

URBAN POLITICS (POSC 315)

Professor Kim Geron

5:00 – 6:15 synchronous zoom Zoom meeting and online assignments



Classroom: Zoom class format-due to Covid restrictions

Office: SF Bldg. Room 424

Phone: 510-885-3222 (I am not able to check my phone messages currently, please email me and if I don't respond, send me another email)

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Office Hours: 4:00-4:50 PM, and by appointment

Course Description

This course introduces students to the theory and practice of urban politics in the United States. Throughout the course, we will discuss difficult topics, at times we will be uncomfortable by what we see, read and discuss. The Covid-19 pandemic, the incarceration of immigrant children, the murder of George Floyd, Breanna Taylor and many other Black people have exacerbated existing and underlying structural inequities. The present movement calls for a rethinking and reordering of priorities in our urban communities.

This course will build the foundation blocks to determine what priorities should be created for urban communities to build equitable and sustainable places to live, work and exist in peace and make recommendations for what these can be. We will not all agree, that is not the goal of a political science class, rather, we will discuss and dialog about critical issues confronting U.S. cities and regions and how we can direct limited resources to address these problems of healthcare, poverty, crime and policing, housing, education, environmental sustainability and other topics.

The first third of the semester will be devoted to a brief overview of how to frame our discussions, I will be trying a different approach that includes interrogating what is White Supremacy and what role has it played in the construction of inequalities in U.S. cities between races, classes, and genders. We will explore briefly the 3 pillars of White Supremacy and a revised 4th pillar perspective to establish a structural framework for viewing urban politics.

Then, we will explore how urban power and politics changed as cities evolved from small mercantile entities into industrial juggernauts before transforming once again into post-industrial centers of an ever-expanding metro region with extended suburbs and ultra-wealthy enclaves while simultaneously reproducing small and large areas of diminished opportunity and deepening economic and social conflict in urban communities. As we explore the development of urban cities and regions, we will explore how the political processes and institutions of the earlier eras continue to influence those of the present period.

During the second section of the semester, we will focus on the history of segregated housing in communities. We will use the text by J. Trounstein to study and analyze the history of housing segregation in the U.S. Students will work in small groups to discuss one chapter each of the *Segregation by Design* ebook available via the Library.

During the last third section of the semester, we will focus on a few issues in the contemporary period by analyzing how cities have addressed or failed to address the structural budgetary and political constraints that limit their capacity to address chronic problems such as inequality and racism, poverty, crime, policing policies, education, informal economy, affordable housing and homelessness. We will conclude the semester with in-class zoom presentations of your research papers.

Some of the questions we will examine include:

- a. How do various theoretical approaches to the challenges faced by cities differ from one another? Why have some been more effective, and under what circumstances? Using a racial lens, which theories take into account race as a significant factor in their theoretical approach, and which do not, why do you think this happens?
- b. Recent scholars of city politics have emphasized the importance of stable governing coalitions composed of groups from the public and private sectors with the resources and organizational capacity to get things done in an otherwise fragmented political environment that includes not only city/county challenges, but regional challenges and state and federal level issues framed by the legacies of white supremacy and structural racism. Questions to consider include: how are such coalitions constructed? How does the composition of governing coalitions shape policy making? Who's policy agendas are advanced and why? How is political power gained, held, and (re)distributed to others, particularly, Black, Indigenous and other marginalized groups?
- c. How do social divisions based upon race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender and class reinforce or undermine collective efforts to promote political change?

Course Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to articulate an understanding of the major urban politics theories, the pillars of White Supremacy and their application in urban politics.
2. Students will discuss, write about, display written competency and oral communication related to urban politics and its concepts using empirical

research in an informed and multi-dimensional manner.

3. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the power of political institutions, structures of racism and inequality, and political processes in the U.S. urban arena including the roles of the executive, legislative, and courts at the federal, state, and local level and their impact on communities in cities and counties. Also, the power of taxation on local budgets, and the corresponding urban priorities such as police funding, education, healthcare and housing.
4. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the history of urban political development including: the political machines of the mid-19th century-1960s; also the role of economic development; suburbanization; rise of ethnic/racial, gender, and identity movements, that engage in the urban political process.
5. Students will demonstrate the ability to apply the knowledge they have learned through course readings and materials and through collaborative team projects to discuss and analyze real-world urban politics.

Course Policies

As this is now an online course, we will have weekly or bi-weekly zoom meetings at our regular class time. In addition to attending the Wednesday class you will have additional reading and assignments throughout the term. Deadlines and assignments will be posted.

1. This course requires a serious amount of reading. To help understand the reading materials that are assigned, please allocate adequate time to read and reflect on them. Set aside time each week to read the assignment materials. The readings will provide you with an in-depth understanding of the complexity of urban politics and help prepare you for the online reflections, group project, and the research paper. Please focus on the key ideas and themes in the readings, and use them to help you contribute to our classroom and online discussions.

