

Political Science/Urban Planning 103

Local Government and Politics
Spring 2012
Section 01
TTh 1200-1315

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“All politics is local,” said one of America’s master politicians, meaning that the essence of politics is relationships between people but also suggesting that local politics shapes larger events. Political Science/Urban Planning 103 focuses on local government and politics in the US. You’ll learn about politics in communities, but also about politics more generally. You’ll be introduced to the basics of local politics, including the structure and organization of local government, intergovernmental relations and nongovernmental elements (voters, interest groups, media, private power holders, race, class). We’ll use San José and the surrounding area as a learning laboratory or case study. We’ll also learn about local politics through a simulation, with students playing the roles of various participants in local politics. The overall goal of the course is to provide students with information, understanding and critical insights as to how American communities function politically.

In this course, you will learn:

- how to understand, participate in and affect politics in your own community – as a public or private sector professional, a journalist or an involved citizen.
- how to access the information you need to deepen your knowledge of your current and future communities.
- to apply social science theories to real-life politics.
- to synthesize ideas from varied sources to enhance your understanding of local politics.
- to think critically and analytically about local politics and politics more generally.

Required Reading

- Terry Christensen and Tom Hogen-Esch, *Local Politics*, 2nd Ed. ME Sharpe, 2006.
- *The San José Mercury News* (www.sjmercury.com). If you don’t subscribe to a newspaper, list “San José” on your Google News to be sure you see articles about the city.
- News articles and other readings to be distributed by the instructor through the class email list. Please note: these are *required* readings that will be relevant to papers and the final exam.

Evaluation

The standard format for grading will be 20% for the final exam, 20% for a paper on city council meetings, 40% for quizzes and short assignments and 5% each for a role model paper, 5% for a community service project and 10% for participation in the city politics simulation,

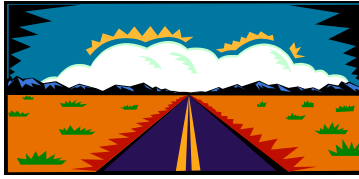
- The **final exam** (20% of the course grade) will be comprehensive essay questions covering lecture and readings. Review questions will be distributed at the last class meeting.
- The **city council paper** (20% of the course grade) will require attendance of at least two meetings of the San José city council or another approved city council and a 6-8 page paper analyzing what you observe with appropriate application of readings. See the attached assignment (page 5) and handouts for further information. **Due March 22.**
- **Quizzes and Short Assignments** (40% of the course grade). **Quizzes** will be multiple choice or true/false covering chapters of *Local Politics* only. They will be given promptly at the beginning of class, normally on the day the chapter is assigned; any alteration of this schedule will be announced in advance. **No make-ups** will be permitted unless approved in advance. You must arrive in class on time. **Short Assignments** will consist of short written commentary on specified readings or quick research assignments. Assignments will be emailed at least one-week before they're due. See course outline for due-dates. You can earn **extra credit** points for this portion of the course grade by attending local political events and writing short reflection papers on your observations. Such reflection papers *must* relate your observations to concepts from the text. Opportunities will be announced in class and by email.
- The **role model paper** (5% of the course grade) will be a 3-page paper on a person like the one you will play in the city politics simulation (you'll get a list of roles soon). Once you've picked a role, you must find a local, real-life parallel and research that person through public records, the Internet, newspapers or interviews. Check out the reader, too. Your brief paper should describe the person and his/her political activities and *put them in the larger context provided by the text and reader, which should be cited in footnotes.* **Due April 12.**
- The **community service project and paper** (5% of the course grade) requires that you participate in a community service project (in association with CommUniverCity San Jose) on Saturday, April 21, 0900-1200, and write a short, 2-3 page reflection paper on your experience. The paper should include your observations about the event and the community *and* make reference to appropriate readings (text and handouts). **Paper due April 26.**
- The **city politics simulation** (10% of course grade) will be played at the end of the semester. A course handout will provide details. Grades will be based on attendance, participation and written evaluations by participants.

For purposes of averaging the course grade, scores of

- 90-100 = A (thorough coverage; good references to readings; original insight)
- 80-89 = B (good coverage, some references, little original)
- 70-79 = C (incomplete coverage, inadequate references, perhaps even erroneous information)
- 60-69 = D (poor coverage, no references, misinformation)
- 0-59 = F (unacceptable work; inadequate, insufficient and perhaps irrelevant)

Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San José State University, and the University's Academic Integrity Policy require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty are required to report all infractions to the Office of Judicial Affairs. The policy on academic integrity can be found at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S04-12.pdf>.

