This course examines the historical development and contemporary problems of urban governments in the United States. We will focus on the context of urban policymaking, urban-suburban relations, the relationship between public and private power, the role and impact of race, ethnicity, class, and the fiscal crisis.

The goals of the course are to enable students to understand how urban government developed in the United States, to learn about specific features of urban governance, and to evaluate the workings of urban government through an examination of specific issues. Generally, the course seeks to enable students in the acquisition of knowledge of common institutions in American society and how they have affected different groups.

Mason B. Williams, *City of Ambition, FDR, La Guardia and the Making of Modern New York*
Films: *Roger and Me* (91 min.) and *City Hall* (112 min.)

Christopher R. Friedrichs, *Urban Politics in Early Modern Europe*
Peter John, *Local Governance in Western Europe*
Eduardo Canel, *Barrio Democracy in Latin America*

**Course Requirements**

- Two, in-class, one-page reaction/commentary essays based on *Roger and Me* and *City Hall*. One page per movie. You will be provided blue books to write these two essays. You will be expected to write four blue book pages, double space, for each essay. Four blue book pages, double space, is, more or less, the equivalent of one page, typed, double space paper with one inch margins. I will grade these essays as one unit (10% of course grade).

- Because these are just one-page, please focus on the following questions: What do you think was Michael Moore's purpose for making *Roger and Me*? What is the main point addressed in *City Hall*? Did the films serve their purpose well? Why or why not? Was there anything in the films that
you found objectionable? Why? What did you learn or realize as a result of watching these films? What questions did they raise in your mind about urban politics and government?\(^1\)

- One, 5-page paper, typed, double space, describing and analyzing a historical or contemporary issue of significance in your city or town of origin, due the last day of classes. Papers must be turned in the last day of classes in person, at the end of the class. Students who submit their papers in person without attending class will incur a penalty of half a grade. Late papers without a compelling reason for lateness will not be accepted (30% of course grade).

- For this paper focus on the subject matter indicated above and keep in mind the following general guidelines. The most elementary requirement of an essay or paper is to have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Your introduction could give the reader a bit of historical background about your city or town. Don’t overdue it; write just enough to allow the reader to get a general sense of the place.

- In the middle section of the paper you will address the subject: describe and analyze the selected issue. The issue you select must be significant enough to have prompted a public debate as well as action(s), reaction(s) and interaction(s) between local officials, the governing body and citizens.

- The end of your paper should bring your narrative to a coherent closing by elaborating on the implications of your findings. How significant or interesting are your findings? How does the emergence, development and resolution of the issue you selected relate to the readings done in class?

- To write your essay or paper you should use the University Libraries, the World Wide Web, and other information sources. Keep in mind that beginning, middle and end demarcate the form of your essay paper. Your writing will be a process of finding, evaluating, and citing information sources presented in diverse formats from multiple sources. The finished product will integrate this information within a single textual document.\(^2\)

- Twelve, random quizzes. Two will be dropped (30% of course grade).

- Class participation (20% of course grade): Class participation will be structured so that each student, with notice, will have sufficient opportunity

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\(^1\) This section draws from *Handy-Dandy Guide To Writing a Reaction Paper*  

\(^2\) This section draws from University guidelines online at  
http://www.albany.edu/generaleducation/
to comment on class readings. Students who are absent on the day when they are supposed to comment will fail the requirement for that given day and will not be allowed to make up the assignment unless their absence is justified and documented according to university policy. Keep in mind that due to the size of the class, even if the absence is justified, there may not be an opportunity to make up the assignment. While attendance will not be taken, absences will be noted and taken into account.

- Presentations will be peer evaluated. Presenters will answer the following questions: What is the main point of the chapter/reading? What did you learn? What did you find particularly interesting or provocative? Is(are) there any value judgment(s) that you disagree with and/or assumption(s) that is(are) unfounded? Explain. Do you have any questions that you would like to share with the class? Focus on conceptual rather than factual questions, e.g. What power theory best describes urban government? rather than what is Dillon's rule? The second question is legitimate but you can find the answer easily just by reading the text. Let's use class time to analyze, probe, and debate questions.

