University at Albany, State University of New York

RPOS 322 (9421) and RPUB 322 (9422): The Government and Politics of New York City

Spring 2012, Thursdays, 5:45 pm to 8:35 pm

Frank J. Mauro, Public Service Professor, and Adjunct Lecturer

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 electronically after the due date will be reduced by five percent (5%) for each day that the assignment is late.

Submit all written assignments as MSWord documents (or as documents that can be opened easily in MSWord) 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 MSWord document (at the top of the first page of that document); and (3) in the name you give to your MSWord document. The last point is particularly important since if you give your MSWord document a name that includes my name and/or the course number but does not include your own name, it will make my recordkeeping very difficult.

In addition to submitting all written assignments electronically, print out two copies. Give one of those printed copies to the instructor at the beginning of the first class meeting after you have submitted the assignment electronically. Bring the other printed copy of each of your written assignments to class so that you can refer to those papers during class discussions of relevant topics.
I. Course Description

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

- The recurring efforts to provide for greater local input into the city government 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 Thursday evenings. The final examination for this course will be held from 5:45 pm to 7:45 pm on Thursday, May 10, 2012.

IV. Course Readings

The first three books listed below are available for purchase at both (1) the University Bookstore in the Campus Center and (2) Mary Jane Books, 215 Western Avenue, at the corner of Western Avenue and Quail Street, near the downtown campus.
In addition to the materials listed below, 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 the instructor with an e-mail address that you do check regularly.


*New York City Charter*. The full text of the New York City Charter is available electronically in HTML via the last link on the “Laws of New York” page to which you can link from [http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/menuf.cgi](http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/menuf.cgi)

V. Course Requirements

A. Completion of all required readings prior to the class at which those readings are scheduled for discussion.

B. Completion of all assignments on a timely basis.

C. Regular monitoring of a newspaper or a website that covers New York City government and politics on a regular basis.

D. Participation in class discussions on the basis of the required readings and other assignments including your regular monitoring of a newspaper or a website that covers New York City government and politics on a regular basis.
VI. Grading

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<td>Class participation</td>
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<td>Written Assignment #1</td>
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<td>Written Assignment #2</td>
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<td>Written Assignment #3</td>
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<td>Midterm Exam (March 8)</td>
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<td>Final Exam (May 10)</td>
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VII. Schedule of Topics for Class Discussion

**January 19 Class.** Overview of the course and course requirements; overview of the structure of the New York City government; important developments in the evolution of New York City’s governmental and political institutions and processes; New York City’s mayors and mayoral elections; demographic and economic trends.

**January 26 and February 2 and 9 Classes.** The origins, evolution and functioning of New York City’s major governmental institutions. By January 25, read *What Makes New York City Run?*; and submit electronically any questions that you have regarding any of the institutions and processes covered by that book. Be prepared to discuss in class the material covered by this book, particularly the material in this book regarding the governmental office or organization that you are assigned to cover.

**February 16 Class.** The forces influencing the governance of New York City: (1) the need and the desire to promote economic growth; (2) the city’s relationships with state and federal governments; and, (3) the city’s racial and ethnic diversity. By February 15, read and prepare to discuss chapters 1, 2 and 10 in Berg, *New York City Politics.*
February 23 and March 1 Classes. Racial and ethic diversity in New York City government and politics; Political parties in the government and politics of New York City. By February 22, read and prepared to discuss chapters 5 and 6 in Berg, *New York City Politics*; and chapters 1 through 7 in Barry, *The Scandal of Reform*.

March 8 Class. Midterm Examination.

March 22 and 29. New York City in the federal system. By March 21, read and be prepared to discuss chapters 3 and 4 in Berg, *New York City Politics: Governing Gotham*.

April 5 and 12. Charter Revision and Governmental Reform. By April 4, read and be prepared to discuss chapter 7 in Berg, *New York City Politics: Governing Gotham*; and chapters 8 through 16 in Barry, *The Scandal of Reform*.

April 19. The City Council and Representative Government in New York City. By April 18, read and be prepared to discuss chapter 8 in Berg, *New York City Politics: Governing Gotham*.

April 26 and May 3. Delivering services in New York City, including efforts at decentralization and community participation. By April 25, read and be prepared to discuss chapter 9 in Berg, *New York City Politics: Governing Gotham*.

May 10. Final Exam

VIII. Written Assignments

Written Assignment #1. By the end of February 1, submit electronically a four (4) page paper that (1) briefly summarizes what, if anything, *What Makes New York City Run?* says about the governmental office or organization that you are assigned to cover; and then (2) provides additional information (including information on important developments since 2001) regarding that office or organization. Potential sources of information for these short papers include (1) relevant material from Berg, *New York City Politics* and from sources referenced in that book; (2) relevant material from the New York City Charter for those offices and organizations established by the
charter (and from state law for those offices and organizations that are established by state law); (3) relevant material from the nyc.gov website; and (4) relevant material from newspapers, magazines, journals and websites that cover New York City government and politics. In addition to submitting this assignment electronically on or before February 1, print out two copies. Give one of those printed copies to the instructor at the beginning of the February 2 class meeting. Bring the other printed copy with you to the February 2 and subsequent classes so that you can refer to your paper during class discussions of relevant topics.

**Written Assignment #2.** By the end of February 29, submit electronically a six (6) page paper dealing with either (a) one of the attempts at increasing inter-party and/or intra-party electoral competition in New York City; or (b) one of the attempts at electing or re-electing a “reform” mayor through a “fusion” challenge to the predominance of the “regular” Democrats. Topics for these papers must be agreed upon with the instructor by February 3. See Appendix A for a list of some possible topics for this assignment. In addition to submitting this assignment electronically on or before February 29, print out two copies. Give one of those printed copies to the instructor at the beginning of the March 1 class meeting. Bring the other printed copy with you to the March 1 class and subsequent classes so that you can contribute material from it to class discussions of relevant topics.

**Written Assignment #3.** By the end of March 28, submit electronically an eight (8) page paper dealing with either (a) one of the occasional efforts to provide for greater local input into city government policy making and/or program operations through decentralization at either the borough or community levels; or (b) the undoing of one of these efforts at decentralization in the name of improved efficiency or corruption reduction, etc. Topics for these papers must be agreed upon with the instructor by March 2. See Appendix B for a list of some possible topics for this assignment. In addition to submitting this assignment electronically on or before March 28, print out two copies. Give one of those printed copies to the instructor at the beginning of the March 29 class meeting. Bring the other printed copy with you to the March 19 class and subsequent classes so that you can contribute material from it to class discussions of relevant topics.
Appendix A. Examples of efforts at reducing the dominance of “regular” Democrats through either “fusion” campaigns or structural reforms designed to increase inter-party and/or intra-party competition.

- One 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 use of proportional representation to elect the members of the City Council from 1937 through 1949.
- The use of limited nomination and limited voted 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 the functioning of that process following the decennial censuses of 1990 and 2000.
- The establishment and workings of a system of public campaign financing for the election of city government officials.
- The unsuccessful efforts by Mayor Bloomberg to use Charter Revision Commissions to secure public support for nonpartisan elections.

Appendix B. Examples of efforts at decentralization in policy-making and/or implementation in the name of local control and increased citizen participation; and efforts to undo such experiments in the name of increased efficiency and corruption reduction.

- 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 in 1901.
- The successful effort by Mayor Wagner to eliminate the borough presidents’ public works powers.
- The elimination in 1989 of the Board of Estimate.
- The establishment and institutionalization of the community board system.
- The creation and later elimination of community school boards.
- The establishment in 2002 and the functioning, since then, of Mayoral control of the NYC school system.