

**San José State University**  
**Department of Political Science**  
**Political Science 103: Local Government and Politics**  
**Spring 2017**

**Lecturer:** Rod Diridon, Jr.

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**Office Hours:** 4:00 – 6:00 by appointment on Wednesdays, others by appointment.

**Class Days/Time:** Wednesdays, 6:00 PM to 8:45 PM

**Classroom:** Dudley Moorhead Hall (DMH), room 164

**CANVAS Website:** <http://sjsu.instructure.com>

**• Course Description**

For the bulk of Americans, local government has the most direct effect on their quality of life. Police and fire public safety, local streets, sidewalks, water, sewers, utilities, libraries, parks, cemeteries, land use, development and the costs thereof are just a few of the policy areas regularly administered by a municipality. It is also the most accountable level of government: you can easily drive to City Hall for a Council meeting, but probably not to the State Capital or Washington D.C. The confluence of these broad responsibilities, highly motivated stakeholders and sometimes challenging policy hurdles makes local politics a worthy field of study.

This class will focus on, 1) the basic history and structures of local government, 2) how public policy is made, shaped and implemented, and 3) the players and sometimes complex relationships between stakeholders in the public process. Significant attention will be directed to the practical elements of the process of governance rather than esoteric or theoretical models. An effort will also be made to provide a context for how one would pursue employment in local government and the various associated organizations and institutions.

Instructor's Biography: Rod Diridon, Jr. was elected City Clerk for the City of Santa Clara in 2004 and appointed to the additional role of City Auditor in 2007. As the City Clerk and Auditor, Diridon works with City and community partners to implement the City's state, national and international award-winning community engagement programs. He also serves on the board of California Common Cause and as the Chair of the California Ethics and Democracy Project, a non-profit effort to engage the City Clerk profession in the process of creating good government programs. Prior to his tenure as City Clerk, Diridon had various careers as a political campaign consultant, high-tech global program manager and general manager of a regional start-up. He also served two terms as a City Councilmember, focusing on campaign finance and government reform policies. Diridon received a BA in Political Science from San Jose State University in 1993 and became a Master Municipal Clerk in 2009. He returned to SJSU to earn a Master's Degree in Public Administration in 2013, graduating Summa cum Laude with a perfect 4.0 GPA and receiving the Smith Award for the outstanding thesis-level project.

### • Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

In this course students will learn:

- A practical and historical context for the structure and function of local governance.
- The roles, powers and limitation of residents, public officials, private sector professionals, members of the media and others in the context of local government.
- How to empower yourself to be an effective and savvy participant in the local governance of your community.
- How to use critical thinking and analytical skills to assess local policies and politics from your own, personal set of morals and ideologies.
- How to pursue employment or a career in local government or the associated industries.

In addition, this course will contribute to the Political Science Program Learning Outcomes, which political science students are expected reach by upon graduation.

- **Breadth:** Students should possess a broad knowledge of the theory and methods of the various branches of the discipline.
- **Application:** Students should be able to apply a variety of techniques to identify, understand, and analyze domestic and international political issues and organizations.
- **Disciplinary Methods:** Student should be able to formulate research questions, engage in systematic literature searches using primary and secondary sources, have competence in systematic data gathering using library sources, government documents, and data available through electronic sources, should be able to evaluate research studies, and should be able to critically analyze and interpret influential political texts.

- **Communication Skills:** Students should master basic competencies in oral and written communication skills and be able to apply these skills in the context of political science. This means communicating effectively about politics and/or public administration, public policy, and law.
- **Citizenship:** Students should acquire an understanding of the role of the citizen in local, state, national, and global contexts and appreciate the importance of lifelong participation in political processes.

• **Required Texts/Readings**

- Christensen, Terry, and Tom Hogen - Esch. 2006. *Local Politics: Governing at the Grassroots*. 2nd Ed. ME Sharpe.
- Local daily and weekly newspapers and various sites on the Internet.
- Handouts as provided or sent by the instructor or guest speaker.

• **Course Requirements and Assignments**

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in University Policy S12-3 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

A basic outline and weighting of the assignments is below. Additional information will be provided by the instructor regarding the content of each assignment:

Overall Class Participation	10%
Primary Examination	20%
Role Model Paper	20%
Local Governance Simulation	20%
Final Paper	15%
Final Examination	15%
Total = 100%	

\*Additional extra credit of up to 5% may be offered as outlined below.

