Urban Politics
PLS 226
Winter 2011

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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
Jan 10 to 12
• No readings.
Jan 14
• Urban Politics, pp. 41-70.

Jan 17

II. The Individual in Urban Environments
Jan 19 to 21

Jan 24

Jan 26

Jan 28
• Urban Politics, pp. 233-248.

Jan 31

Feb 2

Feb 4

Feb 7
• Urban Politics, pp. 339-352.

III. Two is Company, But Three an Association?
Feb 9

Feb 11

Feb 14
Feb 16

Feb 18
* Urban Politics, pp. 278-279 and 283-299.

Feb 21

Feb 23

**Midterm**

Feb 25
Midterm

**IV. Power and City Government**

March 7
* Urban Politics, pp. 103-150.

March 9
* Urban Politics, pp. 173-226

March 11


**V. Urban Problems**

A) Does Form Matter?

March 14
* Urban Politics, pp. 385-402.

March 16


March 18

March 21

March 11
* Urban Politics, pp. 364-375.

B) Crime In Cities

March 25

March 28

C) Urban Bureaucracy

March 30
• Urban Politics, pp. 267-278.

April 1

D) Urban Conflict

April 4 to 8

VI. Subject Analysis

April 11
• All subject analyses due.

April 11-15
• Presentations

Final Exam--