- Proper demeanor and engagement (10% of course grade). This portion of the course grade will be based on my assessment and evaluation of your presence and behavior during the semester. I notice everything and take everything into account, e.g. if you are routinely absent, absent-minded, late, disruptive, disrespectful, texting, browsing the internet, etc. I assume that everyone knows how to behave appropriately during class and unless a student's disregard for the basic norms of classroom behavior is flagrant, I will not put anyone on the spot (then again, I may; I am unpredictable in this regard). I may call your attention privately but I will do so only on a discretionary basis.

**Grading**
The course is graded A-E. The course grade will be tabulated according to the weights indicated above for each requirement. Letter grades will be converted into scores between 0-100 and graded according to the scale noted below. Letter grades will be converted to the top score in the range for each grade. For example, if the grade for your 5-page paper is a B+, your score will be 89.

Individual participation beyond the structured opportunities through statements and questions will be taken into account in determining the **course** grade, with a particular emphasis on borderline cases. An example of a borderline case is someone scoring 89 in the final course tabulation. If that student makes no **additional, distinctive** and **significant** contribution to class participation during the course of the semester, he/she will receive a grade of B+ instead of an A- or even an A for the added participatory value.
In making borderline determinations, I reserve the right to judge whether contributions are worthy or not. For example, statements or questions that reveal that a reading or readings have not been done or that do not measure up to standards of reason and civility are not only discouraged but will not be considered meaningful contributions.

Grading Scale
100-95 A
94-90 A-
89-85 B+
84-80 B
79-75 B-
74-71 C+
70-65 C
64-61 C-
60-55 D+
54-51 D
50-45 D-
44-0 E

Policies
There will be no opportunities for extra credit in this class. You either meet the requirements specified in the syllabus or you don't.

Concerning standards of academic integrity, freedom of expression, and attendance and timely completion of course requirements please refer to: http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html

Concerning medical excuses please refer to: http://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexcuse.shtml

Please also note that, as indicated in the University’s Undergraduate Bulletin: “Each instructor retains the right to modify the syllabus and give notice in class of any modifications in a timely fashion. Students are responsible to apprise themselves of such notices.”

I retain the power to judge and/or decide on any situations, terms, conditions, and stipulations not specified herein, nor prohibited by reasonable academic and administrative standards.

Office Hours
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30-11:00 am HU-B16. If you are unable to meet during scheduled office hours, we can meet at a mutually convenient day and time by appointment. Contact information: jcruz@albany.edu E-mails sent after business hours will not be answered until the following day. E-mails sent after
5pm on Fridays will be answered the following week during business hours. Business hours are 9am-5pm.

**Course Schedule**

**August**
- 26 – Introduction
- 28 – *Roger and Me* - 65 min. viewing, 15 min. writing.

**September**
- 2 – Finish *Roger and Me* - 26 min. viewing; 15 min. final writing, remaining time: discussion.
- 4 – *City Hall* 65 minute viewing, 15 min. writing.
- 9 – Finish *City Hall* - 47 min. viewing; 15 min. writing, remaining time: discussion.
- 11 – Continued discussion of *Roger and Me* and *City Hall*.
- 18 – Lecture: John, Local Governance in Western Europe.
- 23 – Lecture: Canel, Barrio Democracy in Latin America.

**25 NO CLASSES, Rosh Hashanah**

- 30 - Ross and Levine, 1-2

**October**
- 2 – Ross and Levine, 3-4
- 7 – Ross and Levine, 5
- 9 – Ross and Levine, 6
- 14 – Ross and Levine, 7 **Mid-term point.**
- 16 – Ross and Levine, 8
- 21 – Ross and Levine, 9

**23 - NO CLASS - Prof. Cruz at PRSA**

- 28 – Ross and Levine, 10
- 30 - Ross and Levine, 11

**November**
- 4 – Ross and Levine, 12
- 6 - Williams, 1-2
- 11 - Williams, 3
- 13 – Williams, 4-5
- 18 - Williams, 6
- 20 – Williams, 7
- 25 – Williams, 8

**27 - NO CLASS, Thanksgiving Break**

**December**
2 – Williams, 9-10
4 -
9 – 5-page paper due, in class, in person.