- **Overall Class Participation (10%):** This will be a highly interactive course. It is expected that you will participate both during and outside of class as necessary to complete assignments and build a robust body of knowledge regarding local politics. At the instructors' discretion, a portion or all of this 10% may be in the form of quizzes or other tests.
- **Primary Examination (20%):** This essay exam will be given at the end of Section 1 of the class. It will test your knowledge of the history, structures and concepts related to local governance.

- **Role Model Paper (20%):** Midway through the semester you will choose your role for the City Council simulation. You are expected to research the role, interview someone who is an active practitioner and complete a paper of not more than 2000 words, as well as an outline of the role. This paper should demonstrate a thorough understanding of the function of the role as well as the tactics, processes and strategies related to the implementation of its' work product.
- **Local Governance Simulation (20%):** Starting approximately 2/3 through the semester, the class will begin a multi-week simulation of a city council meeting, with students assuming various roles in local governance. Students will be graded on both their participation as well as their ability to achieve policy success and effectively playing the role they have chosen.
- **Final Paper (15%):** A “capstone” paper of no more than 3000 words will be due the day of the final exam, outlining what the student learned through the simulation and academic portions of the class. This will outline their performance during the simulation, a self-analysis of their success or lack thereof, and offer insights into the role and function of local governance.
- **Final Examination (15%):** During finals week, an essay exam will be administered outlining elements of all three segments of the class.
- **Extra Credit (+5%):** One extra credit paper of no more than 900 words may be submitted at any time before the final examination. This paper may be a summary and reflection on a speaker at the Don Edwards Lecture series. It may also be on a topic germane to local governance, to be approved by the instructor prior to commencement.

**\* Please note, the instructor retains the right to change the weighting, content and outline of class assignments at any time.**

Course Letter Grades will be assigned using the following scale:

A+ = 99 - 100%	A = 93 - 98%	A- = 90 - 92%	B+ = 87 - 89%
B = 83 - 86%	B- = 80 - 82%	C+ = 77 - 79%	C = 73 - 76%
C- = 70 - 72%	D+ = 67 - 69%	D = 63 - 66%	D- = 60 - 62%
F = 59% or below			

## • Classroom Protocol and Policies

### **Mobile Phone and Computer Use in Class**

In the classroom environment, texting, social networking, web searching, or any of the myriad things people can do with their phones is distracting to the instructor, students and you. Use of mobile phones during class time is not allowed. If phone use is absolutely necessary, please leave the classroom. If the instructor notices smartphone use, the student will be asked to leave. Additionally, computer use in the class should be limited to note-taking or research

related specifically to the syllabus and instruction.

### **Late Policy**

Make-up exams are only given in cases of excused absences in accordance with the university's policy on excused absences. Circumstances that may lead to an excused student absence are subpoenas, jury duty, military duty, religious observances, illness, illness of a dependent, and bereavement for immediate family. If you are a member of a SJSU varsity intercollegiate athletic team, please provide the instructor with your team schedule during the first week of the class. **Papers that are turned in late will be penalized a full letter grade for every 24 hours past the original due date.** For example, a paper turned in 10 minutes past the scheduled time it was due will be marked down 1 full letter grade. This same penalty will apply to a paper turned in up to 24 hours past the original due date. For every 24 hours after that, a paper will be penalized an additional letter grade and so on until the start value is an F. Please be aware of this policy and submit your writing assignments on time.

### **• University Policies**

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo>

### **Additional Class Notes**

This is a course that covers a significant body of material in a short period of time. Every student is encouraged to participate by asking questions and actively participating in group and class discussions. Although attendance in the class is not mandatory, participation is a portion of the grading scale and it is obviously difficult to contribute if you do not attend class. Each student has intellect, experience and a personal point of view to bring into the class and the course becomes much more rewarding if you frequently participate.

Handouts, PowerPoint slides and other support documents may be posted on the course Canvas site which you can link to here: <http://sjsu.instructure.com>. Either Canvas or group email distributions will be used throughout the semester for supplemental items such as newspaper articles and outlines of academic papers, and when the time comes, to communicate your performance on the graded assignments.

Please avail yourself of the instructor to answer any questions you may have regarding the course and the context in which the subject matter is considered. If your work or academic schedule are in conflict with the instructor's office hours, please contact him to make an appointment outside of office hours. While it is not guaranteed that this will be possible, efforts will be made to do so.

