I. Course Description

This course will cover the functioning of New York City’s political and governmental institutions, with an emphasis on:

- The recurring efforts to provide for greater local input into the city government’s policy making processes without undoing the consolidation of 1898 that created the current five-borough city; and
- The attempts to increase inter-party and intra-party electoral competition in a city that is overwhelmingly Democratic in its political preferences.

II. Course Objectives

The instructor's objectives are for each participating student to

(1) Develop a good understanding of the political and governmental institutions and processes through which the residents of New York City govern themselves,

(2) Become familiar with the major sources of information that are available regarding the workings of New York City's major political and governmental institutions and processes, and

(3) Be able to place current developments involving New York City's political and governmental institutions in their proper theoretical and historical context.

III. Course Meetings

This course will meet from 5:45 pm to 8:35 pm on Tuesday evenings except March 18, 2014, and April 15, 2014. There will be an in-class mid-term examination on Tuesday, March 11, 2014. The final examination for the course will be held from 5:45 pm to 7:45 pm on Tuesday, May 13, 2014.
IV. Main Course Readings


*New York City Charter*. For access to the text of the New York City Charter go to [http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/menuf.cgi](http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/menuf.cgi). From the last link on that page, you can link to a page for “Laws of New York.” Then, from the last link on the “Laws of New York” page you can link to a page with a table of contents for the New York Charter. From that page you can link to individual chapters of the Charter. For example, Chapter 1 deals with the Mayor. (referred to as NYC Charter in the reading assignments sections of this syllabus)

In addition to the course readings listed above, (a) additional items are listed in the reading assignments section of this syllabus; and (b) copies of other readings (or links to electronic versions of other readings) will be distributed in class or via e-mail. If you do not check your University at Albany e-mail address on a regular basis, please provide me with an e-mail address that you do check regularly.

V. Course Requirements

A. Completion of all assignments on a timely basis INCLUDING completion of all required readings prior to the class at which those readings are scheduled for discussion.

B. Keeping up on current developments regarding New York City government and politics by reading a daily newspaper (or a comparable electronic news service such as Capital New York [http://www.capitalnewyork.com/city-hall](http://www.capitalnewyork.com/city-hall)) that that covers New York City government and politics on a regular basis; and reporting on (and/or raising questions about) course-relevant developments relevant. (Note: Time will be available for this purpose at the beginning of each class meeting except for the March 11, April 29, May 6 and May 13 class meetings.)

D. Participation in class discussions on the basis of (1) the required readings; (2) your research; and (3) your reading of a daily newspaper (or a comparable website) that covers New York City government and politics on a regular basis.
VI. Grading

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and class participation.</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam (March 11)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam (May 13)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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VII. Discussion Topics and Reading Assignments

**January 28:** During this class, we will discuss the course structure, the material to be covered during the semester, the course requirements, the topics for the research paper and presentation; the structure of the New York City government; and, some important events that have influenced New York City government and politics in recent decades.

**February 4:** During this class, we will discuss the concepts of centralization and decentralization (also referred to as consolidation and/or regionalization vs. community control and sometimes even secession) and the competing values involved. We will also discuss the creation in 1897 of the Greater City of New York (i.e., the current 5-borough city); and how the resulting governmental structure differs substantially from the local government structures in all of the state outside of New York City. To prepare for this discussion, read *Benjamin*, Chapters 1, 2 and 3; and Wallace S. Sayre and Herbert Kaufman, *Governing New York City: Politics in the Metropolis*, 1960, Chapter 1, pages 11 to 17, available at [https://www.russellsage.org/publications/governing-new-york-city](https://www.russellsage.org/publications/governing-new-york-city).


**February 18:** During this class, we will discuss the political party system in New York City including the role of minor parties, cross-endorsement and fusion; the battles over time between regulars and reformers over time. To prepare for this discussion, read
Berg, Chapter 6; and, portions to be distributed of Daniel O. Prosterman, Defining Democracy: Electoral Reform and the Struggle for Power in New York City, Oxford University Press, 2013; and become familiar with the NYC Election Atlas website, a joint project of the Center for Urban Research at the CUNY Graduate Center, the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism and the CUNY Center for Community and Ethnic Media, at http://www.nycelectionatlas.com/

February 25: During this class, we will discuss the role of the New York State government in the government and politics of New York City and city-state relations. As part of this discussion, we will cover the New York City fiscal crisis of 1975 (which involved the federal government as well as the state government). To prepare for this discussion, read Berg, Chapter 3.

March 4: During this class, we will discuss the relationships between New York City and the federal government. As part of this discussion, we will cover the role of the federal and state governments in the response to the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center, and to Hurricane Sandy. To prepare for this discussion, read Berg, Chapter 4; and John H. Mollenkopf, Contentious City: The Politics of Recovery in New York City, 2005, Chapter 1, https://www.russellsage.org/publications/contentious-city.

March 11: Mid-Term Examination.

