

Urban Government and Politics

PLS 207-001

Spring 2006

TR 3:30-4:45

LH 111

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Office Hours: Drop In Hours are 30 Minutes Immediately After Class
Other Times By Appointment

*****Do Not Bring Cell Phones to Class!**

Course Description: The increasing attention being given to urban politics reflects the long term trend in America of growing urbanization (and suburbanization) and, in addition, the fact that the city has become identified with the worst of this country's domestic problems, ranging from poverty and racial strife to transportation snarls and pollution. The purpose of this course is to introduce the student to the structure and process of urban government and to acquaint him with problems facing urban government from the policy focus. The course is divided into four parts. At the outset, we will look at Urban Policymaking; its characteristics and its environment. We will discuss the emergence and development of the city in the United States, and the position of the city in the Federal system, and the dimension of the so-called urban crises. The second portion of the course will examine urban politics. The third part will study urban governments, while giving special attention to partisan politics and the issues of community power. The fourth part of this course will deal with specific problem areas in an urban context, as they relate to our federal system of government.

Requirement: The student is responsible for all readings. Most of the readings come from Judd and Swanstron, City Politics: Private Power and Public Policy. A mid-term examination counts 1/3 of your grade. A final examination counts 1/3 of your final grade. There will be a formal typed research paper of 15 pages (1/3 of your final grade). Due Nov. 19 at beginning of class. The student is to read assignments on lecture topics before class and to initiate and participate in class discussion. Participation is important! Two unexcused cuts are allowed; more will lower one's final grade by one letter! This semester we will study urban government and politics by participation as well as by traditional class activities, we will attend city council meetings and one planning board meeting in the evenings...so if you can't go don't take the class!!! These are the same as labs in sciences.

Wilmington City Council Meetings – Every 1st & 3rd Tuesday at 6:30pm
www.Wilmingtonnc.gov

Planning Board Meetings – Wednesday, February 1st at 6:00pm in City Council Chambers

Grading Scale

90-100	= A
80-89	= B
70-79	= C
60-69	= D
59-below	= F

Lecture Outline

- I. The Evolution of Urban Life in America
 - A. the city evolves
 - B. the city in history
 - C. the emergence of town and metropolitan lie in the US

- II. The Legal City and the socio-economic City
 - A. The legal basis of the city and its relationship to the state and national governments
 1. Dillon's rule
 2. City charters

 - B. The meaning of city limits and municipal corporations

 - C. The politics of territorial expansion and suburbia and the challenge of the "Edge City"
 1. Annexation
 2. Metropolitan government
 3. Extra-territorial jurisdiction
 4. Contracting for services
 5. Special districts
 6. Metropolitan authorities

 - D. City government
 1. Its basis in history
 2. The town-meeting
 3. The commission approach
 4. Mayor-council
 5. Council-manager system

 - E. The Economic Basis of Urbanism and Urban Psychology
 1. Who does where and why?
 2. The economic basis of urbanism
 3. Decline and renewal
 4. the urban psychology

- III. Politics and Influence in Cities and smaller Communities
 - A. Community power. How is it structured?
 - B. Relationship of power to policy formation
 - C. How bureaucrats wield influence
 - D. The press
 - E. Increasing influence of outside sources

TEST (On or before spring break)

Project Discussion

- IV. Community Leadership Styles
 - A. The wielding of power
 - B. The goal-oriented leader
 - C. Contrasting styles of emotional leadership
 - D. Mayoral leadership styles
 - E. Changes in urban leadership

- V. Community Finance
 - A. Sources of revenue: the special uses of the property tax and borrowing
 - B. The outlook
 - C. Why costs have risen
 - D. The challenge of limiting costs and delivering necessary services
 - E. Privatization

- VI. The Urban Underclass
 - A. Its origins
 - B. Crime and welfare
 - C. The studies of the underclass

- VII. The Impact of Immigration: Post, Present, Future
 - A. Planning and zoning
 - B. Urban renewal, conservation, and redevelopment
 - C. Private and public housing
 - D. Crime control
 - E. The design of cities

MAJOR TESTS

TEST I Spring Break

TEST II Exam – Tuesday, May 9th (3:00-6:00pm)

Term Paper

This should be a major written project relating to an aspect of urban government or a problem encountered by towns and cities. It may deal with a specific city, or it may focus on a more wide-ranging problem dealing with urban communities in general. An alternative would be to deal with how a particular major (or majors) or a power elite have influenced a particular city. The term paper will be due on March 23rd at class. It will only be accepted then. Lateness of 1 hour to 1 day minus 1 letter grade; etc.