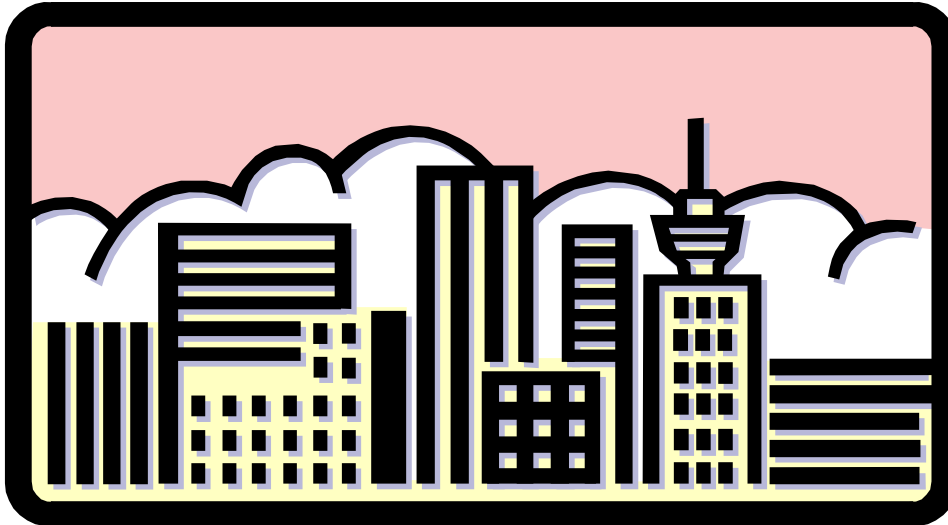


Urban & Regional Planning 103

Local Politics
Fall 2010
Section 01
TTh 1200 HGH 116

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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. URBP 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). To the maximum extent possible, this will be done using San José and the surrounding area as a case study or learning laboratory. We’ll also learn about local politics through a simulation, with students playing the roles of various actors in local politics. The 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 journalist, involved citizen, or public or private sector professional.
- how to get 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.
- *Political Science 103 Course Reader* (from the AS Print Shop in the old red brick dorms).
- *The San José Mercury News* or designate “San José” for local news on your Google News or similar website.

Evaluation

The standard format for grading will be 20% for the final exam, 30% for quizzes and short assignments, 20% for a paper on city council meetings, and 10% each for a role model paper, participation in the city politics simulation, and a civic engagement paper.

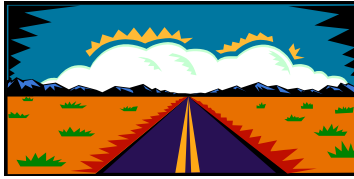
- The **final exam** (20% of the course grade) will be comprehensive essay questions covering lecture and readings. Review questions will be distributed at the last class meeting.
- The **city council paper** (20% of the course grade) will require attendance of at least two meetings of the San José city council 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 October 28.**
- **Quizzes and Short Assignments** (30% 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. We'll also have three short (one page) assignments—see the course outline for topics and due dates (September 7 and 21 and October 21).
- **Extra Credit.** You can earn extra credit points for the quiz/short assignment portion of the course grade by attending local meetings and political events that will be announced in class and writing short reflection papers on your observations. Such reflection papers *must* relate your observations to concepts from the text. Limit: two papers and up to 40 quiz points.
- The **role model paper** (10% 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 November 4.**
- The **civic engagement paper** (10% of the course grade) will be based on service to the community through participation in a project with CommUniverCity San José (<http://www.communivercitysanjose.org/newsite/index.php>). We'll help with outreach for two projects related to San José's new general plan (a BART station at 28th and Santa Clara and a "rails-to-trails" project just south of that site). Each student will be expected to devote 4-6 hours to this assignment. Various service options will be available, including attending and providing logistical support for community meetings. A short (2-3 page) paper describing your service and including your observations and references to the text will be required. Due dates will vary depending on when you do your service, but in general the paper will be due one week after your service.
- 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

Date

Topic and Reading Assignment

- 08/26 & 08/31 The Environment of Local Politics: Characteristics of Urban Places
Read *Local Politics* (LP), Ch. 1-2 and accompanying readings in Course Reader
- Consider: What do the terms 'city' or 'urban' bring to mind? How is local politics different from state, national or international politics?
 - Consider: What's the difference between a crowd and a community?

- 09/2 & 09/07 The Evolution of Urban Places: Where People Live & Why
Read LP, Ch. 3 and accompanying readings in Course Reader
- Consider: What is the impact of suburbanization on local politics in metropolitan areas?

