

**PO300. Cities in a Polarized Nation:
Local Politics and Policy Change in America**
Summer I, 2021
Boston University

Instructor: Luisa Godínez-Puig
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Class Time: Mon./Wed. 9 am-12:30 pm

Class Zoom Link:

<https://bostonu.zoom.us/j/92398613601?pwd=Q3ltQWIEaExlQWdGd3UrYmJ2U3EwQT09>

Meeting ID: 923 9861 3601

Passcode: 226444

Office Hours: Mondays 2pm- 4pm and Wednesdays 2pm-3pm + upon request

Office Hours Zoom Link:

<https://bostonu.zoom.us/j/94128587582?pwd=WUpZeXd2WXU5bXNmWkxvNU41VIRDQT09>

Meeting ID: 941 2858 7582

Passcode: 357292

Dropbox folder: [Link](#)

Course Overview

This course provides an introduction to issues and opportunities that affect politics and policy in American cities. Students explore how cities interact with other levels of government, by analyzing how national and state politics affect the implementation of local policy. We then analyze the different opportunities and challenges that cities face in the current context of polarization.

The course begins with an examination of the political, social and economic explanations for the origin and evolution of cities, including a section on the creation of cities today. It then analyzes the historical, economic and demographic constraints that have shaped how cities enact policy. We explore how states and the Federal government influence cities' governance. The course then looks at local agency, by studying the main areas of policy capabilities for cities and the types of services that can be provided in these local governments. We take a deeper look at elections, local representation and interests' groups. We study the role that race plays as a central feature of local politics, local policy and local outcomes. We delve into specific services provided by cities including land use regulations, infrastructure, education. Finally, we analyze current issues that cities face such as the COVID19 response at the local level and police violence.

Course Objectives

- Learn how local governments function and how policy is made in U.S. cities
- Understand the role that economic, social and demographic status plays in local government
- Gain critical thinking
- Learn how to write policy and academic research, including collecting data and making literature reviews

Class Format

Come to class each session having done the required readings. Zoom for seven hours a week is a lot – there will be a variety of activities and formats designed to make the most of remote learning. Each class session will include both lecture and discussion portions, with time allotted for small group work, debates, videos, as well as in-class reading and in-class writing activities. In-class readings will be short. Typically, each class will combine some lecturing on the assigned material for that day, and then we will transition to a discussion-style format and other activities. Class discussions will take various forms ranging from full-class discussions to small groups and/or paired conversations. The instructor will also leave time for questions at the end of the session as needed.

Course Materials

This is a reading-intensive course that incorporates a variety of materials. The readings have been selected based on their relevance to the discipline, the topic of the session, and how they dialogue with one another. All journal articles, news reports, and readings will be posted on the class Dropbox or links will be provided.

Course Requirements and Grading

Participation (25% of final grade). Students are expected to attend class, come prepared and participate in class by discussing the material assigned for each class. That is, you should be ready to discuss the themes and main questions of the readings. To receive an excused absence, you must notify me of your absence before or shortly after the class (the same day of the class).

Midterm Exam (35% of final grade). There will be a midterm exam to evaluate key concepts and readings from the course (see schedule below for exam date). It will consist of short answers and multiple-choice questions on all of the material reviewed in class before the midterm.

Final Paper and presentation (40% of final grade). Students will write a paper on the potential power that citizens in a block in a city have to change local politics (or not). The paper is expected to be 8-10 pages in length and will build on the weekly assignments of the class. The paper will include the normal sections of a research paper: introduction, literature review, data and methodology, results and conclusions. The paper should be developed in stages through weekly assignments. The syllabus provides deadlines for when each part is due.

I will allow other forms of final projects (video, poster or anything else you can think of), but students will have to make a formal proposal in writing to me no later than **June 14**. In the

proposal, I expect the student to explain the project, the audience that the project will target and why presenting the project in this format is important.

Students are entitled to appeal grades, but the instructor reserves the right to increase or decrease grades upon reconsideration. I will offer feedback throughout the semester and I am willing to change grades if the feedback is taken into account and students improve their projects/assignments.

