

POLS 4640: Urban Politics
University of Georgia
Spring 2017

Instructor:
Dr. Brittany Bramlett
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Office hours:
Before / after class
Or by appointment

Class meets:
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:00am to 12:15pm, Journalism 501

Course description

This course explores the unique political circumstances and challenges faced by cities in the United States. We examine the factors influencing city government organization, policy making, and citizen participation at the local level. The course provides an overview of the political forces influencing mass migration to and away from cities and the consequences for city government. We also take a critical look at national policies effecting the development and maintenance of residential segregation of inner cities and surrounding suburbs.

Course objectives

Students will:

- Study the origins and developments of American cities
- Understand the increasing suburban sprawl and its consequences for conventional urban settings
- Understand the history and ramifications of racial and ethnic politics for cities and suburbs
- Develop a working knowledge of city government institutions and functions
- Learn the course material by working independently and with a group
- Improve critical thinking and communication skills by considering various political perspectives and communicating those views effectively

Course structure

This course is designed to be a seminar course where you read the assignments before class and come prepared to discuss them in class. Active and frequent participation in class discussion is required.

Many of the readings will be provocative, and I look forward to your responses. Reading is important but so is your response. If you are nervous about participating in class discussions, I'm happy to talk to you about this and work on strategies for making it through the class.

¹ Instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus as needed.

Course texts

You are required to gain access to the books listed below. They are available at the campus bookstore.

- 1) *City Politics*. Ninth Edition. Dennis Judd and Todd Swanstrom. 2014.
- 2) *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Thomas Sugrue. 2005.
- 3) *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Massey and Denton. 1998.

Other assigned readings will be made available to you via eLearning Commons.

Assignments and grading

Participation & attendance (10%)

You are expected to attend class and participate in class and in group discussions and activities. Quality engagement is more important than the quantity of contributions. If you know that you must miss class, please let me know as soon as possible. If discussion lags, expect a few reading quizzes throughout the semester!

Class discussion is an important part of the course but small group discussion will also be a major component of the course. After the first week of class, you will be assigned to small groups of 4 or 5 students. You will spend considerable time working with your small group of students in class (through discussion of the readings) and outside of class (by preparing for an urban story presentation).

Presentation of urban story (10%)

Your small group will sign up for a slot to present a real-life urban story to the class. Students should find a news article highlighting a current issue/problem/solution for an urban center. (Hint: to get the full story, you may need to do additional research.)

You will inform the class about the particular urban issue, why you think it's important, and explain the consequences for the city. You will have approximately 15 minutes of class time to present your story. You should also prepare 2 or 3 questions for your classmates, so they can respond to your presentation (for approximately 15 minutes). I will model this for you during the first two weeks of class, so expectations are clear.

Midterm (20%)

Anything from the assigned readings and discussed during class up to the first exam is considered fair game to show up on the exam.

Final exam (25%)

This is a comprehensive final exam given during the final exam period. Anything from the assigned readings and discussed in class during the semester is considered fair game to show up on the exam.

Film reviews (2 short papers, 20%)

These are reflection papers more than anything. The tone can be informal, but that doesn't mean sloppy. You will write responses to two of the three films shown in class this semester: *Street Fight*, *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth*, and / or *My Brooklyn*. You will write about 2 pages of double-spaced text for each review. Formatting details will be provided via eLearning commons. Assignments are generally due the class period after completing the film.

Final assignment (15%)

One of the goals for this course is for you to develop a working knowledge of city government institutions and functions. Your final assignment will focus on this learning outcome, but you have a choice for how you proceed.

Choose one of the following assignments:

Internship list: One option for understanding city government is to explore related job opportunities. For this assignment you will identify ten internships with city governments or with organizations that work closely with city governments. You'll describe the internships' requirements and 1) discuss how your knowledge of urban politics might help you perform the internship tasks, and 2) how performing those tasks might further develop your interests in urban politics.

