Governance in the Contemporary American Metropolis
LDST 390-01
Jepson School of Leadership Studies

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Office hours: 2:15-4 p.m. Friday
or by appointment

Many writers about democracy from Tocqueville onward have emphasized the locality as a crucial site in the formation of citizens and the exercise of self-government. Yet democratic practice in contemporary cities is typically constrained and compromised by numerous institutional, economic, and political factors. Indeed, the city itself is often associated with concentrated social problems, crime, and dysfunctional public institutions, and the American dream has been redefined in suburban terms over the past half century.

This course draws on democratic theory to critically assess urban politics in the United States and to evaluate prospects for strengthening effective democratic governance in contemporary metropolitan areas. While the course is framed around a classic political science question–who rules in contemporary cities?–readings will be drawn from a variety of fields including normative political theory, biography, history, and legal scholarship, as well as political science and journalism. Specific topics discussed include: power structures in contemporary American cities; the demographic composition and social condition of American metropolitan areas; the economic dependence of urban areas; suburban sprawl and its consequences; the impact of federal policy upon cities; local economic development policies; the politics of race and prospects for multiracial coalition-building; and proposals to re-shape metropolitan governance in American cities.

Throughout the course we will pay particular attention to the variety of ways leaders acquire and exercise influence in urban America: at various points we will focus on the roles of mayors, bureaucrats, business elites, and civic activists in shaping (or attempting to shape) the life of the city.

Course Requirements

1. Students are expected to attend each tutorial meeting prepared to discuss the assigned readings in some depth. If lack of participation or preparation becomes an issue in the course, there may be pop quizzes from time to time.

2. Each student is to take responsibility for providing a substantive overview of the assigned reading during two class sessions in a 10-15 minute presentation at the start of class. You will be assigned in pairs.

3. Each student is expected to submit four response papers totaling approximately two-
three pages. Each response papers should be focused on class reading and discussion material. Response papers are due every two weeks, on Fridays at 5 p.m. Response paper due dates are February 2, February 16, March 2, March 23, April 6, April 20, and April 27. (You should turn a paper in on four of these eight dates.)

4. As a class project, the course is going to start and maintain a blog focused on governance issues in metropolitan Richmond. The blog will be publicly available and will be linked to other local weblogs; in short, the public will read what is posted there. Each student is expected to make a minimum of six substantive posts to the blog over the course of the semester, focused on a particular area of research (potential areas are listed below). A “substantive post” should be at least 250 words in length. Pointing out and providing comments on articles or information and posting links, or introducing new information and arguments, counts as a substantive post. At least one of the posts should be a first-hand account of an event in the Richmond area. (You should look for an event that pertains in some way to your research area, if possible.)

Students are also required to post at least six comments or links over the course of the semester. A comment is an intelligent and intelligible response to another post that contributes to the discussion in a substantive way; a link simply points to an article of interest with little or no additional commentary required.

In short, plan on making a contribution to the blog of some kind roughly once a week.

You are permitted to use ideas or facts developed in your response papers, and especially in your term papers, in your blog postings. Just be sure that what you post has some connection (direct or indirect) to Richmond so that it will be of interest to local readers.

Blog contributions will be assessed on the basis of writing quality, the quality of information you introduce into the public discussion, how well you exercise the responsibility of making claims that will be visible in a public forum, and the level of understanding and knowledge about your topic area that you acquire and exhibit via your postings.

Specific topics to focus on:

Transportation
Land use planning (including sprawl)
Public education/educational inequality
Crime/policing
Business/economic development
Poverty
Public housing/affordable housing
Racial trust/mistrust
Legacy of Richmond’s history (Civil War, slavery, etc.)
Mayor Wilder
The Richmond City Council/city budget/ordinances
County governments
Local environmental concerns
State legislative session
African-American community
Status of other “minorities” (gay-lesbian; Hispanic; Muslims; etc)
Religious communities
Local political activism/community organizing

The name of the blog will be voted on during the first week of class. I will provide instructions on how to register as a blog co-author during the first week; you should register immediately and begin contributing. Each student will also get their topic assignment during the first week of class.

