

**Urban Politics
Political Science 302
Michigan State University
Spring 2011
Monday & Wednesday, 12:40 to 2 pm
136 Holden Hall**

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Office Hours: Thursday 2 to 4 pm, or by appointment

Overview: This course is an introduction to the study of urban politics in the United States. We will focus on who is involved and influential in urban politics and how political processes in cities shape policies. Major topics include: urban political institutions; political machines and urban reform; federal urban policy; race, ethnicity, and immigration in cities; urban elections; and key policy areas within the urban and metropolitan context, such as: economic development, crime, and education.

Assignments: The class includes four quizzes covering lectures and readings as well as two short written assignments. You will also be required to write a book review of a book on cities, selected from a list that I will provide. The final grade will be based on the following:

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| 1) Quizzes (4) | 20% |
| 2) Short Paper Assignment (3 pages) | 20% |
| 3) Comparing Cities with Data (3 pages) | 20% |
| 4) Book Review (5-7 pages) | 25% |
| 5) Participation: class discussion, small groups, “book club” | 15% |

Late Policy: Late assignments will be penalized 20% off your grade for each day they are late.

Grade Scale: 92.5-100 = 4.0; 87.5-92.5 = 3.5; 82.5-87.5 = 3.0; 77.5-82.5 = 2.5; 72.5-77.5: 2.0

Participation: Your participation grade incorporates your attendance in class. Yet you will not automatically receive credit for attending. You are expected to pay attention and participate in class discussions, group work, and the “book club” discussion groups. You are expected to minimize distractions for yourself and for others by NOT checking email or Facebook during class. If you are unable to attend class, you do not need to provide an excuse. Instead, you need to make up your absence by participating more during the class sessions that you do attend. However, frequent absences (more than 3 during the semester) will bring down your participation grade significantly.

If you miss a day when an assignment is due, you must turn in the assignment via email prior to the class period. If you will miss a quiz day, you need to make arrangements to take the quiz prior to the scheduled quiz day.

Course Materials: The course reader is available at Collegeville Textbooks, located at 321 East Grand River Avenue. The cost of the reader is \$29.46. All of the regular class readings are included in your reader. In addition, you will need to obtain a copy of the book that you select for the Urban Politics Book Club.

Just for fun (not required): Rent and watch the HBO series, *The Wire*. In particular, Seasons 3 and 4 overlap with topics we will discuss in class.

Guest Speakers: A few guest speakers have been invited to share their expertise with you. These are prominent local leaders, and you will have an opportunity to ask them questions.

Schedule of Required Readings, Topics, and Assignments

January 10: Introduction and Course Overview

Urbanization

January 12: What is urban?

Jane Jacobs. 1961. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Chapters 2- “The uses of sidewalks: safety” and Chapter 3- “The uses of sidewalks: contact.”

January 17: Holiday

January 19: Urbanization

Douglas Rae. 2005. *City: Urbanism and its End*. Chapter 1- “Creative Destruction and the Age of Urbanism.”

January 24: Power in Urban Politics

Robert Dahl. 1961. *Who Governs?* Chapter 1- “The Nature of the Problem” and Chapter 10- “Leaders in Urban Redevelopment.”

January 27: Machine Politics

Milton Rakove. 1975. “The Ward Organizations” (in *The Urban Politics Reader*.)
Submit book club reading selections

January 31: Urban Reform Politics

Quiz #1

The “Urban Crisis”

February 2: Deindustrialization

Thomas Sugrue. 1998. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Chapter 5- “‘The Damning Mark of False Prosperities’: The Deindustrialization of Detroit”

February 7: Suburbanization

Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom. 2004. *Place Matters: Metropolitcs for the Twenty-First Century. Second Edition*. Chapter 1- “Place Still Matters”

February 9: Racial Segregation, Poverty, and Black Power

Robert Self. 2003. *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*. Chapter 6- “Black Power” p. 217-242

February 14: Federal Urban Policy

City Government and Politics

February 16: Mayors, Councils, and Managers

Buzz Bissinger. 1998. *A Prayer for the City*. “Prologue.”