Attend and report on a public meeting: As another option for this assignment, you may attend an Athens-Clarke County public meeting and report back on the current issues/problems/solutions discussed for your own urban center. You should discuss 1) how your knowledge of urban politics helped you understand the aspects of the meeting, and 2) how attending the meeting influenced your interests in and understanding of urban politics.

You can check for updates on public meetings at the ACC website (<https://athensclarkecounty.com/calendar.aspx>).

Administrative Items**eLearning**

You can find additional reading assignments for our class via the eLearning Commons (<https://uga.view.usg.edu/>). You should sign into the eLearning Commons using your UGA MyId and password. If you are registered for the class, the course link should show up on your eLearning Commons homepage. I may post additional documents useful for your class, so you will want to check in throughout the semester.

Attendance policy

Class attendance is expected, but obviously, things come up. Open communication is always appreciated and considered. However, I note when you are not in class, and this factors into your participation grade. In addition, excessive absences may lead to withdrawal from the course. The instructor may withdraw a student from the class if he or she exceeds 6 unexcused absences.

Missed deadlines

If you have a conflict with a due date or will miss class repeatedly, please come talk to me about it as soon as you know about it. This way we can work something out and your grade may not suffer. If you have an emergency conflict (i.e. personal, family or medical emergencies), you should e-mail me within the week of the missed due date to discuss the timely completion of the assignment. Documentation is required for make-up exams. If you miss a deadline for a non-emergency, most assignments can still be completed and will be accepted for up to a week—but they will be penalized a letter grade for every additional day late. Missed exams can be made up on the day of the final exam.

Disability Resource Center

If you anticipate needing classroom or exam accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, you must register for services with the Disability Resource Center.

Additional information can be found here: <http://drc.uga.edu/>

Withdrawal policy

Undergraduate students can only withdraw from four courses and receive a withdrawal-passing (WP) grade while enrolled at the University. Students can drop any class without penalty during the drop/add period at the beginning of every semester. Dropped courses during the drop/add period do not qualify as withdrawals. Instructors have the ability to withdraw a student from the class due to excessive absences (see course attendance policy).

Please carefully review the policy in its entirety here:

<http://www.reg.uga.edu/policies/withdrawals>

UGA Culture of Honesty policy

The policy is in place to encourage academic honesty among students, faculty and other members of the university community. You and I are responsible for knowing and complying with the policy and procedures. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, cheating and much more. It's in your best interest to understand what constitutes dishonest work, as defined by the University.

Please carefully review the policy in its entirety here: <https://ovpi.uga.edu/academic-honesty/academic-honesty-policy>

Course Outline

Week 1.

Thursday, January 5

Read: Course syllabus

Tuesday, January 10

Read: Judd & Swanstrom 1

Thursday, January 12

Read: Judd & Swanstrom 2

Listen: Radio Lab. "Cities." Season 8, Episode 4. Stream at:
<http://www.radiolab.org/story/91732-cities/> (about 60 minutes).

Week 2.

Tuesday, January 17

Read: Judd & Swanstrom 3 & 4

Thursday, January 19

Read: Hicks, Jonathan P. "A Model City in Nonpartisan Correctness." *The New York Times*: October 21, 2003.

Yardley, Jim. "In Houston, a 'Nonpartisan Race Is Anything But.'" *The New York Times*: November 30, 2001.

Listen: This American Life. 1997. "84: Harold." Stream at:
<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/84/harold>
(about 60 minutes).

Week 3.

Tuesday, January 24

Watch: Street Fight film (in class)

Urban story presentation 1

Thursday, January 26

Watch & discuss: Street Fight film (in class)

Week 4.

Tuesday, January 31

Read: Judd & Swanstrom 5

“What Is It Exactly That Makes Big Cities Vote Democratic?”
(<http://www.theatlanticcities.com/politics/2013/02/what-makes-some-cities-vote-democratic/4598/>)

Film review 1 due

Thursday, February 2

Read: Selections from *The Urban Voter* by Karen Kaufmann (available on eLC)

Week 5.

