also be expected to discuss your research during the final two weeks of the semester. The final exam will be comparable to the subfield questions you might be required to answer during the Ph.D. comprehensive exam in American politics.

Your research paper should be a high-quality draft of work that could be presented at a conference or submitted to a scholarly journal. It is due in hard copy by 4:00 PM on Monday, May 2. You are also required to complete several preliminary steps. Most importantly, consult early and often in designing your research project. Your topic, an accompanying problem statement, and a preliminary bibliography should be submitted electronically by 4:00 PM on Monday, February 28. This work should be roughly 4-6 pages. A preliminary version of your literature review is due electronically by 4:00 PM on Monday, March 28.

Seminar Schedule

Jan. 13 Overview of the Course

Profile of Urban America (lecture)

Studying Urban Politics


Supplementary Reading:


Part 1: Theoretical Perspectives

Jan. 20 Paradigms and Urban Research

Political Economy

Supplementary Reading:

Jan. 27 The Market Model
– Peterson: City Limits. [This book has achieved “classic” status in the urban literature.]

Supplementary Reading:

Feb. 3 The Public Choice Model

Supplementary Reading:
Feb. 10  Regime Theory
– Stone: *Regime Politics*.

Supplementary Reading:

**Part 2: Local Government Institutions**

Feb. 17  Local Government Structure

Supplementary Reading:

Feb. 24  Intergovernmental Relations
Supplementary Reading:


Part 3: Participation in Local Politics

March 3 Local Elections: Money and Turnout


Supplementary Reading:

March 10
Local Elections: Outcomes
- Kaufman: The Urban Voter.

Supplementary Reading:

March 24
Political Parties & Groups

Supplementary Reading:

March 31
Other Forms of Participation


Supplementary Reading:

April 7
Community Characteristics & Participation
– Oliver: Democracy in Suburbia.

April 14
Overview

The Internal Dynamics of Local Policy Making

Supplementary Reading:
April 21  Policy Outputs: Urban Development Decisions


Supplementary Reading:


April 28  Policy Outputs: The “Other” Issues


Supplementary Reading:


May 5  Final Examination (3:30-6:30)