Urban Politics
PLS 226
Fall 2013

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Course Description:
Cities seem to have always elicited strong emotions. For many cities evoke images of corruption, poverty, and vice. Indeed, Thomas Jefferson’s famous dismissal was that “the mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body.” Yet at the same time cities have been viewed as one of the most powerful of human artifacts—a compounding of human, social, and financial capital. It should not be forgotten, that, though they looked very different from the modern metropolis, it was in the Greek cities—the polis—that democracy was conceived; nor forgotten that it was from these “centers of manufacturing” that Alexander Hamilton saw the future greatness of the American nation.

This class will look at a number of issues surrounding the modern city and what those issues have to say more generally about self-government, society, and liberty regardless of where we live. Special focus will be on the successes and limits of urban planning, the impact of race, the role of associations and private government within the city, the importance of communication and mobility, and what we have learned about the causes and remedies to issues such as urban crime and poverty.

Readings:
• Supplemental readings as indicated in the syllabus.

Course Requirements:
Grades are based on: A midterm (30%), final exam (30%), reaction papers (15%), and subject analysis/presentation (25%).

Reaction papers are short (one page or less) “reactions” to the day’s readings that you will be periodically asked to compose. These papers are written in class and range from “reactions” to ideas presented in the readings, or applications of the readings to an issue we have discussed. About ten of these will be randomly spread throughout the term. As a general rule there will be no make-up papers. However, I will drop the lowest score when computing the course grade—so you essentially have an “extra.”

For the subject analysis I will assign a reading or series of readings to each of you. First, you are to read the subject matter and write a five-page summary and analysis based upon what you have learned in the class. Second, on an assigned day you are to present a summary of your analysis to the class.

I look forward to impressive works that are both original and unique. As you know, plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable and you may be penalized as prescribed in the student handbook. If you are unsure of what plagiarism is, or exactly how much you and a friend can collaborate on class work, please talk with me.

I. The Reason for Cities
Sept 2 and 4
• No readings.
Sept 6

Sept 9

II. The Individual in Urban Environments
Sept 11

Sept 13

Sept 16

Sept 18
• Urban Politics, pp. 233-248.

Sept 20

Sept 23

Sept 25

Sept 27
• Urban Politics, pp. 339-352.

III. Intracity Organization
Sept 30
• Ostrom, Elinor. “Metropolitan Reform: Propositions Derived from Two Traditions.” Chapter 6 of *Polycentricity and Local Public Economies*. M. McGinnis, ed. 1999. (Book is on reserve).

Oct 2
• Urban Politics, pp. 278-279 and 283-299.

Oct 4

Oct 7
Oct 9

Midterm
Oct 11
Midterm

IV. Power and City Government

Oct 16
• Urban Politics, pp. 103-150.

Oct 18
• Urban Politics, pp. 173-226

Oct 21

V. Urban Problems

A) Does Form Matter?

Oct 23
• Urban Politics, pp. 385-402.

Oct 25

Oct 28

Oct 30 and Nov 1

Nov 4

Nov 6 and 8
• Urban Politics, pp. 364-375.

B) Crime

Nov 11

Nov 13
C) Bureaucracy
Nov 15
• Urban Politics, pp. 267-278.

Nov 18

D) Conflict
Nov 20

Nov 22

Nov 25

VI. Subject Analysis
Dec 2
• All subject analyses due.

Dec 2-6
• Presentations

Final Exam--