March 25: During this class, we will discuss the powers and duties of New York City’s mayors and the other citywide and borough-wide elected offices (Comptroller, Public Advocate [formerly known as the City Council President], and the Borough Presidents), the ways in which the power of the mayor has been enhanced over time by periodic charter revisions and the attempts by those charter revisions to balance the powers of the mayor and other elected officials including the City Council; the switch from a hybrid plural executive to a clearly “strong mayor” system by the elimination of the Board of Estimate by the 1989 Charter revision. To prepare for this discussion, read Berg, Chapter 7; and the NYC Charter, Chapters 1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10 and 11.

April 1. During this class, we will discuss the structure and functioning of the New York City’s legislative body, the City Council. To prepare for this discussion, read Berg, Chapter 8 and the NYC Charter, Chapters 2, 2A and 50.

April 8: During this class, we will discuss the delivery of public services in New York City, including efforts at decentralization and community participation; and the role of the community boards, the borough boards and the borough presidents in the current land use processes. To prepare for this discussion, read Berg, Chapter 9; the NYC Charter, Chapters 8, 14, 15, 27, 69 and 70; and Benjamin, Chapters 4 and 5.

April 22: During this class, we will discuss the delivery of public services through public corporations with a particular focus on two regional entities – the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. To prepare for this discussion, read Benjamin, Chapters 6 and 7.
April 29: Student Presentations

May 6: Student Presentations

May 13: Final Examination

VIII. Research Paper and Presentation

This assignment involves the preparation and submission of four deliverables related to the completion of a well-researched, well-organized, well-written, and well-edited term paper dealing with one or more of the occasional efforts, in New York City, to

(a) Provide for greater local input into government operations, service delivery and/or policymaking through decentralization at either the borough and/or community levels; or

(b) Increase efficiency and/or to reduce corruption through centralization, consolidation or regionalization of governance, government operations, service delivery or policymaking at an increased geographic scale; or

(c) Increase inter-party and/or intra-party electoral competition; or

(d) Undo one of those efforts at increasing inter-party and/or intra-party electoral competition in New York City; or

(e) Elect or re-elect a “reform” mayor through a “fusion” challenge to the “regular” Democrats.

The first step in this assignment involves the selection and submission, by e-mail, by the end of the day on Friday, February 7, 2014, of a topic for your term paper. See the list of possible topics for this assignment beginning on page six of this syllabus. You can select one or more of the topics from that list, or some variation of one or more of those topics, or some other topic dealing with one or more of the subject matter areas (a) through (e) listed above. Please correspond with me by e-mail as soon as possible if you have questions regarding any particular topic or topics that you are considering for this research project.

The second step in this assignment involves the submission, by e-mail by the end of the day on Friday, February 28, 2014, of an outline and a preliminary bibliography for your paper. You can also submit (for my comments and suggestions) revisions of the outline and/or of your preliminary bibliography as you work on the paper during March and April.

The third step in this assignment involves a five-minute classroom presentation of your research along with a 1-page handout that summarizes your key points in an easy to scan format. For a presentation of this length to be informative and effective, it needs to be very well organized. Most presentations will be scheduled for April 29 or May 6 but
earlier presentations are possible if requested in advance. Submit your 1-page handout by 10 a.m. on the morning of your presentation and I will take care of making copies for the class.

The fourth and final step in this assignment involves the submission, by e-mail, by the end of the day on Friday, May 16, 2014, of your completed term paper with your final bibliography. This paper (not counting the bibliography) should be in the range of 15 to 17 pages, double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font.

All of the deliverables submitted for this assignment should be saved as Word documents (or as documents that can be opened in Word) with a .doc suffix (or as Rich Text Format documents with an .rtf suffix). Those documents should each be saved with a name that includes your last name, and should be submitted on or before their respective due dates as attachments to e-mail messages. The pages in your second and fourth deliverables should be numbered. The fourth deliverable (the completed term paper) should have sources cited using an established system of footnotes or endnotes or in-text citations. All material quoted exactly from a source should be in quotation marks with the source cited. Material that is paraphrased from a source or sources and which is not part of your own knowledge should not be in quotation marks but the source or sources that you relied on for the information being presented should be cited.

For these topics, you should be able to find useful journal articles and/or useful government reports. Also, articles from the New York Times from the period(s) relevant to the topic you select will be particularly useful. New York Times articles can be accessed via two databases available through the University Library website: (1) “LexisNexis Academic” (which has the full text of New York Times articles going back to June 1, 1980 in a searchable database); and (2) “Proquest Historical Newspapers - The New York Times” (which has the full text of New York Times articles from 1851 through 2010 in a searchable database). LexisNexis Academic also has the full text of other New York City newspapers for various time periods. In addition, based on your topic selection and your outline and preliminary bibliography, I should be able to suggest some additional sources.

Possible Term Paper Topics

You are not limited to the suggestions below in selecting and submitting a proposed topic for your term paper.

The following topics deal with efforts to reduce the dominance of “regular” Democrats through “fusion” campaigns or through structural reforms designed to increase inter-party and/or intra-party competition.

- One or more of the periodic efforts of “reformers” within the Democratic Party, “good government” groups and Republican to join together in “fusion” campaigns against Tammany Hall and its counterparts in Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx. The successful “fusion” candidates for mayor during the 20th Century were Seth
Low, John Purroy Mitchel, Fiorello LaGuardia, and John V. Lindsay. In addition, the two most recent Republican mayors, Rudolph Giuliani and Michael Bloomberg, were both elected with minor party cross-endorsements (by the Liberal and Independence parties, respectively).