SIGN UP for PolS 103 email list by emailing: Terry.Christensen@sjsu.edu



Course Outline

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic and Reading Assignment</u>
1/26	Introduction and Organization. Consider: What do the terms 'city' or 'urban' bring to mind? How is local politics different from state, national or international politics?
1/31 & 2/2	The Environment of Local Politics: Characteristics of Urban Places. Read <i>Local Politics</i> (LP), Ch. 1-2. QUIZ 1/31 Consider: What's the difference between a crowd and a community?
2/7 & 9	The Evolution of Urban Places: Where People Live & Why. Read LP, Ch. 3. QUIZ 2/7. Consider: What is the impact of suburbanization on local politics in metropolitan areas?
February 9. Short Assignment on Census Data for a City of Your Choice Due	
2/14	The Intergovernmental Environment of Local Politics Read LP, Ch. 4. QUIZ 2/14.. Consider: Should the state and federal governments give local governments more power or are controls by higher levels of government good?
February 9, 1800-1930: State of the City (Mayor Reed), Civic Auditorium Extra Credit Option. Registration required. RSVP Online: www.sanjoseca.gov/mayor	
2/16	Forms of Government: Weak Mayors and Machines. Read LP, Ch 5 and San Jose Political History to 1970 (to be emailed by instructor). QUIZ 2/16.
2/21 & 23	Forms of Government: Machines, Reform and Counterreform. Read LP, Ch. 6 and San Jose Political History since 1970 (to be emailed by instructor). QUIZ 2/21 Consider: Who are the winners and losers with reform and counter reform politics? Is San José's form of government reform, counterreform or "adapted?"
February 23. Short Assignment on San José History Readings Due	
2/28 & 3/1	Forms of Government Continued: Mayors, Managers & Council Members Read LP, Ch. 7. QUIZ 2/28. Consider: Who should have the most power, the council, the mayor or the manager?
03/6 & 8	Bureaucracies in Local Politics Read LP, Ch. 8. QUIZ 3/8. Consider: Are bureaucracies objective? Should bureaucracies be representative?
March 8. Short Assignment on Public Employee Salary Due	

3/13 & 15 Inputs in Local Politics: Elections, Campaigns and the Media.
Read LP, Ch. 9. QUIZ 3/13.

Consider: How do electoral structures affect who gets elected?

3/20 & 22 Interest Groups and Local Politics.
Read LP, Ch. 10. QUIZ 3/20.

Consider: Why are economic interest groups usually winners in Local Politics? Is it because money equals power or does the structure and organization of local government also have something to do with it?

March 22. CITY COUNCIL PAPER DUE

Spring Break: March 28-April 3

4/3 & 5 Community Power Structures: Official and Unofficial Decision Makers.
Read LP, Ch. 11 and San Jose power studies (to be emailed by instructor). QUIZ 4/3.

Consider: Based on *Movers and Shakers* and its up-dates, would you describe San José's power structure as pluralist or elitist or something in between?

April 5. Short Assignment on Power Studies of San José/Silicon Valley Due

4/10 & 12 Budget Politics: Getting and Spending Money.
Read LP, Ch. 12/ QUIZ 4/10.

Consider: What is fiscal zoning and what are its causes?

April 12: ROLE MODEL PAPER DUE

4/17 Public Policy: Local Issues and Battles. The Politics of Growth.
Read LP, Ch. 13. QUIZ 4/17.

Consider: Should public funds subsidize private development?

4/ 19 Metropolitan Regional Politics: The Future of Local Government.
Read LP, Ch. 14. QUIZ 4/19.

Consider: Is metropolitan regional fragmentation good or bad? How should it be resolved?

Saturday, April 21, 0900-1200: Community Service Project

April 26 Community Service Reflection Paper Due

April 24, 26 and May 1, 3, 8, 10 and 15: CIRCLEVILLE SIMULATION.

May 23 0945-1200 FINAL EXAM

Local Issues to Keep an Eye on This Semester:

state funding of local government, city budget problems, public employee pensions, police/community relations, stadiums (baseball, soccer, football), medical marijuana (regulations and possible referendum), regional transit plans (BART, high speed rail), city council elections..



City Council Paper

Due March 22

Your essay should be 6-8 double-spaced, typewritten pages. Prepare by reading **everything** assigned up to March 24 with special attention to *Local Politics*, Chapters 5-10, accompanying readings in the *Course Reader* and relevant newspaper articles. **Be sure to apply ideas from these readings to your observations of the meetings.**

You may attend the meetings of any approved city council or county board, but the San José City Council is strongly preferred. Attend a *minimum* of two meetings (afternoon and evening sessions may count as different meetings). Note on your paper the date and time (evening or afternoon) of sessions attended.