**• POLS 103: Local Government and Politics (Spring 2017) Schedule**

Please note, this schedule is subject to change with fair notice and will be announced via email and/or in-class announcement. This schedule is also subject to any strike sanctions, which may modify the ability to hold class.

The PS 103 term will be broken into three main sections:

- 1) **Background Section (Weeks 1 – 5):** The history, structures and concepts behind local governance.
- 2) **Implementation Section (Weeks 6 – 11):** The participants and processes through which local governance occurs.
- 3) **Simulation Section (Weeks 12-16):** An in-depth simulation of a City and local community considering difficult policy decisions.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines</b>
<b>1</b>	Wednesday 2/1	Getting Started: Context and Introductions  Reading, <i>Local Politics</i> : Chapter 1: <i>Introduction to the Study of Local Politics: Why We Bother and How We Go About It</i>
<b>2</b>	Wednesday 2/8	Geographic and Social Settings  Reading, <i>Local Politics</i> : Chapter 2: <i>The Environment of Local Politics: The Geographic, Demographic and Economic Contexts</i> Chapter 3: <i>The Evolution of Urban Places: Where People Live and Why</i>
<b>3</b>	Wednesday 2/15	Structures and Forms of Governance  Reading, <i>Local Politics</i> : Chapter 4: <i>The Intergovernmental Environment of Local Politics: Creatures of the States and Supplicants of the Federal Government</i> Chapter 14: <i>Metropolitan Politics: The Future of Local Government</i>

4	Wednesday 2/22	<p>City Manager Form of Government</p> <p>Reading, <i>Local Politics</i>:  Chapter 5: <i>Forms of Government: From Weak Mayors and Machines to the Beginnings of Reform</i>  Chapter 6: <i>Reform Politics: The City-Manager form of Government and Beyond</i></p>
5	Wednesday 3/1	<p>Leadership Structures</p> <p><b>* Primary Examination Due</b></p> <p>Reading, <i>Local Politics</i>:  Chapter 7: <i>Legislators and Executives: The Balance of Power</i></p>
6	Wednesday 3/8	<p>Policy Implementation</p> <p><b>* Role Model Assignments Made in Class</b></p> <p>Reading, <i>Local Politics</i>:  Chapter 8: <i>Bureaucracy: The Rest of the Iceberg</i></p>
7	Wednesday 3/15	<p>Elections</p> <p>Reading, <i>Local Politics</i>:  Chapter 9: <i>Elections and Campaigns: The Voters (and the Media) Have Their Say</i></p>
8	Wednesday 3/22	<p>Who, How and Why  The Brown Act and Sunshine Laws</p> <p>Reading, <i>Local Politics</i>:  Chapter 10: <i>Interest Groups in Local Politics: Types, Tactics and Targets</i></p>
9	Wednesday 3/29	<p><b>No Class: Spring Break.</b></p>

10	Wednesday 4/5	<p>Power and the Community</p> <p>Reading, <i>Local Politics</i>: Chapter 11: <i>Community Power Structures: Official and Unofficial Decision Makers</i></p>
11	Wednesday 4/12	<p>Review of Course and Outline of Simulation Robert's Rules of Order and How Meetings Work</p> <p><b>* Role Model Papers Due</b></p> <p>Reading, <i>Local Politics</i>: Chapter 12: <i>Budget Politics: The Getting and Spending of Money</i></p>
12	Wednesday 4/19	<p>City Simulation</p> <p><b>* Pre-Council Process: Proposing policy and debating policy</b></p> <p>Reading, <i>Local Politics</i>: Chapter 13: <i>Politics and Public Policy: Some Local Issues and Battles</i></p>
13	Wednesday 4/26	<p>City Simulation</p> <p><b>* Council Meeting 1: Considering and making policy</b></p> <p>Review of First Council Meeting</p>
14	Wednesday 5/3	<p>City Simulation</p> <p><b>* Pre-Council Process: Proposing and debating policy</b></p>
15	Wednesday 5/10	<p>City Simulation</p> <p><b>* Council Meeting 2: Considering and making policy</b></p> <p>Review of Second Council Meeting</p>

<b>16</b>	Wednesday 5/24	* <b>Final Paper Due Wednesday, May 24 at 6:00PM</b> * <b>Final Exam Wednesday, May 24, 7:45 – 10:00 PM</b>
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