September 7. Short assignment on census data on a city of your choice due

- 09/09 The Intergovernmental Environment of Local Politics
Read LP, Ch. 4 and accompanying readings in Course Reader
- Consider: Should the state and federal governments give local governments more power or are controls by higher levels of government good?

- 09/14 Forms of Government: Weak Mayors, Machines and Reform
Read LP, Ch. 5, accompanying readings in Course Reader and "San José Political History to 1970," ("Flashback") http://www.sjsu.edu/polisci/docs/San_Jose_Political_History_to_1970.pdf
- Consider: Which is worse (or better), traditional political machines or contemporary growth machines?

- 09/16 & 21 Forms of Government: Reform and Counterreform
Read LP, Ch. 6 and "San José Political History Since 1970," ("San José Becomes the Capital of Silicon Valley") http://www.sjsu.edu/polisci/docs/San_Jose_Political_History_since_1970.pdf
- Consider: What outcomes of reform produced the counterreform movement?

September 21 Short Assignment on San José History Readings Due

- 09/23 & 28 Legislators and Executives: The Balance of Power
Read LP, Ch. 7 and accompanying readings in Course Reader
- Consider: Who should have the most power, the council, the mayor or the manager?

- 9/30 Bureaucracies in Local Politics
Read LP, Ch. 8
- Consider: Are bureaucracies objective? Should bureaucracies be representative?

- 10/5 & 7 Elections, Campaigns and the Media
Read LP, Ch. 9 and accompanying readings in Course Reader
- Consider: How do electoral structures affect who gets elected?

October 7. Don Edwards Lecture with NPR's Michele Norris 7 p.m. Student Union Ballroom (extra credit opportunity)

- 10/12 & 14 Interest Groups and Community Power Structures
Read LP, Ch. 10 and 11 and accompanying readings in Course Reader
- 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?

- 10/19 & 21 Community Power Structures
Read LP, Ch. 11 and accompanying readings in Course Reader
- 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?

October 21. Short assignment on power structure articles in reader due

- 10/26 & 28 Budget Politics: Getting and Spending Money
Read LP, Ch. 12 and accompanying readings in Course Reader
- 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?

October 28. CITY COUNCIL PAPER DUE

- 11/2 & 4 Public Policy: Local Issues and Battles. The Politics of Growth
Read LP, Ch. 13 and accompanying readings in Course Reader
- Consider: Should public funds subsidize private development?
 - Consider: What creates the imperative for "fiscal zoning" by local government?

November 4. Role Model Paper Due

- 11/9 Metropolitan Regional Politics: The Future of Local Government
Read LP, Ch. 14 and accompanying readings in Course Reader
- Consider: Is metropolitan regional fragmentation good or bad? How should it be resolved?

November 16, 18, 22, 30 and December 2, 7 & 9: Circleville Simulation.

December 14 Final Exam 0945-1200

Warnings

- Late papers will be penalized with lower grades.
- **No** late papers will be accepted after December 9.
- **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.



City Council Paper

Due October 28

Your essay should be 6-8 double-spaced, typewritten pages. Prepare by reading **everything** assigned up to October 21 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 at 1:30 (except September 7 and October 12) and at 7 p.m. on the third Tuesdays of each month. Evening sessions during this semester are September 21 and October 19 only. When possible, a council member will talk with us after the meetings.

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. You can watch council meetings on television on San José cable channel 26. Meetings are cablecast live on Tuesdays and rebroadcast at 7 p.m. Thursdays and 10 a.m. Saturdays. You can also view live meetings or archived video of past council meetings at http://sanjose.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=2. **DO NOT** substitute televised meetings for in-person observation. You will not learn as much. You may, however, use the televised meetings to supplement your in-person observations. And you'll better understand what's going on in the televised meetings 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—they're on a table as you enter (next to the machine for validating parking, which is available under city hall through an entrance on 6th Street). 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 file on the table that has the agendas. Council members get this information in advance so they can study these memos. See the class handout for who's who on the dais.

For general information about the council and access to agendas and video of past council meetings, go to <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/clerk/agenda.asp>. Click on dated agendas to review in advance or on dated synopses to see brief summaries 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 **city 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 from the meetings you've observed to support your generalizations. 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 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.

Political Science Department Writing Policy

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 so indicated with quotation marks and a specific reference to the page in the source from which it was taken. Failure to cite your 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.

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. 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 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 Financial Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Economist*. These publications also contain articles of direct relevance to political science classes.