Tuesday, February 7

Read: Sugrue 1 & 2

Urban story presentation 2

Thursday, February 9

Read: Sugrue 3 & 4

Week 6.

Tuesday, February 14

Read: Sugrue 5

Urban story presentation 3

Thursday, February 16

Read: Sugrue 7 & 9

“Do Parts of the Rustbelt ‘Need to die off’”
(http://www.citylab.com/housing/2016/07/do-parts-of-the-rust-belt-need-to-die-off/492260/?utm_source=SFTwitter)

Week 7.

Tuesday, February 21

Read: Judd & Swanstrom 6

Urban story presentation 4

Thursday, February 23

Take: MIDTERM EXAM

Week 8.

Tuesday, February 28

Read: Judd & Swanstrom 7

Urban story presentation 5

Thursday, March 2

Read: Judd & Swanstrom 8

Spring Break: Monday, March 6 – Friday, March 10

Week 9.

Tuesday, March 14

Read: Massey & Denton 1

Listen: "Historian says, don't 'sanitize' how our government created the ghettos" (http://www.npr.org/2015/05/14/406699264/historian-says-dont-sanitize-how-our-government-created-the-ghettos?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=npr&utm_term=nprnews&utm_content=20150514)

Urban story presentation 6

Thursday, March 16

Read: Massey & Denton 2

"Creating the Black Ghetto: Residential Patterns before and during the Great Migration" in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 2015. 660:1, 18-35

(<http://ann.sagepub.com/content/660/1/18.full.pdf+html>)

Urban story presentation 7

Week 10.

Tuesday, March 21

Read: Massey & Denton 4

Urban story presentation 8

Thursday, March 23

Read: Massey & Denton end of 6 & all of 7

Week 11.

Tuesday, March 28

Watch: *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth* film (in class)

Urban story presentation 9

Thursday, March 30

Watch & discuss: *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth* film (in class)

Week 12.

Tuesday, April 4

Read: Judd & Swanstrom 9

“Redlining: Still a thing”

(<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2015/05/28/evidence-that-banks-still-deny-black-borrowers-just-as-they-did-50-years-ago/>)

Watch: <http://www.fairhousingjustice.org/resources/film/>

Film review 2 due

Thursday, April 6

Read: Judd & Swanstrom 10 & 11

“How Anti-growth Sentiment Reflected in Zoning Laws Thwarts Equality” (http://mobile.nytimes.com/2016/07/04/business/how-anti-growth-sentiment-reflected-in-zoning-laws-thwarts-equality.html?_r=0&referrer=https://t.co/GyyqlKMt4H)

Week 13.

Tuesday, April 11

Read: Judd & Swanstrom 12

Urban story presentation 10

Thursday, April 13

Read: Judd & Swanstrom 13

“For More Cities Downtown is a Center of Economic Strength”
(<http://www.wsj.com/articles/for-more-cities-downtown-is-a-center-of-economic-strength-1470389405>)

Final assignment due

Week 14.

Tuesday, April 18

Watch: *My Brooklyn* film (in class)

Thursday, April 20

Watch & discuss: *My Brooklyn* film (in class)

Week 15.

Tuesday, April 25

Read: Judd & Swanstrom 14 & 15

Film review 3 due

Thursday, April 27

TBA

Thursday, May 4: FINAL EXAM, 12:00PM – 3:00PM

List of Due Dates

Midterm exam – Thursday, February 23

Final exam – Thursday, May 4, 12:00pm to 3:00pm

Film review 1 – Tuesday, January 31

Film review 2 – Tuesday, April 4

Film review 3 – Tuesday, April 25

Final assignment – Thursday, April 13

Urban story presentation dates:

- Tuesday, January 24
- Tuesday, February 7
- Tuesday, February 13
- Tuesday, February 21
- Tuesday, February 28
- Tuesday, March 14
- Thursday, March 16
- Tuesday, March 21
- Tuesday, March 28
- Thursday, April 11