Quiz #2

February 21: The View from Lansing

Guest Speaker

February 24: Local Interest Groups and Community Organizing

“Why Organize? Problems and Promise in the Inner City.” Barack Obama.

February 28: Urban Elections

Short Paper Assignment Due

March 2: Movie- *Street Fight*

Gwen Ifill. 2009. *The Breakthrough: Politics and Race in the Age of Obama*. Chapter 7- “Cory Booker.”

SPRING BREAK!

Urban Policy

March 14: Urban Budgets- Taxing and Spending

“Michigan Town is Left Pleading for Bankruptcy.” *The New York Times*. 2010.

March 16: Urban Economic Development

Peter Eisinger. “The Politics of Bread and Circuses: Building the City for the Visitor Class.” *Urban Affairs Review*. 35(3). 2000.

March 21: The Creative Class

Richard Florida. 2003. *The Rise of the Creative Class and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life*. Chapter 1- "The Transformation of Everyday Life." Chapter 12- "The Power of Place."

March 23: Public Education in Cities

Quiz #3

March 28: Urban Education Reform

Larry Cuban. *As Good As It Gets: What School Reform Brought to Austin*. "Introduction."

March 30: No class

April 4: Movie: *Hard Times at Douglass High: A No Child Left Behind Report Card Comparing Cities with Data Assignment Due*

April 6: Crime and Public Safety

James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, "Broken Windows," *The Atlantic*. March 1982.
Charlie LeDuff. "What Killed Aiyana Stanley-Jones?" *Mother Jones*. November/December 2010.

April 11: Urban Land Use: Housing and Transportation

April 13: Housing, Property Abandonment, and Michigan Cities

"Vacant Properties: The True Costs to Communities." National Vacant Properties Campaign.
Finish Book Club Book and check-in with group

April 18: Immigration

Audrey Singer. Brookings: State of Metropolitan America. "Immigration"

April 20: Growth Challenges: Cities and the Environment

Edward Glaeser. "Green Cities, Brown Suburbs." *The City Journal*. 2009.

Wrapping Up

April 25: The Future of Cities

Quiz #4

April 27: Book Club Discussion Groups

Book Reviews Due

Short Paper Assignment: Due February 28

Choose 1 of the following options and write a 3 page paper (double spaced, 12 point font).

Option 1: Sidewalk Ethnography (based on Jane Jacobs, “The uses of sidewalks”)

Closely observe a city block in East Lansing, Lansing, or your hometown (if you happen to spend a weekend at home). A downtown or mixed-use area is preferable. Use the model that Jacobs uses to observe Hudson Street, described from p. 50 to 54. Try to observe the area for at least 2 hours at 2 different times of day (i.e. morning and evening). Take notes on the people who use the sidewalk and their interactions. Who are the people? Where do they appear to be going or coming from? Are they in groups or alone? Do strangers interact with each other? Also observe the buildings and transportation in the area—the mix of houses, businesses, cars, buses, bikers, and walkers. If there are businesses in the area, go inside a few and speak with the owners. How do they feel about the block? What kinds of interactions do they have with their neighbors on a daily basis?

In your paper, name the place (the street and cross streets, city name) that you observed. Using Jacobs as a model, describe the interactions you observed in close detail. Use specific examples from the notes you collected to illustrate your points. Conclude by comparing and contrasting the place that you observed to Jacobs’ observations of Hudson Street, focusing on the interactions between the people in each place.

Option 2: Place Profile (based on Dreier, Mollenkopf and Swanstrom, “Place still matters.”)

Identify the Congressional district where you grew up. Using this website:

<http://fastfacts.census.gov/home/cws/main.html> input your home address. Gather data on income, poverty, home ownership, and race/ethnicity for your district. Report this data in a table. Copy the reference map for your district to include as an appendix to your paper. Interview at least two older people who have lived in the place where you grew up for at least 10 years, preferably longer (Try not to interview your parents; these can be relatives, former teachers, friends of the family; you may interview them over the phone). Ask them to describe the community and any changes they have observed. Why did they choose to live there? How has the population changed? Has the area grown poorer or wealthier? How have economic opportunities changed? What are the best and worst things about the place? Do they consider the area to be urban, inner ring suburb, or outer suburb?

