**GVPT 479L**

**Seminar in American Politics: Local Politics and Government**

**Spring, 2018**

M, W: 2:00-3:15, Taliaferro Hall, Room 1101

**Instructor**

Dr. Richard N. Engstrom

Email: [rengstro@umd.edu](mailto:rengstro@umd.edu)

Office: Institute for Governmental Service and Research, 4321 Hartwick Road, Suite 208

Phone: 301-405-3997

Office Hours: Mondays, 12 – 1:30 (and by appointment)

**Course Description**

This course is an introduction to local government and politics in the U.S. context. We will explore the evolution of local jurisdictions, particularly cities, and the politics that goes into local level decision making. At the end of the course you will have a better idea of the challenges faced by localities, as well as the different outcomes associated with different choices about local governance. You will also be able to develop informed opinions about how local governments can and do adapt to political and policy challenges, and conduct a short research project on the topic.

Classes will take place on Mondays and Wednesdays, and will involve both discussions led by the instructor and presentations by students. The subject of the discussions will be the readings for the week, the media supplements assigned most weeks, and relevant additional topics as they come up. Your active participation in this seminar is important both for both the quality of the discussions and for your grade in this class.

**Grades**

This class will assess you based on the following:

1. Performance on two **tests** (25% each, for a total of 50%)
2. Performance on a **seminar presentation** (10%)
3. Performance on **final paper** (30%)
4. Quality of **participation** in seminar discussions (10%)

**Tests** will be short-essay tests, requiring 2-3 paragraphs per answer. Questions will be drawn from readings and seminar discussions. Each student will be paired with another student and assigned to lead part of a class discussion based on the week’s reading and/or the media supplements, and the instructor will assess the students’ preparation, presentation, and the extent to which the students generate and sustain a useful discussion. The **final paper** is an 8 to 10-page paper examining an aspect of local government covered in the course, the topic of which must be approved by the instructor. **Participation** in seminars will involve an evaluation of the frequency and quality of student participation in discussions.

Final grades will be assigned on the following scale:

A+ 98-100%

A 92-97%

A- 90-91%

B+ 88-89%

B 82-87%

B- 80-81%

C+ 78-79%

C 72-77%

C- 70-71%

D+ 68-69%

D 62-67%

D- 60-61%

F 59% or lower

**Textbooks**

There are five required textbooks in this course:

* Glaeser, Edward. 2012. *Triumph of the City*. Penguin Books.
* Oliver, J. Eric. 2012. *Local Elections and the Politics of Small Scale Democracy*. Princeton University Press.
* Florida, Richard. 2017. *The New Urban Crisis*. Basic Books.
* Safford, Sean. 2009. *Why the Garden Club Couldn’t Save Youngstown*. Harvard University Press.
* Katz, Bruce and Jeremy Novak. 2018. *The New Localism*. Brookings Institution Press.

**Course Schedule**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Week | Dates | Readings |
| Week 1 | 1/24 |  |
| Week 2 | 1/29-31 | Glaeser, Intro-Ch 3: Challenges for Cities  Media: TED Talk, “*The Biggest Risks Facing Cities –And Some Solutions*” |
| Week 3 | 2/5-7 | Glaeser, Ch 4-6: Development of Cities  Media: TED Talk: *Why Glass Towers Are Bad for City Life –And What We Need Instead*” |
| Week 4 | 2/12-14 | Glaeser Ch 7-Conclusion: Success and the Modern City  Media: TED Talk, “*How to Protect Fast Growing Cities from Failing*” |
| Week 5 | 2/19-21 | Oliver, Intro-Ch 3: Local Elections and Participation  Media: documentary “*Daley: The Last Boss*” part 1 (in class) |
| Week 6 | 2/26-28 | Oliver, Ch 4-6: Systemic Factors in Local Elections  Media: documentary “*Daley: The Last Boss*” part 2 (in class) |
| Week 7 | 3/5-7 | Florida, Ch 1-3: The Creative Class and Urban Change  Media: Radiolab podcast, “*Cities*” |
| Week 8 | 3/12-14 | Florida, Ch 4-6: Inequality in Cities  Media: WNYC Radio Podcast: “*Forget ‘The Bronx is Burning.’ These Days, The Bronx is Gentrifying*” |
| Week 9 | 3/19-21 | **SPRING BREAK** |
| Week 10 | 3/26-28 | Florida, Ch 7-10: Toward a More Inclusive City  Media: TED Talk, “*Who Belongs in a City*?” |
| Week 11 | 4/2-4 | Catch-Up Session, 4/2  ***TEST 1, 4/4*** |
| Week 12 | 4/9-11 | Safford, Ch 1-3: Case Study of Allentown and Youngstown I  Media: TED Talk, “*Future Tech Will Give You the Benefits of City Life Anywhere*” |
| Week 13 | 4/16-18 | Safford, Ch 4-6: Case Study of Allentown and Youngstown II  Media: Planet Money Podcast, “*Unbuilding A City*” |
| Week 14 | 4/23-25 | K & N, Ch 1-4: New Localism, Growth, and Power  Media: This American Life Podcast, “*What Kind of Country*” (Act Three, “*Do You Want a Wake Up Call?*”) |
| Week 15 | 4/30-5/2 | K & N, Ch 5-7: Governance and Economics  Media: Freakonomics Podcast, “*Why Cities Rock*” |
| Week 16 | 5/7-9 | K & N, Ch 8-10: Solving Modern Problems with Modern Resources  Media: TED Talk, “*Why Mayors Should Rule the World*”  ***FINAL PAPER DUE, 5/9, AT THE END OF CLASS*** |
| Final Exam | 5/16  1:30pm | ***TEST 2*** |

**Make-up Assignments**

Make-up Exams and Assignments will be given as a result of a documented, unexpected emergency or as the result of a university-authorized commitment.

**Contacting the Instructor**

Students with requests or questions about the class should feel free to contact the instructor. I am happy to meet with students to discuss issues related to DSS accommodations, class content, or other issues related to the class.

**Additional Course Information**

The syllabus is tentative, and mid-semester changes to the class may be necessary. Changes are at the discretion of the instructor, and will be announced in class. Students are required to ensure that their emails are registered with ELMS.

Additional information about course-related policies at the University of Maryland, including academic integrity, sexual misconduct, and discrimination, can be found on the Course Related Policies page, hosted by the Office of Undergraduate Studies:

http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html