

# GOVT 303-2: Urban Politics

Georgetown University

Spring 2016

Mon. & Wed. 9:30-10:45 AM, CBN 302A

<https://blogs.commonsgorgetown.edu/govt-302-spring2016/>

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Office hours MW 11-12 PM, Lauinger 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor. Friday by appointment.

## 1 Overview

How do local politics work? Are they different from state and national politics? What are the big issues? Are all towns and cities alike? Is reform a good idea? Has it always been this way?

To answer these questions, we will read some of the best recent work in urban politics, plus a few classics. There is roughly one book per week, then two or three shorter selections that speak to the same issue. We are sampling a vast literature that has developed over more than a century.

These books and articles will expose us to a range of tools that urbanist scholars use in their research. Public opinion surveys, government statistics, interviews, and archives are some sources of their data. Their methods range from computer modeling to deep interpretation. Use these tools in your own papers.

Substantively, we will cover present-day issues including (but not limited to): elections and election reform, economic growth and stagnation, gentrification, racial tension, the suburbs, state and federal (in)action, and how we got to today.

## 2 Required books

You'll need to obtain the following books. Some are available at the campus bookstore. All are available online. I also recommend the library. If Georgetown's copy is checked out, consider borrowing through the consortium (WRLC) or inter-library loan (ILL).

- Hajnal, Zoltan. 2009. *America's Uneven Democracy: Race, Turnout, and Representation in City Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mollenkopf, John H. 1983. *The Contested City*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Oliver, J. Eric. 2012. *Local Elections and the Politics of Small-Scale Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Sugrue, Thomas. 1996. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Erie, Steven P. 1990. *Rainbow's End: Irish-Americans and the Dilemmas of Urban Machine Politics, 1840-1985*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Stone, Clarence N. and Robert P. Stoker, eds. 2015. *Urban Neighborhoods in a New Era: Revitalization Politics in the Postindustrial City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Trounstein, Jessica. 2008. *Political Monopolies in American Cities: The Rise and Fall of Bosses and Reformers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Erie, Steven, Vladimir Kogan, and Scott MacKenzie. 2011. *Paradise Plundered: Fiscal Crisis and Governance Failures in San Diego*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Zukin, Sharon. 2011. *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ehrenhalt, Alan. 2013. *The Great Inversion and the Future of the American City*. New York: Vintage Books.

### 3 Requirements

Your grade will be based on the following components. I cover each of them in depth below.

- Participation (10%).
- Two reflection papers (30%). Due at start of the respective class.
- Research proposal (10%). Due at start of class on March 2.
- Research paper (50%). Due at 5 PM on Monday, May 9.

The Georgetown Honor System has full effect. I will vigorously prosecute any instance of plagiarism. See <https://honorcouncil.georgetown.edu/system> for more information.

Deadlines are firm, and attendance is mandatory. I will relax these rules for documented medical emergencies and bereavement only.

Audio and video recorders are prohibited. You may use tablets, laptops, and similar note-taking devices. Accumulating research shows these to be distracting, however. Distractions are especially harmful in a discussion-based seminar. If using a laptop or tablet affects your participation, switch to pen and paper.

#### 3.1 Participation

Attend class daily, participate in discussion of the readings, and occasionally lead that discussion. On the first day of class, we will randomly allocate each day's readings to one student until all students are responsible for an even number of days.

Leading (and participating in) discussion requires thinking along the lines required for the reflection paper (see below). While the reflection paper is very focused, however, leading discussion necessarily covers more ground. If there are more than one, how do the readings speak to each other? Do their findings conflict? Why? How do they fit with earlier work we've read? Overall, how do they enhance our understanding of city politics? Equally important, what are their limitations? How do they not enhance our understanding? Does the author persuasively rule out confounding factors? If the author posits a model to explain some outcome, have they omitted some factor? Do you expect the argument to work in another time or place? This is the sort of class discussion you want to stimulate.

Your participation grade will also reflect my evaluation of an in-class presentation of your research paper. See below.

### **3.2 Reflection papers**

These should be about 250 words in length (roughly one double-spaced page) and 500 words at the most. Each paper is due to me in hard copy on the day that we cover those readings. Also, please also post them to the course blog before class. You may base a reflection paper on the readings you are presenting.

