

PLS 207—American Urban Government and Politics

Spring 2008

Instructor: Milan Dluhy

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office hours: M,W 2 pm to 3:30 pm

Description: *A study of the structure, functions, political processes, problems, and trends in American city and metropolitan government and politics*

Goals:

- *To understand urban dynamics and the connection between economics and politics*
- *To analyze the major social, economic, and physical factors influencing metropolitan growth and development*
- *To assess governmental structures and governance patterns*
- *To look at the results and impacts of urban trends on different population groups*

Books:

Bernard Ross and Myron Levine (1996). Urban Politics. Fifth Edition. F.E. Peacock: Itasca, Il.

CQ Press. (2007). Urban Issues. Third Edition. CQ Press: Washington, D.C.

Course Grade:

Weekly assignments.....33.3%

Final Exam.....33.3%

City/Metropolitan analysis.....33.3%

Background: *Every student will select a metropolitan area to focus on for the semester. This area should be over a million people. If you want an area smaller than that, contact me directly. Many of your weekly assignments will draw from your case study so select the metro area carefully.*

City/Metropolitan analysis: Class Project

- *Population dynamics*
- *Economic structure and diversity*
- *Dominant politics over last 30 years*
- *Major accomplishments of government (“Best Practice“)*
- *Major problems that need to be worked on*
- *Future of the Metropolitan Area in the next 25 years*

Schedule and Assignments**January 9****Introduction****January 14****Smart Growth and Urban Sprawl***Ross and Levine, Chapter 2**CQ Press, Chapter 9*

January 16

Smart Growth and Urban Sprawl

Film, Paving Over America

Written assignment: Using the Internet identify the 5 most sprawled metropolitan areas in the Southeastern U.S. . Two reasons why you think they so sprawled. One page.

January 23

Land Use and Urban Development

CQ Press, Chapters 10, 11, 12

January 28

Land Use and Urban Development

Film, Independent America (Big Boxes and Small Town America)

Written assignment: In one page, take a position--- should Walmart be excluded from communities who fear that the big box will destroy local businesses? Alternatively we live in a free market system.

January 30

Race, Ethnicity and Class

CQ Press, Chapters 1,2,3,4

February 4

Race, Ethnicity and Class

Ross and Levine, Chapter 1

Written Assignment: Bring a one page statement giving at least five reasons why urban riots periodically occur in urban America. What causes them?

February 6

Intergovernmental Relations

Ross and Levine, Chapters 12, 13

February 11

Intergovernmental Relations

Written Assignment: Construct a table that includes the number and types of governments that are included in the Metro Area you have chosen for your project. Include all types. Bring to class.

February 13

Formal Governmental Structure

Ross and Levine, Chapter 4

February 18

Formal Governmental Structure

Written Assignment: Prepare a table which summarizes the types of governments in your Metro area. Which cities have the council manager form of government, which have the strong mayor, weak mayor, and commission forms.

February 20

Power and Urban Regimes

Ross and Levine, Chapters 3, 7

February 24

Power and Urban Regimes

Written assignments: Take the largest city in your Metro area and using the internet and other literature, come up with the major power brokers in the area (using others perceptions). Focus on the last 10 years.

February 27

Machine Politics and Reform

Ross and Levine, Chapter 5, 6

March 10 **No class, work on Metro paper**

March 12 **No class, work on Metro Paper**

March 17 **Machine Politics and Reform**

Film, City Hall

Written assignment: In one page, summarize the five major things that reformers are the most interested in today. Now look at the largest city in your Metro area and indicate whether they are reform minded or not.

March 19 **Suburban Politics**

Ross and Levine, Chapters 9

March 24 **Suburban Politics**

Film, New Suburbia

Written assignment: In one page, what is your opinion about living in a gated community. Take one position or the other.

March 26 **Metropolitan Government**

Ross and Levine, chapters 10, 11

April 2 **Metropolitan Government**

Written assignment: In one page, indicate whether metropolitan reform is currently feasible in the Wilmington area? How about the area for your project?

April 7

Education

CQ Press, Chapter 5, 6

April 9

Education

Written assignment: In one page, argue whether or not the federal government should take over the entire burden of paying for public education. Or just leave it the way it is?

April 14

Law Enforcement and homeland security

CQ Press, Chapter 7, 8

April 16

Law Enforcement and homeland security

Written assignment: Should federal agents be given total responsibility for securing nuclear plants, large regional ports, and other large urban facilities? Or should we continue to leave it as an intergovernmental responsibility?

April 21

Future of Urban America

Ross and Levine, Chapter 15

Film, Ugly America

April 23

Studying Cities around the world (especially in Less Developed Regions like India, Indonesia, Africa, and Southeast Asia. These are usually referred to as less developed regions of the world)

Written assignments: What are three things urban America needs to do to prosper in the next decades?

April 28

Course Review, Metro analysis due.