Policies

Grading Scale

Following Boston University guidelines, the grading scale is as follows:

94-100:	A	77-79:	C+
90-93:	A-	74-76:	C
87-89:	B+	70-73:	C-
84-86:	B	60-69:	D
80-83:	B-	60 or ↓:	F

Communicate with Me!

I would expect to talk in office hours which each of you at least once. Don't hesitate to get in contact with me if you have questions, thoughts, or are struggling with any of the course material. Trust me, I want to talk with you! ☺ My contact information is available at the top of this syllabus. A note on emails: I will respond to emails during regular business hours and can't promise that I'm able to get back to you on weekends, so please plan accordingly. Specific questions are great for email, however, if you have in-depth questions about course material, assignments, or concepts, please come to office hours. Email is the primary means of correspondence in most academic and professional settings – checking and responding to email regularly and professionally is an important skill to have. Networking is crucial in the professional life too. So please practice it by communicating with me!

Last day to drop the class with a “W” grade: May 28

Academic Integrity

Please maintain the basic standards of academic integrity. Do not cheat or plagiarize. If you do, I am required to report it. In order to avoid this, you should familiarize yourself with the BU Academic Integrity Code and Website:

<https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/>

Disabilities

Boston University provides services to ensure that students are able to access and participate in all opportunities at BU. You are thus expected and encouraged to utilize the resources available

to you through the office of Disability and Access. To accommodate your needs, please turn in your accommodation letter as soon as possible after the first day of class and meet with me to discuss the plan for the semester. Please contact the Office of Disability Services if you have any further questions: access@bu.edu.

Support / Resources

If you feel stressed at any time during the semester and need to talk to someone about a personal problem or situation, I encourage you to seek support as soon as possible. I am available to talk about stresses related to the class and have an open policy when it comes to this. There is nothing from my class that cannot be sorted out together. I encourage reaching out to all or any of the resources/venues available on campus too:

- BU Behavioral Medicine: <https://www.bu.edu/shs/behavioral-medicine/>
- CAS Advising: <http://www.bu.edu/cas/currentstudents/undergraduate/casadvising/>
- Dean of Students Resources: <http://www.bu.edu/dos/resources/>
- Sexual Assault Response and Prevention Center: <http://bu.edu/sarp/>

Schedule, Readings and deadlines

Note: this schedule is a living document and is open to adjustments as we proceed. I will send an email to the class about any changes and will note any changes on BlackBoard under “Announcements.” All readings are posted to Dropbox when a link is not provided below. Make sure to note the different deadlines in this schedule.

Date	Topic and Readings Required	Assignment Deadlines
May 24	Introduction to urban politics	In-class Assignment
	Friedman, Thomas. “I want to be Mayor”, New York Times, 2013. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/28/opinion/sunday/friedman-i-want-to-be-a-mayor.html?_r=0 Ellen Barry, “Drained by a Year of Covid, Many Mayors Head for the Exit”. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/11/us/covid-burnout-mayors.html?smtyp=cur&smid=tw-nytimes	
May 26	Constraints: Horizontal and Internal	

	Paul Peterson, <i>City Limits</i> , Chapter 2	Assignment reading to do before class: Richard Campanella- “People-Mapping Through Google Street View: A New Orleans Experiment”. Available at: https://placesjournal.org/article/people-mapping-through-google-street-view/
	Richard Schragger, <i>City Power: Urban Governance in a Global Age</i> , Introduction	
	Optional: Alana Semuels- <i>The City That Gave Its Residents \$3 Million</i> . Available at: https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/11/the-city-that-gave-its-residents-3-million/382348/	

May 31	*****Class suspended for Memorial Day*****	
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June 2	More Constraints: Vertical		Assignment 1 due
	Graham, David “Red State, Blue City”. The Atlantic, 2017. Available at: https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/03/red-state-blue-city/513857/		
	Jonathan Rodden. 2019. <i>Why Cities Lose</i> , Introduction		
	Hicks and Weissert, 2017. From <i>Home rule be damned ONLY</i> read the articles from Jeffrey Swanson, Vladimir Kogan and Katherine Einstein/ David Glick		