Please, don't summarize the readings. Make and defend a thesis statement. A good reflection paper will critique the science in one or more readings, suggest a feasible improvement, or propose an extension of the research (e.g., explore how the argument fits your own research interest). The purpose of the assignment is to get you thinking critically. Consider using reflection papers to develop an idea for your research paper.

### **3.3 Research paper**

This assignment has four big steps: pose a question (research question), come up with a tentative answer (hypothesis), devise a way to know whether your answer is right (research design), then find out if it's right (hypothesis testing).

In general, two kinds of questions are good. One kind asks about cause-effect relationships. Another asks about dynamics: which parts of the political world are important and how they interact with each other. In the end, both kinds of questions are about explaining outcomes. All our readings use one or both of these two approaches.

Research design involves stating what we would expect to see in the world if your hypothesis were true. Also called "observable implications," these expectations are implied by your hypothesis, and we can observe them in real-world data, descriptive histories, and so forth.

Your research design should also state ways to rule out competing hypotheses. In other words, what observable implications would exist if your hypothesis were right and another hypothesis were wrong?

The first step in developing a hypothesis is seeing how others have answered your research question. If nobody else has answered it, how have scholars answered similar questions? How might they answer your question? Consult the urban politics literature for insights. Start with the items on this syllabus, then use tools like Google Scholar to find more. In addition

to letting you search broadly on a topic, Google Scholar shows you other books and articles citing an item. This feature allows you to find any important work that's relevant to your research question.

I will grade your paper on the following criteria:

- **Originality.** Would your question be interesting to most people who've read the books and articles we're reading? Or are you restating a finding of which we already have a lot of evidence? Worse yet, is much (or all) of your paper an extended summary of course and outside readings?
- **Ambition.** New information leads to insight. Your own home town has some of it. Consider using spring break to build a novel data set. Be a political archaeologist. I am not requiring you to spend vacation in dusty local archives, but an Indiana Jones approach can be rewarding.

Also, consider using the paper to build skills. Increase your comfort with Excel, data visualization, or even a statistical program like R. These skills will set you apart in the job market.

- **Execution.** Follow through with your research design. This means you have to plan a doable project. Going too far in the opposite direction, however, will reduce your project's ambition.
- **Presentation.** Would readers take you seriously if you brought the paper to an **undergraduate research conference**? Revise, revise, revise. Proofread. Include a title page. Avoid clip art. Use a common 12-point font and one-inch margins. Consistently use one citation format. (Chicago's parenthetical author-date method is the norm in political science.)

In the final week of class, you will present your preliminary findings to everybody. A good way to do this is with presentation slides that include: your research question, hypothesis, any alternative hypotheses, and findings from your data (i.e., graphics). Your participation grade will reflect my evaluation of this presentation. Yes, grades matter, but please use the presentation as a last chance for feedback that improves your paper. Your presentation should last 10-15 minutes, followed by 10-15 minutes of discussion.

The average paper will be 18-22 pages in length. I will not read anything after page 25 (not including title page and references). It is due by 5 PM on Monday, May 9, in hard copy, in my mailbox.

### **3.4 Research proposal**

This is not a bulleted version of the paper you plan to write. Rather, it should summarize your research question, key hypothesis, the literature you have been consulting, the evidence you intend to present, and the sources of that information. The final paper outline is due in class, in hard copy, on the final day we meet during week 7. It should be one to three pages.

## How to read

We will read a lot of books. It would be unfair to expect you to pore over every word. Skimming is essential. My dad calls skimming “reading a book from its table of contents.”

In political science, skimming typically means closely reading the introduction, the first one or two chapters, and conclusion. These parts of a book usually lay out, respectively, the broad argument, its more nuanced form, and the important findings. The middle chapters usually present evidence. Glance at these. One strategy involves reading the first and last sentence of all or most paragraphs in these middle chapters. When someone writes a book you can read in this way, I say they’ve followed the intro-theory-evidence-conclusion (ITEC) sequence.

Reading critically means fighting the argument of a book or article. How does this author think the world works? Do you buy it? Which points seem weakest or most difficult to verify with evidence? These are the points on which you want to give closer attention to evidence.