- The use of proportional representation to elect the members of the City Council from 1937 through 1949.
- The efforts leading up to the adoption of proportional representation.
- The efforts by the regular Democrats to stop the implementation of proportional representation and/or to repeal it once it was implemented.
- The use of limited nomination and limited voting to elect two at-large members of the City Council from each borough during the 1960s and 1970s.
- The establishment of a bi-partisan and somewhat independent redistricting process and/or the functioning of that process following the decennial censuses of 1990 and/or 2000 and/or 2010.
- The establishment and/or workings of New York City’s system of public campaign financing.
- The unsuccessful efforts by Mayor Bloomberg to use Charter Revision Commissions to establish a system of nonpartisan elections.

The following topics deal with efforts to increase local control and increased citizen participation through decentralization OR efforts to increase efficiency and/or equity and/or to reduce corruption through centralization, consolidation and/or regionalization.

- The creation of the boroughs and the borough presidencies as part of the 1898 consolidation that created the “Greater City.”
- The addition of the borough presidents to the Board of Estimate by the 1901 charter revision.
- The elimination of the Board of Estimate by the 1989 charter revision.
- Some aspect or aspects of the establishment and/or the evolution and/or the workings of the community board system.
- Some aspect or aspects of the creation and/or the workings and/or the later “reform” and/or the later elimination of community school boards.
- The arguments that were made for and against consolidation (and who made which arguments) during the decade leading up to legislative and public approval of the plan that took effect on January 1, 1898, creating what was then called the Greater City of New York.
- One or more of the prominent payers in the move toward the 1898 consolidation (including discussions of their roles in the consolidation effort, and their careers before and after consolidation) such as:
  - Andrew Haswell Green
  - Thomas Platt
  - Seth Low
- The referenda that were held as part of the move to consolidation, which communities voted which ways, and which communities that were considered for inclusion in the proposed Greater City ended up not being included.
• The so-called revolt of the boroughs that occurred following the implementation of the 1897 charter (which took effect on 1/1/1898) and how that led to the 1901 charter which gave public works powers to the borough presidents and restructured the Board of Estimate to include the borough presidents (i.e., which created the Board of Estimate in the basic form in which it existed from 1902 until the end of 1989).
• The elimination of the borough presidents’ public works powers by the 1961 charter revision and/or the events leading up to the establishment of the 1961 charter revision commission.
• The creation and operation of the community planning councils during Robert Wagner’s service as Manhattan Borough President and/or the later expansion of this concept by Wagner as Mayor by the creation of community planning boards which evolved into the community boards of today.
• The creation of the current system of community boards by the 1975 charter revision.
• The creation of the (community) district manager system during the Lindsay Administration as part of that administration’s efforts at “neighborhood government” and the major change in the role of the district managers under the 1975 charter revision.
• The role of the community boards in the land use process in NYC (currently and/or since the 1975 charter revision)
• The role of the community boards in the budget process in NYC (currently and/or since the 1975 charter revision)
• Some aspect of New York City’s experience with Community School Districts (either the creation of the system of elected school boards; and/or the reduction of their powers in the mid 1990s; and/or their demise with the enactment of the mayoral control legislation in 2002.)
• Mayor Giuliani’s unsuccessful efforts to secure state legislation giving the Mayor control of the NYC school system and/or Mayor Bloomberg’s successful effort to secure state legislation establishing mayoral control of the NYC school system.
• The workings of mayoral control of the NYC school system including the debate over the renewal of mayoral control in 2009.
• New York City’s experience with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)
• Borough (or County) representation on the NYC Board of Elections
• Borough representation on the former NYC Board of Education
• Some aspect of the Staten Island secession effort
• The Rockaways secession effort
• The creation of Bronx County
• Borough representation on the City Planning Commission
• The Borough Presidents as members of the Board of Estimate
• The Elimination of the Board of Estimate by the 1989 charter revision
• The Borough Presidents since the elimination of the Board of Estimate
IX. Communications

For submitting class assignments, assignment-related questions and other substantive questions; for scheduling appointments; and for any administrative matters, please send an e-mail message to me at fjmauro@albany.edu.

If you do not receive a response to an e-mail message in a reasonable amount of time, call me at home at 518-346-3122. If no one answers, leave a message on the voice mail.

Submit all written assignments electronically by those assignments’ due dates. The maximum credit for assignments submitted after the due date will be reduced by five percent (5%) for each day that the assignment is late.

Submit all written assignments as Word documents (or as documents that can be opened easily in Word) attached to an e-mail message. Be sure to include your name (1) in the body of your e-mail message; (2) in the body of your attached Word document (at the top of the first page of that document); and (3) in the name you give to your Word file. In your Word documents, use double line spacing or 1.5 line spacing. Be sure to number the pages in any written assignments that are two or more pages long.

If you do not check your University at Albany e-mail address on a regular basis, please provide me with an e-mail address that you do check regularly.