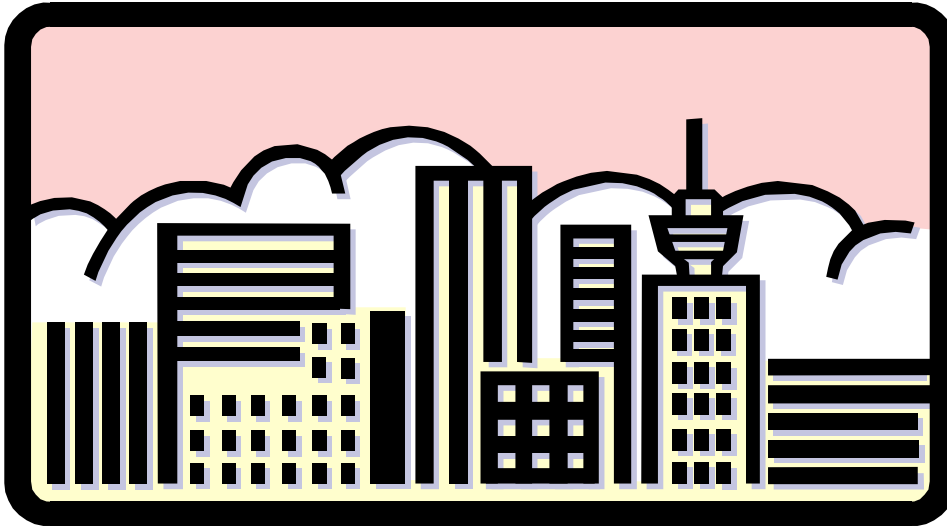


## Urban Planning 103

Local Politics  
Spring 2008  
Section 02  
TTh 1030

## Terry Christensen

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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. 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). To the maximum extent possible, this will be done using San Jose and the surrounding area as a 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 by the Student Union).
- *THE SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS* ([www.sjmercury.com](http://www.sjmercury.com)) or other local newspaper.

## Evaluation

The standard format for grading will be 20% for the final exam, 25% for quizzes, 25% 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.

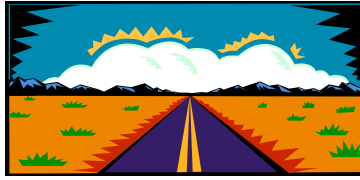
- The **final exam** (20% of the course grade) will be comprehensive essay questions covering lecture and readings. Review questions will be distributed at the last class meeting.
- The **city council paper** (25% of the course grade) will require attendance of at least two meetings of the San Jose city 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 20.**
- **Quizzes** (25% of the course grade) 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. You can earn extra credit points for this portion of the course grade by attending candidate forums or local 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.
- 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 April 10.**
- The **civic engagement paper** (10% of the course grade) requires that you participate in a voter registration project or in organizing a candidate forum or attend a neighborhood association meeting or volunteer for a city council campaign and write about your experience being sure to apply the text. If you choose the voter registration or candidate forum options, you'll work in a team on these projects and you'll apply Chapter 9 of the text when you write your paper. If you choose the campaign option, you'll volunteer for a couple of evenings or a Saturday for one of the candidates in local races in the June primary election, also applying Chapter 9 of the text in your paper. If you choose the neighborhood association option, you may choose to attend any neighborhood association meeting. Note how many, what sorts of people attend, what issues they discuss and how they make decisions. Apply Chapter 10 of the text. Is this a NIMBY group? What interest group tactics do they use or discuss? Why are people there? Your paper should be 3 pages. **Due May 8 (or March 13 if you choose the neighborhood association option).**
- 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](mailto:Terry.Christensen@sjsu.edu) (optional).



## Course Outline

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic and Reading Assignment</u>
01/24	<p>Introduction and Organization.</p> <p>Consider: What do the terms 'city' or 'urban' bring to mind? How is local politics different from state, national or international politics?</p>
01/29 & 31	<p>The Environment of Local Politics: Characteristics of Urban Places. Read <i>Local Politics</i> (LP), Ch. 1-2 and accompanying readings in Course Reader.</p> <p>Consider: What's the difference between a crowd and a community?</p>
02/5 & 7	<p>The Evolution of Urban Places: Where People Live &amp; Why. Read LP, Ch. 3 and accompanying readings in Course Reader.</p> <p>Consider: What is the impact of suburbanization local politics in metropolitan areas?</p>
02/12 & 14	<p>The Intergovernmental Environment of Local Politics Read LP, Ch. 4 and accompanying readings in Course Reader.</p> <p>Consider: Should the state and federal governments give local governments more power are controls by higher levels of government good?</p>
02/19 & 21	<p>Forms of Government: Machines and Reform Read LP, Ch. 5 and accompanying readings in Course Reader.</p> <p>Consider: Which is worse (or better), traditional political machines or contemporary growth machines?</p>
02/26 & 28	<p>Forms of Government Continued: Reform and Counterreform Read LP, Ch. 6-7 and accompanying readings in Course Reader.</p> <p>Who are the winners and losers with reform and counter reform politics?</p>
03/4	<p>Bureaucracies in Local Politics Read LP, Ch. 8 and accompanying readings in Course Reader.</p> <p>Consider: Who should have the most power, the council, the mayor or the manager? Are bureaucracies objective? Should bureaucracies be representative?</p>
03/6	<p>Interest Groups and Local Politics. Read LP, Ch. 10 and accompanying readings in Course Reader.</p> <p>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?</p>
03/11 & 13	<p>Inputs in Local Politics: Elections, Campaigns and the Media. Read LP, Ch. 9 and accompanying readings in Course Reader.</p> <p>Consider: How do electoral structures affect who gets elected?</p>

- 03/18 & 20 Community Power Structures: Official and Unofficial Decision Makers.  
Read LP, Ch. 11 and accompanying readings in Course Reader (San Jose power studies).  
Consider: Based on *Movers and Shakers* and its up-dates, would you describe San Jose's  
an Jose's power structure as pluralist or elitist or something in between?

**March 20. CITY COUNCIL PAPER DUE**

**Spring Break**

- 04/1 & 3 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?

- 04/8 & 10 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?

**April 10: ROLE MODEL PAPER DUE**

- 04/15 & 17 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?

**April 16 Poli Sci Field Trip to Sacramento 0630-1800 (extra credit option)**

**April 25 SJSU Day of Service 0800-1400 (extra credit option)**

**April 22, 24, 29; May 1, 6, 8 & 13: CIRCLEVILLE SIMULATION.**

**May 8: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PAPER DUE**

**May 21 0945-1200 FINAL EXAM**

**Warnings**

- Late papers will be penalized with lower grades.
- **No late papers will be accepted after May 13.**
- **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 March 20**

Your essay should be 6-8 double-spaced, typewritten pages. Prepare by reading **everything** assigned up to April 4 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 Jose 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 Jose City Council meets in the Council Chambers at City Hall (200 E. Santa Clara Street) every Tuesday at 1:30 and the first and third Tuesdays of the month at 7 p.m. You can attend any Tuesday afternoon meeting. Evening sessions during this semester are February 5 and March 4 & 18 only. When possible, a council member will talk with us after the meetings.

Meetings may be very 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 Jose 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 archived video of council meetings at: [http://sanjose.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view\\_id=2](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 at the table on the right of the council (if you're facing the council) or to your right if you enter the Chambers at street level. Study it 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.

You can see an agenda in advance on San Jose's Web Site, where you can also communicate with council members and the mayor: [www.sanjoseca.gov](http://www.sanjoseca.gov). Click on Council and Committee Agenda (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 *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 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 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.