The San José City Council meets in the Council Chambers at City Hall (200 E. Santa Clara Street) every Tuesday afternoon at 1:30 and *some* Tuesday evenings at 7 p.m. Note: no meetings on Tuesday, February 21. You can park underground at City Hall and validate your parking ticket on the machine at the back/top of the Council Chambers.

Meetings may be short, so plan your attendance now and allow some leeway in case you hit a very short one. You need to stay for at least a couple of hours to get a sense of how things work, so allow yourself plenty of time when you attend. Try to go to at least one meeting as soon as possible. See the class handout for who's who on the dais.

You can watch council meetings live on the city website or watch them on television on Comcast cable channel 26. Meetings are televised live on Tuesdays and rebroadcast at 7 p.m. Thursdays and 10 a.m. Saturdays. Go to www.sanjoseca.gov/civiccenterv for archived videos of council meetings. **DO NOT** substitute televised meetings for in-person observation. You won't learn as much. You may, however, use the televised meetings to supplement your in-person observations. You'll understand what's going on in the televised meetings better after you've attended a live meeting in person.

Afternoon sessions deal with general business; evening sessions are for public hearings, usually on land use. Pick up an agenda as you enter the chambers (on the table at the back—or ask one of the people in chartreuse shirts). Study the agenda to understand the Consent Calendar, public hearings and the sources of requests for action (in parenthesis after most items). Additional information on agenda items is available in a big white binder on the table that has the agendas. Council members get this information in advance so they can study these memos.

You can see an agenda in advance on San José's website, where you can also communicate with council members and the mayor: www.sanjoseca.gov. Click on "Council and Committee Agendas" (right side) to see agendas of up-coming meetings and synopses of past meetings. When you look at the agenda on-line, you can click on items in **blue** to see the background information council members receive in their packets. Also on the *agenda* page, click on *weekly meeting calendar* for a schedule of meetings of council committees, which you are also encouraged to attend.

Your essay should NOT be a factual summary of events at the meetings. Rather, you should attempt to assess, evaluate and analyze what you observe. Try to make some generalizations about the process, with specific examples for illustration. Make a special effort to assess the roles played by council members, administrators (manager, staff, bureaucracy) and citizens (audience, speakers, groups--who's there, how many, for what purpose, etc.?) and the relationships between all of these and the council as well as relationships among the council members themselves. After considering these things, attempt to arrive at some conclusions regarding the process as a whole. How does the council make decisions? Is this democracy at work? Who seems to dominate the process? Does anyone? Are decisions made at council meetings after careful deliberation or do they appear to have been made in advance? How and why? The readings will help; use them. **Be sure to make at least eight (8) references to specific readings.** Use footnotes or endnotes and cite your sources.

Please do not submit papers in bindings. Just staple them together with your name, the title of the paper and the dates of meetings you attended on the cover sheet.

Warnings

- Late papers will be penalized with lower grades.
 - **No** late papers will be accepted after May 15.
 - **Missed quizzes may not be made up unless students are excused in advance.**
- Plagiarism or cheating on quizzes, tests or papers are serious offenses that may result in grades of F or expulsion from the university.
 - Late arrivals, early departures, ringing cell phones and disruptions of class in any form are unacceptable.

If you need course **adaptations or accommodations because of a disability**, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities register with DRC to establish a record of their disability.

A Message from Political Science Faculty on Writing:

Students of political science should develop the ability to write in clear, grammatical English. Spelling and grammar count!

Students must take care that appropriate citations are used. Direct quotations must be indicated with quotation marks and a specific reference to the page in the source from which they are taken. Ideas from others must also be referenced although quotations marks are inappropriate. Failure to cite sources constitutes academic misconduct which carries with it serious sanctions. A tutorial on citations is available at the library website at http://www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info_comp/citing.htm.

Assistance:

The SJSU Writing Center is staffed by professional [instructors](#) and upper-division or graduate-level writing specialists from each of the [seven SJSU colleges](#). Writing specialists have met a rigorous GPA requirement and they are well trained to assist students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. It is your responsibility to arrange a time to meet with the instructors. Consult with your professor in advance to determine whether you need assistance with your writing.

Arguably the best way to improve your own writing is to read high quality material regularly. To that end, students are encouraged to read articles from scholarly sources but also newspapers such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Financial Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Economist*. These publications also contain articles of direct relevance to political science classes.