5. Each student should identify one local leader (broadly defined) working on either your blog beat or your research paper topic to interview, in person if at all possible. You should prepare at least 10 questions for your interview subject. Turn in the transcribed interview or a magazine-type article (3-4 pages) about your interview topic. This is due on Friday April 20, though you are strongly encouraged to fulfill this requirement much earlier in the semester. If your interview subject agrees, we will post the interviews/articles on the class blog.

6. Each student must write a 15-18 page, fully-documented research paper on an issue of your choosing related to leadership and governance in urban areas, due on May 4 at 6 p.m. Each student must submit a proposed topic for approval by March 30, and a draft of the first two pages of the paper, and outline of the rest, and a working bibliography by April 16. Longer papers (up to a cut-off limit of 25 pages) are acceptable but not encouraged unless necessary.

In addition to the assigned reading noted below, handouts and short journalistic articles will be distributed to the class from time to time.

Course Grading

25% Response Papers + Interview
20% Participation in Class (Including Class Presentations)
20% Contributions to Class Group Project (Blog)
35% Final Term Paper

There is no final exam for this class.
General grading standards:

A range grades are given for truly outstanding written work that not only meets the basic requirements of the given assignment but also demonstrates exceptional insight, clarity, and depth of thought. For instance, an A-range paper will not simply forward a coherent argument, but also anticipate and attempt to answer likely objections to the argument, and/or acknowledge points at which one’s argument might be vulnerable. Such papers will also be very well-organized and well-written, and gracefully presented.

B range grades are given for good and very good written work which amply meets all the basic requirements of the given assignment and reflects substantial effort and engagement with the material. Such work is generally well-written and well-organized, shows good understanding of the course material, and avoids major substantive or logical errors. B is a good grade for any assignment in this course, and B+ is a very good grade.

C range grades are given for work which attempts to fulfill the requirements of the assignment but which falls short in some substantial way, with respect to organization, writing quality, understanding of the material, or argumentative logic.

D and F grades are reserved for work which comes nowhere close to meeting the requirements of the assignment.

Your class participation grade is based on attendance, attentiveness, evidence of preparation (i.e. doing the readings), making the effort to verbally participate, and quality of such participation. If you attend every class and pay attention to what is going on but do not contribute anything unless called upon, your participation grade will be at best a C+. However, talking a lot does not necessarily guarantee you a very high participation grade; contributions to class that advance the class discussion are valued more than sheer quantity of participation. Advancing the class discussion can take several forms, from calling attention to something important in the reading we haven’t talked about yet, to answering a question posed by the instructor, to asking a factual or interpretive question of relevance to the discussion, to stating (and giving reasons) why you think you disagree with another student or the instructor.

Attendance: Please let me know if you need to miss a class for any reason. If you miss more than one class without a valid excuse, it will negatively affect your participation grade. Multiple unexcused absences will have increasingly severe negative consequences. I will not pass anyone in the course that misses more than four classes without permission.

Course Books:

The following texts are required, and are available at the Campus Bookstore:

Buzz Bissinger, *A Prayer for the City*
Robert Caro, *The Power Broker*
Clarence Stone, *Regime Politics*
J. Philip Thompson, *Double Trouble*
Thad Williamson et al, *Making a Place for Community*
Archon Fung, *Empowered Participation*
Anthony Flint, *This Land*

Recommended but not required (i.e. we will be reading substantial excerpts, but less than half the book)

Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*
Douglas Rae, *Urbanism: City and Its End*

**Course Outline and Schedule**

**Part One: The American Metropolis and Its Problems: An Overview**

January 15. *Introduction*

Overview and blog/student presentation assignments

January 17. *The Social Condition of American Cities*

Bruce Katz, “The State of American Cities”; 22-64, distributed via PDF
Douglas Rae, *City: Urbanism and Its End*, Chapter One, distributed via PDF

**January 22. Normative Issues in the Contemporary Metropolis**

Iris Marion Young, *Justice, Gender, and the Politics of Difference*, 232-248
Loren King, “Democracy and City Life”, 1-15

**Part Two: Political and Bureaucratic Leadership in Urban America: Philadelphia, New York, and New Haven**

January 24. *Governing the Contemporary City: The Philadelphia Experience*

**Student presentations: Alterman and Sulzen**

Buzz Bissinger, *A Prayer for the City*. Chapters 1-5.

