Comparative Urban Politics
RPOS 399-0003
University at Albany, SUNY
Political Science Department
Spring 2017

Professor Timothy Weaver

Building & Room: HU129
Meeting day and time: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 11:30am-12:25pm

NOTE: This is a preliminary syllabus and is subject to change

Contact Details:
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Course overview

This course introduces students to the key theoretical debates in the field of comparative urban politics and offers a series of case studies from across the globe to provide a concrete examples of how a wide variety of cities have driven and/or responded to globalization. The course will be divided into two parts. Part I will compare cities within the United States, with special attention given to the issue of the constraints urban areas face when trying to redistribute wealth or pursue other progressive policies. In so doing, we will examine and interrogate the concept of “neoliberalism.” Part II will move beyond the United States to consider urban experiences in Western Europe, Latin America, and India. Throughout the course, we will explore the circumstances under which cities and urban movements can build alternatives to neoliberal market-dominance.

Course objectives

- To introduce you to the practice of systematic comparison of cases.
- To give concrete examples of the economic constrains city governments faced in the late twentieth century.
- To clarify what is meant by “neoliberalism” and to examine how cities have fashioned alternatives to neoliberal policies.
• To compare urban experience in the United States with cities in Europe, Latin America, and India.

**Academic dishonesty**

The University at Albany takes academic dishonesty extremely seriously. Please familiarize yourself with the University’s policies in this regard. I recommend you watch this video on plagiarism that will help you avoid it: http://library.albany.edu/infolit/plagiarism1

Often students leave themselves open to the charge of academic dishonesty because they fail to provide proper citations in their written work. Please be sure to always remember the following: if they are not your words, you must use quotation marks and citations; if it is not your idea, you must cite the source from which the idea came.

**Course requirements**

This class will consist of lectures and in-class discussion of the readings. Therefore, to get a good grade, it is essential that you participate meaningfully in class discussion. This means that you will come to class having read and thought carefully about the material assigned. If it becomes evident that you have not been completing the assigned reading, pop-quizzes will be given. The results of these pop-quizzes will be factored into your final grade.

You will be assessed according to the quality of your participation in class, your performance on an early-semester short-answer quiz, a mid-term exam, and a final exam.

**Attendance:** In order to do well in this class, regular attendance is crucial. If you miss more than 3 classes during the semester your participation grade will suffer as a result.

Your grade breakdown is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-answer test</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>40%</td>
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</tbody>
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In-class on February 10
In-class on March 10
Take-home due May 17

Questions for final exam will be distributed May 10.

Students will be expected to meet all deadlines. Extensions will only be granted in cases of medical or personal emergency.

**Grading**

The grading scale will be as follows:

If you feel you have been awarded an unfair grade, you may contest it. However, if you want to do so, it must be done in writing and no sooner than 48 hours after you have received the grade. In your written complaint you need to provide a specific account of what in particular you are concerned about.

**Accommodations**

Students with disabilities that may impair their ability to complete the assignments listed in this syllabus and/or who require special accommodations should contact the Disability Resource Center. If you do require accommodations please let me know during the first two weeks.

**Schedule & Readings (all available on Blackboard):**

**Week 1: Introduction to the course & the comparative method**

Monday Jan. 23:  Introductions and syllabus

Wednesday Jan. 25:  The comparative method


Friday Jan. 27: Comparing *urban* politics—Lecture

**PART I: COMPARING U.S. CITIES**

**Week 2: City limits**

Monday Jan. 30:  The City Limits theory


Wednesday Feb. 1:  Discussion of *City Limits* & its predictions

Friday Feb. 3:  Early critiques of the “City Limits” theory—Lecture
**Week 3: Beyond the city limits**

Monday Feb. 6: Discussion of Harvey Molotch’s argument.


Wednesday Feb. 8: Complete discussion of Molotch

Friday Feb. 10: **SHORT-ANSWER TEST**

**Week 4: Bargaining with business**

Monday Feb. 13: Can Politicians Bargain with Business?


Wednesday Feb. 15: Movie: *Roger and Me*

Friday Feb. 17: Movie: *Roger and Me*

**Week 5: Progressive Cities in the U.S.**

Monday Feb. 20: Contexts for “progressive” cities.


**Reading:** Clavel. *Activists in City Hall*. Chapter 2, 16-34.

Friday Feb. 24: Local minimum wages

**Week 6: Black urban regimes**

Monday Feb. 27: The rise of the black urban regime:


Wed. March 1: Challenges/constraints


Friday March 3: Philadelphia


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**PART II: CITIES IN WESTERN EUROPE, LATIN AMERICA AND INDIA**

**Week 7: Neoliberalism**

Monday March 6: Lecture on neoliberalism

Wednesday March 8: David Harvey on neoliberalism.


Friday March 10: MID-TERM EXAM

***************March 11-March 19: SPRING BREAK***************

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**Week 8: The Political Economy of Urban Development**

Monday March 20: The Great Transformation


Friday March 24: Market-centered vs. social-centered cities

**Reading:** Savitch, H. V. and Paul Kantor. *Cities in the International Marketplace*, 101-147.

**Week 9: London I**

Monday March 27: Contradictions of a global city.


Wednesday March 29: Lecture on London Docklands & conclude Massey discussion.

Friday March 31: Gentrification in London


**Week 10: London II**

Monday April 3: Privatization of public space


Wed. April 5: Privately owned public spaces.


Friday April 7: So what?

**Week 11: Amsterdam: A Just City?**

Monday April 10: Recap Amsterdam; discuss the idea of social justice in the city.

Wednesday April 12: NO CLASS—PASOVER

Friday April 14: The Dutch experience


**Week 12: Challenging neoliberalism in Latin America I**

Monday April 17: NO CLASS—EASTER

Wednesday April 19: Rise of radical governance


Friday April 21: NO CLASS

**Week 13: Challenging neoliberalism in Latin America II**

Monday April 24: Participatory budgeting


Wednesday April 26: Porto Alegre

Friday April 28: Conclude discussion on Porto Alegre

**Week 14: Planet of Slums/Mumbai**

Monday May 1: Planet of Slums


Wednesday May 3: Planet of Slums

**Reading:** Davis, Mike. *Planet of Slums*, Chapter 4.

Friday May 5: The “slum”


**Week 15: Cities after the financial crisis**

Monday May 8: Austerity urbanism


Wednesday May 10: Conclusions and reflections.