

Urban Politics
PO 312
On-Line

Introduction:

Political Science is, simply put, the study of how power is distributed and exercised in the mechanism of government. This deceptively simple statement contains within it many significant concepts:

Why do we need government?

How do we define power?

Who has power and how do they get and retain it?

In what ways does power express itself through the mechanisms of government?

Do the mechanisms matter? How do different mechanisms change the way in which power is exercised?

How do we, as citizens, exercise power?

Each of these questions can be examined at an International, National, Regional (State) or Local level of government. The reason for studying local politics twofold. First, local governments are smaller structures and therefore more transparent in the exercise of power. Second, from the perspective of the citizen, understanding local governments has a greater chance to allow an individual or small group to actually exercise power as there is a lower barrier to that exercise. In other words, if you want to make the world you live in on a daily basis better, local government deals with the issues of daily life and, hence, is the place to do it.

The Course Structure:

This course is an on-line course. There are some very good, and some less good, things that follow from that. First, there are no classes per se, you work based on your own schedule. This however forces you to trade off the value of flexibility against the cost of less structure. There is no lecture to attend (good) but that means you have to do the reading to be successful. Second, there if there is no lecture, you become responsible for taking the initiative to ask for help with concepts you do not understand. While I will be available every day, I can't "see your expression" so I don't know what you are not getting unless you tell me. Finally, because I can't see who is getting the materials, nor who is struggling, we will have to have more frequent smaller assessments in order to figure out what is understood, and more importantly, what is not so we can correct that before moving on.

Any course syllabus is a contract between you and I. So make sure we are all on the same page I will list below what I expect of you and what you can expect of me in this course.

Consequence	Student	Instructor
Late work is 1/2 letter grade for each day you, or I, miss the deadline. Work not of your own is a 0.	Work is turned in on time and will be your own work.	Assignments will be graded within 2 days.
	You will ask questions of the instructor and from other students	Questions will be answered within 8 hours
Infrequent or low level participation will impact the participation grade	Everyone will participate in the on-line forums	participation will be defined on the first day of class collectively
Repeated inflammatory remarks or personal attacks will result in lower participation grade and dismissal if the behavior continues.	Anything can be discussed as long as it is done based on respectful discussion and fact.	I will enforce a civility policy

Course Process:

The course will be divided into "class" and "assignments". From the class perspective I will post on BlackBoard a detailed power point of the materials we need to cover that week by Sunday at noon prior to the week. These materials will include key topics, discussion questions, video to be reviewed, a reminder of the reading assignments, and my comments clarifying materials and in some cases brief lectures over key points. Additionally, assignments due that week will be posted by the same Sunday deadline. I will be available by both email and phone throughout the week and will promise to try to get responses out within two hours and never more than eight hours, barring some unforeseen crisis. Should such a crisis occur I will immediately post my unavailability and circle back to you all with how we deal with the loss of access.

The assignments portion of the class will work as follows.

Weekly:

- 1.** you will have specific reading with a deadline of when they have to be completed by.
- 2.** you will each be required to post a discussion question in the class forum and serve as the co-moderator on this question with me.
- 3.** There will be a weekly writing assignment that will be assigned. You will be expected to engage in making an argument, not offering an unsupported opinion. Papers will be restricted to 4 pages in length.
- 4.** Assignments will be submitted to me by Friday morning at 9 EST and they will then be randomly assigned to your peers for anonymous evaluation. You will receive a peer grade and my grade. The peer grading process is also evaluated by me to insure that the peer grader is offering meaningful and helpful comments. All papers may be rewritten with a maximum grade change of one letter grade (up or down). I will solely provide the evaluation for rewrites.
- 5.** The weekly forum will be student driven with your peers offering questions and we all get to participate in the discussion. I will reserve the right to add my own questions to the forum. All posts must begin or end with your name and the rules of civility must be followed. Your feedback will be evaluated in three ways. The thoughtfulness of the questions you offer when it is your turn to moderate, the thoughtfulness of your responses to your peers and finally overall contribution you have made to the overall course discussion.

Final:

The final assignment will be a 5-10 page paper on a topic the instructor assigns. These papers will be discussed more fully as we move through the course. You will have 2 days to write the paper and the grade is based on the degree to which it is an argument with is supported by observations/data.

Assignment Weights:

Weekly Papers	10%	x4	40%
Peer Review	3%	x4	12%
Discussion Question (2)	10%	x2	20%
Participation	15%		15%
Final	13%		13%

Course Outline:

Week 1: What is government and why do we need one? What is power and how is it expressed? History of cities.

- a. Hobbes --the state of Nature -- BlackBoard
- b. Mumford -- City in History
- c. Waste -- Urban Pluralism
- d. Mills -- Elitism

Week 2: The City in the Federal structure

- a. History of Federalism
- b. Constitutional Power and the City
- c. The City and the State
- d. Structure of the City
- e. Funding the City

Week 3: Power in the City

- a. Elections
- b. Interest Groups
- c. Bureaucracy -- Technocracy
- d. the Machine
- e. Reformism and The Hatch Act

Week 4: Immigration

- a. External Immigration
- b. Internal Immigration
 1. African Americans
 2. Civil Rights Movement
 3. Rust Belt -- Sun Belt

Week 5: How we Mobilize Power

- a. coalition building
- b. local policy making
- c. neighborhood organization
- d. NIMBY

Texts:

Paul Peterson -- City Limits

Taylor Branch -- Parting the Waters

All other reading assignments are going to be posted on Blackboard.

Miscellaneous Issues:

1. Civility -- Anything can be discussed here but not based solely on your opinion. It is incumbent on you to support your argument with facts, data or at the least a theoretical structure. Additionally, all comments need to be directed at the substance of the question, not at the individual whose comment annoyed you. As we will be speaking through an electronic format this is especially important as many people lose site of the people on the other side of the discussion when they can't see them. We need to retain civility in order to allow people to develop their ideas without fear of attack or humiliation.
2. Contact Information:
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kfsnape@yahoo.com
3. Plagiarism is the use of someone's work without giving them credit for the ideas or concepts you "borrowed". Citations for the use of someones work is a simple process. The good news is finding data is easy, the bad news is that it is also ease for someone else to find that information as well. Make sure you cite what you use, it is easy and the consequences are not worth the cost. The cost is a zero on the assignment and a referral to the Dean for disciplinary action. It is much easier to cite the material.