Not all books neatly follow the ITEC sequence. This is especially true of historical books, edited volumes, and those that try to explain more than one outcome. If a book does not follow ITEC, its individual chapters will. Adapt your reading strategy accordingly.

Finally, some statistical analyses in our books and articles will be very technical. I do not expect you to critique the minute details of a regression analysis. If you can, that’s great! But the important jobs are to identify the author’s main hypothesis, how they turn it into variables, the kind of data they’re using – then think about these things.

## 4 Schedule of readings & assignments

### Course introduction

#### Wednesday, January 13

- This syllabus.
- Thompson, Derek. "Why It's So Hard for Millennials to Find a Place to Live and Work." *The Atlantic*, November 19, 2014. [\[LINK\]](#)
- Semuels, Alana. "How to Decimate a City." *The Atlantic*, November 20, 2015. [\[LINK\]](#)

### Topics and methods in urban politics

#### Wednesday, January 20

- Trounstine, Jessica. 2009. All politics is local: The reemergence of the study of city politics. *Perspectives on Politics* 7(3): 611-618.
- Fortner, Michael J. 2015. Straight, no chaser: Theory, history, and the muting of the urban state. *Urban Affairs Review*. Early online version.
- Sapotichne, Joshua, Bryan D. Jones, and Michelle Wolfe. 2007. Is urban politics a black hole? Analyzing the boundary between political science and urban politics. *Urban Affairs Review* 43(1): 76-106.

### Issues and representation in local politics today

#### Monday, January 25

- Oliver, J. Eric. 2012. *Local Elections and the Politics of Small-Scale Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

#### Wednesday, January 27

- Tausanovitch, Chris and Christopher Warshaw. 2014. Representation in municipal government. *American Political Science Review* 108(3): 605-641.
- Gerber, Elisabeth R. and Daniel J. Hopkins. 2011. When mayors matter: Estimating the impact of mayoral partisanship on city policy. *American Journal of Political Science* 55(2): 326-339.
- Hajnal, Zoltan and Jessica Trounstine. 2014. What underlies urban politics? Race, class, ideology, partisanship, and the urban vote. *Urban Affairs Review* 50(1): 63-99.

## Voter turnout and its effects

### Monday, February 1

- Hajnal, Zoltan. 2009. *America's Uneven Democracy: Race, Turnout, and Representation in City Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### Wednesday, February 3

- Anzia, Sarah F. 2014. "Estimating the Effect of Off-Cycle Election Timing: School Board Elections" in *Timing and Turnout: How Off-Cycle Elections Favor Organized Groups*, 126-66. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Anzia, Sarah F. 2012. Partisan power play: The origins of local election timing as an American political institution. *Studies in American Political Development* 26(1): 24-49.

## Machine politics

### Monday, February 8

- Erie, Steven P. 1990. *Rainbow's End: Irish-Americans and the Dilemmas of Urban Machine Politics, 1840-1985*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

### Wednesday, February 10

- Wolfinger, Raymond. 1972. Why political machines have not withered away and other revisionist thoughts. *Journal of Politics* 34(2): 365-98.
- Reid, Joseph D. Jr. and Michael M. Kurth. 1992. The rise and fall of urban political patronage machines. In Claudia Goldin and Hugh Rockoff (Eds.), *Strategic Factors in Nineteenth Century American Economic History: A Volume to Honor Robert W. Fogel*, 427-55. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Azari, Julia. "Parties are not the problem – they're the solution." *Vox.com*, September 11, 2015. [\[LINK\]](#)

## Progressive Era reform

### Wednesday, February 17

- Wikipedia on council-manager government in the U.S. Read if you do not know what council-manager government is. [\[LINK\]](#)
- Trounstine, Jessica. 2008. *Political Monopolies in American Cities: The Rise and Fall of Bosses and Reformers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

## Monday, February 22

- Shefter, Martin. 1983. Regional receptivity to reform: The legacy of the Progressive Era. *Political Science Quarterly* 98(3): 459-483.
- Bridges, Amy and Richard Kronick. 1999. Writing the rules to win the game: The middle-class regimes of municipal reformers. *Urban Affairs Review* 34(5): 691-706.
- Trebbi, Francesco, Philippe Aghion, and Alberto Alesina. 2008. Electoral rules and minority representation in U.S. cities. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123(1): 325-57.

