

Political Science 103

Local Politics
Fall 2011

TuTh 7:30-8:45 Hugh Gillis Hall 116

Sam Liccardo

Office: Clark 404M

Telephone (408) 535-4903

E-mail: Samuel.Liccardo@sjsu.edu

Office Hours: Thurs., 8:45-10:00 am & by appointment

“All politics is local”

-The late Thomas P “Tip” O’Neill, then-Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives

As O’Neill’s famous line suggests, local politics have profound impacts on larger events. Relationships between people comprise the simple essence of politics, even on the national stage.

Political Science 103 focuses on local government and politics in the U.S.. You’ll examine how people use—and decline to use—power within communities, but also about politics more generally. You’ll learn about the basics of local politics, including the structure and organization of local government, intergovernmental relations and nongovernmental stakeholders (voters, interest groups, media, private power holders, race, class). We will frequently use San José and the surrounding area as a case study or learning laboratory. You’ll gain information, understanding and critical insights as to how American communities function politically, with particular emphasis on cities within the state of California.

In this course, we will examine how to:

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

Required Reading

- Terry Christensen and Tom Hogen-Esch, *Local Politics*, 2nd Ed. ME Sharpe, 2006.
- Selections identified on the Class Website for each week, which can be found at www.sjsu.edu/people/samuel.liccardo/courses/localpolitics_103.
- *The San José Mercury News* – you should have an awareness of the significant stories about San José and other local city governments. You can read the newspaper online at mercurynews.com, or alternatively, designate “San José” for local news on your “Google News” or similar web service.

Evaluation

- The **final exam** (up to 20% of the course grade) will consist of comprehensive essay questions covering lecture and readings. Review questions will be distributed at the last class meeting.
- **Bi-Monthly Written Assignments** (40%). We will have a steady stream of very short written assignments (less than 500 words/ 2 pages) throughout the semester. These assignments will apply your critical thinking skills to the readings and to current events, and will emphasize your ability to communicate those thoughts in a variety of real-life situations relevant to the political process. The assignments will take the form of memoranda to elected officials, op-eds, speeches, and the like.
- The semester-long **Policy Project** (15% of the course grade) will consist of a short (1000 word/ 4 page) written assignment focusing on identifying a policy issue of your choice, analyzing the political forces at play, and crafting oral and written analysis and advocacy.
- **Quizzes** (20% of the course grade). Quiz questions will appear in a multiple choice and true/false format, covering key readings. You will receive them 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 to take the quiz.**
- **Oral Advocacy, Dialogue, and Analysis** (5%). Your willingness to engage in class discussions, and to prepare and adequately for more formal oral presentations (which will be described in class), could have a small but measureable impact on grades.
- **Extra Credit.** Multiple opportunities will arise to earn extra credit points for the assignment portion of the course grade by (a) attending local meetings and political events that will be announced in class, or (b) engaging in an additional volunteer, service-learning experience, other than the one identified in class. In each case, you must write a short (500 word max.) paper on your observations. Such reflection papers *must* relate your observations to concepts from the textbook. Students can also earn additional credit to boost their quiz scores by crafting thoughtful, discussion-provoking questions for guest lecturers.

For purposes of assessing your grade on written or oral assignments:

- 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: Samuel.Liccardo@sjsu.edu.

Course Outline

(Will be subject to repeated revision, as posted on www.sjsu.edu/people/samuel.liccardo/courses/localpolitics 103)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic and Reading Assignment</u>
8/25	Course Introduction Consider: why should local government—and local politics—matter?
8/30 & 9/1	The Environment of Local Politics: Characteristics of Urban Places Read <i>Local Politics</i> (LP), Ch. 1-2 and accompanying selections on website Consider: What's the difference between a crowd and a community?
9/6 & 9/8	The Evolution of Urban Places: Where People Live & Why Read LP, Ch. 3 and accompanying selections on website Consider: What is the impact of suburbanization on local politics in metropolitan areas? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Due September 8: S2D2 Analysis• Identify Topic for “Council Observation” Assignment (see October 6)
9/13 & 9/15	The Intergovernmental Environment of Local Politics Read LP, Ch. 4 and accompanying selections on website Consider: Should the state and federal governments give local governments more power or are controls by higher levels of government good?
9/20 & 9/22	Forms of Government: Weak Mayors, Machines and Reform, and Counterreform Read LP, Ch. 5-6, and accompanying selections on website Consider: Which is worse (or better), traditional political machines or contemporary growth machines? What outcomes of reform produced the counterreform movement? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Due September 22: San José and Counter Reform Efforts
9/27 & 9/29	Legislators and Executives: The Balance of Power Read LP, Ch. 7 and accompanying selections on website Consider: Who should have the most power, the council, the mayor or the manager?
10/4 & 10/6	Bureaucracies in Local Politics Read LP, Ch. 8 Consider: Are bureaucracies objective? Should bureaucracies be representative? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Due October 6: Council Observation Assignment
10/8 (Friday)	CommUniverCity -- Community Perception Survey (Mandatory Attendance—See Instructor regarding any conflicts)
10/11 & 10/13	NO CLASS (in lieu of participation in CommUniverCity (above), and attendance at Council meetings in preparation October 6 Assignment)
10/18 & 10/20	Community Power Structures: CommUniverCity and Strong Neighborhoods Initiative Read LP, Ch. 11 and accompanying selections on website Consider: Based on <i>Movers and Shakers</i> and its up-dates, would you describe San José's power structure as pluralist or elitist or something in between? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Due October 20: Reflection on Community Perception Survey: Community Power and Social Capital
10/19	Fabian Nunez delivers the Fall, 2011 Don Edwards Lecture 7 p.m., Morris Dailey Auditorium (Extra Credit Opportunity)