June 4	Urban Development (SUBSTITUTE MONDAY)		Assignment 2 due
	Dennis Judd and Todd Swanstrom. 2015. <i>City Politics</i> - Chapter 5 (P.117-131) and chapter 6 (p.136-152)		
	Richard Rothstein. 2014. <i>The Making of Ferguson, Public Policies at the Root of its Troubles</i> . Available at: https://www.epi.org/publication/making-ferguson/		

June 7	Race and Urban Politics		
	Enos, Ryan. 2016. “What the Demolition of Public Housing Teaches Us about the Impact of Racial Threat on Political Behavior”. <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 60(1): 123-42.		
	Eckhouse, Laurel. 2019. “Race, Party, and Representation in Criminal Justice Politics.” <i>The Journal of Politics</i> 81(3): 1143–52.		

	Schaffner, Brian, Jesse Rhodes and Raymond La Raja- <i>Hometown Inequality</i> - Chapter 5	
June 9	Local elections, representation and interest groups	Assignment 3 due
	Lappie, John and Melissa Marschall. 2018. Place and participation in local elections. <i>Political Geography</i> 64(18):33-42	
	Mirya R. Holman. <i>Women in Politics in the American City</i> . Chapter 5	
	Benjamin, Andrea and Alexis Miller. 2017. "Picking Winners: How Political Organizations Influence Local Elections." <i>Urban Affairs Review</i> .	
June 14	Infrastructure	
	Eric Klinenberg. 2018. <i>To Restore Civil Society, Start With the Library</i> . Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/08/opinion/sunday/civil-society-library.html?smid=tw-nytopinion&smtyp=cur	
	Craig Burnett and Vladimir Kogan. 2017. "The Politics of Potholes: Service Quality and Retrospective Voting in Local Elections." <i>Journal of Politics</i> 79(1): 302-314.	
	Gerber, Elisabeth and Clark C. Gibson. 2009. "Balancing Regionalism and Localism: How Institutions and Incentives Shape American Transportation Policy." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> .	
June 16	Land use regulations	Assignment 4 due
	Jessica Trounstein. 2018. <i>Segregation By Design</i> , Chapter 4.	
	Katherine Levine Einstein, David Glick and Maxwell Palmer. <i>Neighborhood Defenders</i> , Chapters 5	
	Michael Hankinson. 2017. "When Do Renters Behave Like Homeowners? High Rent, Price, Anxiety, and NIMBYism." <i>American Political Science Review</i> .	
June 21	Midterm	
June 23	Schools	
	Listen to 2-part podcast on school integration "The Problem We All Live With." http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/562/the-problem-we-all-live-with	
	Molly Vollman Makris. "The chimera of choice: Gentrification, school choice, and community." <i>Peabody Journal of Education</i> 93, no. 4 (2018): 411-429.	
	Andrew R Highsmith, and Ansley T. Erickson. "Segregation as splitting, segregation as joining: Schools, housing, and the many modes of Jim Crow." <i>American Journal of Education</i> 121, no. 4 (2015): 563-595.	
June 28	Current Issues: covid-19 response and Police Violence	

	<p>Maryam Jameel and Caroline Chen. How Inequity Gets Built Into America's Vaccination System. Available at:https://www.propublica.org/article/how-inequity-gets-built-into-americas-vaccination-system</p> <p>McDonald III, Bruce D., Christopher B. Goodman, and Megan E. Hatch. "Tensions in state–local intergovernmental response to emergencies: the case of COVID-19." <i>State and Local Government Review</i> (2020): 0160323X20979826.</p> <p>Ryan Welch and Jack Mewhirter. Does military equipment lead police officers to be more violent? We did the research. Available in: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/06/30/does-military-equipment-lead-police-officers-to-be-more-violent-we-did-the-research/</p>	
June 30	Final paper due and Paper Presentations	
<p>Have a great rest of your summer!! 😊</p> <p>Get some rest, you deserve it!</p>		