2. I will strive to provide everyone with a positive atmosphere to grow intellectually, to stimulate constructive conversation and debate, and to treat everyone with respect. This course is designed to be an anti-racist class. What does this mean? One definition of anti-racism is “the practice of dismantling a system marked by white supremacy and anti-Black racism through deliberate action.” This definition can be applied to our class, we will work on exploring the roots and branches of the system of racism in the urban environment and it’s manifestations today in cities so we can develop ideas for actions to address it’s structural and institutional elements.

We will work on this learning project together. In the meantime, here are a few of my thoughts:

- a. an anti-racist designed class begins with recognition of the land our university sits on and was stolen by European settlers.

b. this course acknowledges the field of political science was founded by Woodrow Wilson and other White males in the field who held elitist and racist views of Black people and other folks of color in society and this foundational outlook is the dominant narrative in the field. This means for today's political science courses, I have to actively examine the readings and documents assigned in the course with a "racial lens" that considers how they discuss Black Indigenous and other marginalized people in our society, and the policy implications of the readings and views of the authors. This course also contains several readings by Black and Indigenous authors that address racism and its impact on urban politics and coalition building.

In this class, I plan to create an antiracist and intersectional learning space and will develop self-reflective assignments that enable the class's participants to be accountable to each other toward a shared goal of building an antiracist learning space. Antiracist teaching is an ongoing process and involves challenging racist ideology and practices. I also want to make sure that students lived experiences are acknowledged and we all take ownership of our own views and exercise agency. Please use "I" instead of referring to other people's views.

3. Inclusive Learning Community – all students are expected to demonstrate respect, compassion, and understanding while we engage in the learning process. Support and encourage of one another is important to the success of this course. Students of all backgrounds should feel comfortable in the course in order for successful learning to take place. Please speak to me if you experience any micro-aggressions, bullying, and harassment by other students.

3. Attendance - I hope you will be able to attend class regularly to obtain the maximum from the course. However, this course is designed to be flexible and adaptable to your unique situations such as irregular work schedules, family commitments, financial challenges. I am available to work with you on possible solutions as we work through this Covid crisis.

4. This course includes an 8-10 page **research paper** on a current problem in the urban politics field. You will be expected to develop a thesis statement, include a literature review that explores both sides of an issue, gather data on the subject from primary and secondary sources, and write a well-crafted conclusion with recommendations for how to address the problem you have researched. Guidelines for the paper will be distributed in the class with an outline or draft due in October 4th.

5. Accessibility Services provides academic accommodations and support services for students with temporary or permanent disabilities. Please reach out to me with any needs so we can discuss academic accommodations. Students with disabilities needing accommodations should speak with Accessibility Services (www.csueastbay.edu/accessibility/)

6. Academic Integrity – Effective learning in this course will benefit from both individual and collaborative work. You are encouraged to study and work together on your course assignments. At the same time, you should complete and submit your own written work. Plagiarism of someone's else's work is not acceptable. Students are required to uphold the standards of academic integrity described in the catalog at:

<https://www.csueastbay.edu/aps/academic-policies/academic-dishonesty.html>

6. Plan your schedule accordingly and keep up with the assignments. If you fall behind stay in contact with me so I can be of assistance. I will discuss upcoming assignments and due dates at each of our zoom meetings along with email reminders sent to your campus email.
7. Consult with me if you have any questions about course policies or on-campus policies.

Grading for course

Points are based on a total of 100 points

1. Attendance/Participation: 10 points/10% - this will include attending the weekly/bi-weekly class meetings on Wednesdays at 5-6:15pm and your engagement in other activities
2. Group Presentation on *Segregation by Design: Local Politics and Inequality* by J. Trounstine: 10 points/10%
3. **First Draft**/Outline of Research paper due on **October 4th** worth 5 points
4. Individual presentation of your research paper to the class 5 points/5%
6. Research paper due **SUNDAY NOVEMBER 29TH** worth 30 points/30% of your grade, points will be deducted if your paper is late.
7. 1st Reflection paper assignment due **September 6th** (10 points)
8. 2nd online assignment due **September 20th** (10 points)
9. 3rd online assignment due **October 18th** (10 points)
10. 4th reflection paper assignment due **November 15th** (10 points)

Note: Papers submitted after the due date will have points deducted to be fair to those who meet the deadlines. If your paper is going to be late, reach out to me to discuss how I can assist you.

Required Texts

All readings will be available on my Blackboard course page under “course materials” and/or via the library’s online sources.

For course textbooks, they are available via the Library’s online textbooks. They are NOT held in reserve for the class, rather they are available through the search function. You can download the entire book if you so choose or just download the chapter or portion of the book that you are interested in or expected to discuss/analyze.

Jessica Trounstine. 2018. *Segregation by Design: Local Politics and Inequality in American Cities*. (ebook in library)

Andrea Smith. 2012. *Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy*. In HoSang, D. M., LaBennett, O., & Pulido, L. (Eds.). (2012). *Racial formation in the twenty-first century*.

Chanequa Walker-Barnes. *I Bring the Voices of My People: A Womanist Vision for Racial Reconciliation*. Pages 50-62 required; pages 16-49 recommended (ebook in CSUEB library)

Weekly course schedule will be posted separately.