## More reform

### Wednesday, February 24

- Trounstein, Jessica and Melody E. Valdini. 2008. The context matters: The effects of single-member versus at-large districts on city council diversity. *American Journal of Political Science* 52(3): 554-69.
- McDaniel, Jason. 2015. Writing the rules to rank the candidates: Examining the impact of instant-runoff voting on racial group turnout in San Francisco mayoral elections. *Journal of Urban Affairs*. Early online version.
- Shefter, Martin. 1986. Political incorporation and the extrusion of the Left: Party politics and social forces in New York City. *Studies in American Political Development* 1: 50-90.

## Intergovernmental politics

### Monday, February 29

- Mollenkopf, John H. 1983. *The Contested City*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

### Wednesday, March 2

- Research proposal due at beginning of class.
- Gamm, Gerald and Thad Kousser. 2013. No strength in numbers: The failure of big-city bills in American state legislatures, 1880-2000. *American Political Science Review* 107(4), 663-78.
- Bowman, Ann O'M. and Richard C. Kearney. 2012. Are U.S. cities losing power and authority? Perceptions of local government actors. *Urban Affairs Review* 48(4): 528-46.

## **Growth politics**

### **Monday, March 14**

- Stone, Clarence N. and Robert P. Stoker, eds. 2015. *Urban Neighborhoods in a New Era: Revitalization Politics in the Postindustrial City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

### **Wednesday, March 16**

- Selections from Peterson, Paul E. 1981. *City Limits*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Selections from Logan, John and Harvey Molotch. 1987. *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*. Berkeley: UC Press.
- Stone, Clarence N. 1993. Urban Regimes and the Capacity to Govern: A Political Economy Approach. *Journal of Urban Affairs* 15(1): 1-28.

## **Race and place**

### **Monday, March 21**

- Sugrue, Thomas. 1996. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

### **Wednesday, March 23**

- Carmines, Edward, Paul Sniderman and Beth Easter. 2011. On the Meaning, Measurement, and Implications of Racial Resentment. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 634(1): 98-116.
- Enos, Ryan. 2016. What the Demolition of Public Housing Teaches Us about the Impact of Racial Threat on Political Behavior. *American Journal of Political Science* 60(1): 123-42.

## **Ask me anything**

### **Wednesday, March 30**

- “AMA” day. Open-ended discussion of course topics, research papers, graduate school options, and life after college.

## **Municipal insolvency**

### **Monday, April 4**

- Erie, Steven, Vladimir Kogan, and Scott MacKenzie. 2011. *Paradise Plundered: Fiscal Crisis and Governance Failures in San Diego*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

### **Wednesday, April 6**

- Anzia, Sarah F. and Terry M. Moe. 2015. Public sector unions and the costs of government. *Journal of Politics* 77(1): 114-27.
- Abott, Carolyn. 2015. Public sector unions, partisanship, and pensions in the U.S. states. Working paper. October 22.

## **Gentrification**

### **Monday, April 11**

- Zukin, Sharon. 2011. *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

### **Wednesday, April 13**

- McKinnish, Terra, Randall Walsh, and T. Kirk White. 2010. Who gentrifies low-income neighborhoods? *Journal of Urban Economics* 67: 180-93.
- Ellen, Ingrid G. and Katherine M. O'Regan. 2011. How low income neighborhoods change. Entry, exit, and enhancement. *Regional Science and Urban Economics* 41: 89-97.
- Desmond, Matthew. 2012. Eviction and the reproduction of urban poverty. *American Journal of Sociology* 118(1): 88-133.
- Lloyd, James M. 2015. Fighting redlining and gentrification in Washington, D.C.: The Adams-Morgan Organization and Tenant Right to Purchase. *Journal of Urban History*. Early online version.

## **Bring it all together**

### **Monday, April 18**

- Ehrenhalt, Alan. 2013. *The Great Inversion and the Future of the American City*. New York: Vintage Books.

## **Student presentations**

**Wednesday, April 20**

**Monday, April 25**

**Wednesday, April 27**

**Monday, May 2**