- 10/25 & 10/27 Interest Groups
Read LP, Ch. 10 and accompanying selections on website
- 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?
- 11/1 & 11/3 Elections and Campaigns and the Media (introduction)
Read LP, Ch. 9 and accompanying selections on website
- Consider: How do electoral structures affect who gets elected?
- **November 3: Election Analysis**
- 11/4 SJSU Day of Service (Extra Credit Opportunity)
- 11/8 & 11/10 Traditional Media, the Internet, and Social Media
Read selections on website
- 11/15 & 11/17 Budget Politics: Getting and Spending Money
Read LP, Ch. 12 and accompanying selections on website
- Consider: What is fiscal zoning and what are its causes? How have states limited what local government can do by limiting local powers of taxation?
- **Due November 22: Budget Document**
- 11/22 & 11/29 Budget Politics: the Politics of Labor Negotiations and Retirement Benefits
Read selections on website
- 12/1 Public Policy: The Politics of Development
Fiscalization of Land Use, the Growth Machine, and “Smart Growth”
Read LP, Ch. 13 and accompanying selections on website
- Consider: What is “fiscal zoning,” and what are its causes? Should public funds subsidize private development? To what extent is a stadium, arena, or performing arts facility “private” or “public”?
- 12/6 Metropolitan Regional Politics: The Future of Local Government
Read LP, Ch. 14 and accompanying selections on website
- Consider: Is metropolitan regional fragmentation good or bad? How should it be resolved?
- **Due December 6: Policy Project**
- 12/8 The Future of Cities
Read selections on website
- Consider: how will demographic trends – in greater diversity, older populations, and smaller households—shape the politics and economics of cities of the future?

Monday, December 12 -- 7:15 AM- 9 AM FINAL EXAM

All Written Assignments:

- Please read, and re-read, “Sam’s 10 Tips for Good Writing and Lifetime Happiness” on the class website. It will help you understand how I will assess your writing, and will hopefully inspire better writing for this class and for the future.
- Deliver each assignment at the beginning of class on the designated date. No exceptions (even if you bring cupcakes for the whole class). Otherwise, late written assignments will suffer from a grade reduction.
- Unless otherwise indicated, **written assignments should not exceed 500 words** (two pages, double-spaced). Brevity is the soul of wit, and the path to eternal academic happiness. (And yes, if you’ve messed with the font and margins, I’ll notice.) The papers should be simply stapled (no paper clips, please), without any adornment or cover pages.
- To assist you in making your writing more concise, read the text selection from Zinnser, *On Writing Well*, assigned for January 31st. Apply its lessons in your writing—life rewards ruthless editing!
- Frequent references to the textbook should be made where appropriate to identify the source of ideas or information. Given the very brief nature of the written work in this class, you may dispense with formal citation methods, and simply designate the textbook with a parenthetical containing the initials “LP” followed by the page number, e.g., “(LP, 26).” You can cite, in abbreviated format, sources from course selections simply by identifying the last name of the author, followed by the page number.
- Notwithstanding the citations to the textbook and readings, you should literally assume the identity of the individual described in the assignment as you write. Our class focuses on putting you in real-world circumstances and political decision-making.

Political Science Department Writing Policy

Students of political science should develop the ability to write in clear, grammatical English. Spelling and grammar matter in this course, because they matter in the real world. Your capacity to deliver a message with credibility and your ability to persuade will depend on your reader’s views about the quality of your written work.

For 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 all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. **It is your responsibility to arrange a time to meet with the instructors, but all students should take it upon themselves to seek the assistance of the Writing Center where necessary.** Consult with your professor in advance to determine whether you need assistance with your writing.

One way to improve your own writing is to read quality material on a regular basis. To that end, students are encouraged to read articles from scholarly sources but also newspapers such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Financial Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Economist*. These publications also contain articles of direct relevance to political science classes.

Warnings

- Late papers will be penalized with lower grades.
- **No** late papers will be accepted after December 8.
- **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.