Public Policy 358:
The Political Economy of Cities and Metropolitan Areas
Spring 2005
Tuesdays, 3:00-5:50 pm

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Office Hours: Weds, 2-4 pm

Description

The course introduces students to the latest scholarship on the political economy of cities and metropolitan areas. Particular attention will be devoted to recent developments in thinking about urban political economy from the “new economic geography” and the “new institutionalism.” We will focus on a few basic concepts of urban political economy (e.g., externalities, agglomeration, fragmentation, segregation), and explore how the interaction of economic forces and political institutions forms the foundation of many current policy challenges facing cities.

We begin by analyzing the institutions of local government and their role in the federal system, the sources of urban growth, competition among cities, and the importance of real estate markets in shaping local politics. We next study several specific urban issues, including concentrated poverty, racial conflict, governmental fragmentation, and sprawl. Although the course will focus on large central cities, we will pay attention to the suburbanization of population and employment, politics in suburbia, and city-suburb relations.

Texts

There are two required books for the course:


All other assigned readings are available electronically on the course website, which can be found at https://chalk.uchicago.edu, or on e-reserve at Regenstein.
Requirements

Write four reaction papers: For four weeks of your choosing, write a short (less than one page) reaction paper. For each reading of that week, your reaction paper should describe one issue or question that you would like to discuss in class, and briefly explain why your issue/question is important. Reaction papers are due no later than noon on the day of class.

Participate actively: This is a seminar; there are no lectures. As such, each student’s attendance, preparation, and participation are essential for the course to be successful. You will receive a midterm and a final grade for class participation.

Lead a weekly discussion: Each student will choose one week to be a discussion leader. The role of the discussion leader is to be the “big thinker” for the week, taking a broad view and considering the relationships among the assigned readings. The discussion leader should start class with a brief (10-15 minute) introduction, suggesting a set of questions for the class to consider. In addition, the discussion leader is responsible for reviewing the reaction papers submitted by classmates and identifying common questions that we should address as a group, especially points of confusion in the reading. As discussion leader, you are also responsible for the supplemental readings for the week (if any), and I may call upon you to briefly summarize these readings for the class. If more than one student signs up to be a discussion leader for the same week, the group should collaborate. The discussion leader(s) must meet with me no later than the day before class to review the agenda.

Attend a Chicago City Council meeting: You may choose to attend a meeting of the full Council or one of its committees. You should write a 2-3 page paper analyzing how the content of the Council meeting relates to the readings from class. The City Council calendar can be found at: http://www.chicityclerk.com/citycouncil/calendar.html.

Write two short policy analysis papers or one long research paper: Option 1: Write two short (6-8 page) papers using the concepts and readings from the course to analyze a contemporary or historical policy problem. Option 2: Write a significant (15-20 page) research paper. Ph.D. students must choose option 2. Other students may choose option 2 only with my permission. In either case, students doing option 2 must have their paper topics approved by me no later than the fifth week of class.

Course Grading

Your final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

- Reaction papers = 10%
- Overall participation = 25%
- Leading discussion = 15%
- City Council paper = 10%
- Policy/research paper(s) = 40%.
Reading Schedule

Class 1, March 29
Introduction to the Course

Class 2, April 5
The City as a Legal Concept

Class 3, April 12
The City as an Economic Concept

Class 4, April 19
Urban Growth and Human Capital

**Class 5, April 26**  
**The Politics of Place**


**Class 6, May 3**  
**Racial and Ethnic Politics in Cities**


Class 7, May 10  Suburbanization and Sprawl


  


Class 8, May 17  Fragmentation, Competition, and Service Delivery


**Class 9, May 24**  
**Segregation and the Geography of Opportunity**


**Class 10, May 31**  
**Financing the Metropolis**
