

POLS 4640: Urban Politics
University of Georgia
Spring 2020

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

Class meets:
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 12:30pm to 1:45pm, Baldwin Hall, 0301

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*. Dennis Judd and Todd Swanstrom. Ninth or Tenth edition.
- 2) *The New Urban Crisis*. Richard Florida. 2017.

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

Assignments and grading

Participation & attendance (10%)

Students are expected to attend class and participate in class discussions, large and small. There will be a lot of opportunities to do this. This is a great way to get to know students in the class/major in addition to learning the material in a different way. I take attendance every day for a couple of reasons: 1) I want to learn student names, and 2) if you're not present, you cannot participate. When calculating attendance and participation at the end of the semester, I typically allow for two unexcused absences that will not count against your grade. Be sure to provide documentation for any absences wished to be excused.

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 (15%)

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).

Exams 1 & 2 (40% total, 20% each)

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

Film review (15%)

This is a reflection paper more than anything. The tone can be informal, but that doesn't mean sloppy. You will write a response to one of the two films shown in class this semester: *Street Fight* and *My Brooklyn*. You will write about 3 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 (20%)

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 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 will submit writing assignments and locate 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.

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.

Classroom safety

If the fire alarm sounds, we will exit the building and reassemble across the street (Jackson) to make sure everyone exited the building. If there is a tornado warning, we will move downstairs to shelter and account for everyone. If you have concerns about other emergencies or if you have special circumstances that I need to know about in case of an emergency, please speak to me after class. If you have questions about evacuation locations or shelter locations, contact OEP (Office of Emergency Preparedness).

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. 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. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive an F for the course, and their names will be forwarded to the University.

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

Tentative Course Outline

Week 1.

Tuesday, January 7

- Course syllabus

Thursday, January 9

- Florida 1

Week 2.

Tuesday, January 14

- Judd & Swanstrom 1
- Radio Lab. "Cities." Season 8, Episode 4. Stream at: <http://www.radiolab.org/story/91732-cities/> (about 60 minutes).

Thursday, January 16

- Judd & Swanstrom 2
- Florida 2

Week 3.

Tuesday, January 21

- "There's a problem with Mayor Pete Buttigieg's approach to revitalizing South Bend" by Josh Pacewicz in the *Monkey Cage* at *The Washington Post*. 2019. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/05/13/theres-problem-with-mayor-pete-buttigiegs-approach-revitalizing-south-bend/>
- Urban story presentation 1

Thursday, January 23

- Judd & Swanstrom 3 & 4

Week 4.

Tuesday, January 28

- This American Life. 1997. "84: Harold." Stream at: <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/84/harold> (about 60 minutes).
- Urban story presentation 2

Thursday, January 30

- 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/>)

Week 5.

Tuesday, February 4

- “Constructing a Theory of Local Voting Behavior” by Karen Kaufmann in *The Urban Voter*
- Urban story presentation 3

Thursday, February 6

- “Urban Government, Democracy, and the Representation of Gender in the United States” by Mirya Holman in *Women in Politics in the American City*
- Urban story presentation 4

Week 6.

Tuesday, February 11

- Watch: Street Fight film (in class)

Thursday, February 13

- Watch & discuss: Street Fight film (in class)
- Urban story presentation 5

Week 7.

Tuesday, February 18

- Judd & Swanstrom 6
- Urban story presentation 6
- Film review 1 due

Thursday, February 20

- Introduction & Chapter 1 from *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* by Thomas Sugrue

Week 8.

Tuesday, February 25

- Judd & Swanstrom 7

Thursday, February 27

- Exam 1

Week 9.

Tuesday, March 3

- Judd & Swanstrom 8
- Urban story presentation 7

Thursday, March 5

- Chapter 1 from *American Apartheid* by Massey & Denton
- Urban story presentation 8

Spring break – Monday, March 9 – Friday, March 13

Week 10.

Tuesday, March 17

- Chapter 7 from *American Apartheid* by Massey & Denton
- Watch: <http://www.fairhousingjustice.org/resources/film/>

Thursday, March 19

- Prologue and Chapter 1 from *Segregation by Design* by Jessica Trounstein

Week 11.

Tuesday, March 24

- Chapter 6 from *Fragmented Democracy* by Jamila Michener
- Urban story presentation 9

Thursday, March 26

- Judd & Swanstrom 9
- Urban story presentation 10

Week 12.

Tuesday, March 31

- Judd & Swanstrom 10 & 11

Thursday, April 2

- Judd & Swanstrom 12
- Urban story presentation 11

Week 13.

Tuesday, April 7

- Judd & Swanstrom 13
- Urban story presentation 12

Thursday, April 9

- Florida 4 & 5

Week 14.

Tuesday, April 14

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

Thursday, April 16

- Watch: *My Brooklyn* film (in class)

Week 15.

Tuesday, April 21

- Florida 9
- Film review 2 due

Thursday, April 23

- Exam 2

Week 16. Finals week begins

Thursday, April 30 by 3:00pm

- Final assignment due

List of Due Dates

Exam 1 – Thursday, February 27

Exam 2 – Thursday, April 23

Film review 1 – Tuesday, February 18

Film review 2 – Tuesday, April 21

Final assignment – Thursday, April 30 by 3:00pm

Urban story presentation dates:

Urban story presentation 1	Tuesday, January 21
Urban story presentation 2	Tuesday, January 28
Urban story presentation 3	Tuesday, February 4
Urban story presentation 4	Thursday, February 6
Urban story presentation 5	Thursday, February 13
Urban story presentation 6	Tuesday, February 18
Urban story presentation 7	Tuesday, March 3
Urban story presentation 8	Thursday, March 5
Urban story presentation 9	Tuesday, March 24
Urban story presentation 10	Thursday, March 26
Urban story presentation 11	Thursday, April 2
Urban story presentation 12	Tuesday, April 7