In your paper, name your district and the 2 people who you interviewed, and attach your table and map. Using Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom as a model, write a detailed description of the population and economic characteristics of your home Congressional district. Applying Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom’s categories, determine whether your home district is central city, inner-ring, or outer ring (or a combination of more than one category) and explain why. Use quotes from your interviews, the data you gathered from the Census, and your own knowledge of specific events in your hometown to illustrate your points. Conclude by comparing and contrasting your Congressional district to the three districts described by Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom.

Comparing Cities with Data: Due April 4

Choose three major cities of interest to you; choose cities with a population of at least 300,000. These may be places you would like to live in the future, places you have visited, etc. Using the State of the Cities data system, look up each place:

<http://socds.huduser.org/quicklink/screen1.odb>

Choose three different types of indicators (population, housing, education, poverty, employment, etc.) to compare the economic and social well-being of all three places. Gather the central city data (not PMSA) for each year available from 1970 to 2000 for each indicator you chose for each place. For example, you would collect the percent of people who did not graduate high school in 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 for each of your three cities. Percentages are generally more useful to compare places of different sizes.

Create graphs or tables to compare the 3 cities based on each of the 3 characteristics you choose. You will probably need 3 tables/graphs. Using your data and graphs, write a description comparing and contrasting the three places. Which place was doing the best based on these indicators in 1970? How did the places change by 2000? Did some places improve on one indicator but do worse on others? Were you surprised by these findings, or does the well-being of these places confirm your expectations? Including the graphs and charts, your paper should be approximately 3 pages.

The Urban Politics Book Club

In addition to the required readings for the course, everyone will select one book from the following list to read during the semester. You must finish reading the book by **April 13**. You will write a review of this book (**due April 27**) and participate in the book club discussion group with other members of the class who read the same book.

On January 27, be prepared to submit your top 2 book choices from the list below (this will allow me to even out the number of students reading each book). **Please DO NOT select books you have read before.** Most of the books are long—400 to 500 pages—so don't expect to find a short book that you can read in one sitting. Several of the books focus on specific cities, which are included in parentheses. I will notify everyone by January 31 on your assigned book, and you will have the remainder of the semester to read the entire book. I have read many of these books, and I would be happy to answer any questions about the books to help you make a selection that matches your interests. All of the books are available on Amazon.

- Jane Jacobs. 1961. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.
- Douglas Rae. 2005. *City: Urbanism and its End* (New Haven, CT)
- Thomas Sugrue. 1998. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*.
- Adam Cohen and Elizabeth Taylor. 2001. *American Pharaoh: Mayor Richard J. Daley-His Battle for Chicago and the Nation*.
- Buzz Bissinger. 1998. *A Prayer for the City*. (Philadelphia)

- David Simon and Edward Burns. 1998. *The Corner: A Year in the Life of An Inner City Neighborhood*. (Baltimore)
- Paul Tough. 2008. *Whatever it Takes: Geoffrey Canada's Quest to Change Harlem and America*.
- Richard Florida. 2003. *The Rise of the Creative Class and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life*.
- Joel Garreau. 1992. *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier*.

Book Review: Due April 27

You will write a 5 to 7 page (double-spaced, one inch margins) book review of your book. The book review should be written in the style of a *New York Times* book review, including some summary of the book's arguments along with assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. In addition, you must address the following questions:

- What lessons could urban politicians and policy-makers take away from this book?
- Would you recommend this book to urban politicians and policy-makers? Why or why not?

I encourage you to read several book reviews from the *New York Times* and other major newspapers such as the *Los Angeles Times*, as well as magazines. Take note of the style—book reviews are an opportunity to be creative and engaging in your writing.