January 29. **Philadelphia, II**
Student presentations: Harris and Peterson


**January 31. Philadelphia, III**

Student presentations: Tilley and Scanlan


**February 5. The Making of the Twentieth Century City: Robert Moses and New York**

**In-Class Film: New York**

Robert Caro, *The Power Broker*. 1-21; 143-172; 207-225; 299-367

Feb 7. **Moses and New York, II**

**Student Presentations: Kulseth and Genualdi**

Robert Caro, *The Power Broker*, 450-575

February 12. **Moses and New York, III**

**Student Presentations: Cadwallender and Harris**

Caro, *The Power Broker*, 706-836

February 14. **Moses and New York, IV**

**Student Presentations: Agran and Horne**

Caro, *The Power Broker*, 837-948

**February 19. The Undoing of the Twentieth Century City: New Haven**

**Student Presentations: Boyd and Genauldi**

Rae, *City: Urbanism and Its End*, Chapters 5, 6, and 8.

**Part III: Race and Power in the Urban South**

February 21. **The Urban Regime: Atlanta**

**Student Presentations: Hickman and Alterman**
Stone, *Regime Politics*, Chapters 1-4

February 26. **Atlanta, II**

**Student Presentations: Addison and Wingo**

Stone, *Regime Politics*, Chapter 5-8

February 28. **Atlanta, III**

**Student Presentations: Agran and Horne**

Stone, *Regime Politics*, Chapters 9-12

**SPRING BREAK (whoo-hoo!)**

March 12. **Suburbanization and the South: Charlotte**

**Student Presentations: Scanlan and Tilley**

Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South*, Chapters 5-7

March 14. **Race and Suburbanization: Comparing Charlotte and Richmond**

**Student Presentations: Hickman and Addison**

Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, Chapter 8, 11, 12

Guest: Dr. John Moeser, VCU

**Part IV: Suburbanization and Its Consequences**

March 19. **Suburbanization in Contemporary America**

**Student Presentations: Peterson and Cadwallender**

Anthony Flint, *This Land: The Battle Over Sprawl and the Future of America*, Chapters 1-5

March 21. **Suburbanization, II**

**Student Presentations: Sienko**

Anthony Flint, *This Land*, Chapters 6-11
March 26. **Political Consequences of Suburbanization**

Thad Williamson, *Sprawl, Justice and Citizenship*. Chapters 5-8 (To be distributed as PDF file)

March 28. **Alternatives to Sprawl?**

**Student Presentations: Kulseth and Sulzen**

Flint, *This Land*, Conclusion.
Brief excerpts from Kaid Benfield, *Solving Sprawl*, pages TBA
Stacy Mitchell, *Big-Box Swindle*, 192-222

**Part V: Is Democracy Possible Here? Possibilities for Building an Inclusive Urban Regime**

April 2. **The Practical Politics of Multiracial Coalition-Building**

**Student Presentation: Roberts**

J. Philip Thompson, *Double Trouble: Black Mayors, Black Communities, and the Call for a Deep Democracy*. Chapters 1-4

April 4. **Race and New York City, II**

**Student Presentation: Wingo**

Thompson, *Double Trouble*, Chapters 6-8

April 9. **A City-Sustaining Economic Agenda, I**

Thad Williamson, David Imbroscio, and Gar Alperovitz, *Making a Place for Community: Local Democracy in a Global Era*, 8-21 from Introduction; Chapters 2, 4, and 5.

April 11. **A City-Sustaining Economic Agenda, II**

**Student Presentation: Sienko**

Williamson et al, Making *a Place for Community*, Chapters 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11.
Drier, *The Next Los Angeles*

April 16. **Urban Political Reform: The Case of Chicago**

**Student Presentation: Boyd**

April 18. **Reforming Chicago, II**

**Student Presentation: Roberts**

Fung, *Empowered Participation*, Chapters 5-7

April 23. **The New Regionalism and Its Politics**


April 25. **Making Regionalism Work in Practice?**