Course Description:

This research seminar focuses on federal, state, and urban policies toward the contemporary city and theories of urban politics. We will consider how urban policy and politics have varied over the course of the twentieth century and examine new developments in the early twenty-first century. In so doing, students will develop a clear understanding of a variety of theoretical accounts of urban political development offered by key urban scholars including Robert Dahl, Clarence Stone, John Logan, Harvey Molotch, Paul Peterson, and Adolph Reed. Moreover, we will examine some of the central policy issues facing cities, such as the problem of urban poverty, mass incarceration, deindustrialization, and gentrification. Case studies of New Haven, Atlanta, Detroit, and Oakland will help to structure the empirical and theoretical questions with which we will grapple.

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, assignments, and grades**

**Readings & Participation (20%):** It is imperative that seminar participants come to class having read all course materials thoroughly for each session. Grounding your discussion and writing in the assigned readings is essential for developing an analytical framework to understand the complexities and contradictions of urban poverty throughout history and today.

**Attendance:** In order to do well in this class, regular attendance is crucial to obtaining a good participation grade. If you must miss class you will be expected to provide a doctor's note or do so for exceptional circumstances.

**Reading critique and presentation (15%):** Beginning in week 3, students will write a critique of the week’s reading and make a related presentation in class. Each critique should be approximately 600 words in length and should include your own reaction to what you have read, e.g. what you think the reading helps (or fails) to explain about the issue at hand. But rather than a visceral reaction, you will need to justify your position drawing on theory or empirical evidence. In addition, you must provide some account of how the readings to which you are responding connect to readings from previous weeks. Therefore, rather than summarizing the readings, you must make your own argument about them and discuss their place in broader intellectual debates. The paper will be due by 8pm on the Sunday night before class.

**Final paper:** Assessment for your final paper will consist of two parts—your proposal and the paper itself. This assignment is designed to provide you with an opportunity to examine and develop an argument about an issue of urban politics and/or policy that is of interest to you. Some examples of the broad topics that you may wish to examine include: housing, suburbanization, racial segregation, public health, incarceration, postindustrial decline, and labor rights. This is not an exhaustive list—the point is to encourage you to develop a paper around an issue that you care about.

- **Paper proposal (worth 15%)** should include a paragraph that: explains the topic of interest; provides an indication of how you will address the problem/puzzle/question at issue; and gives a bibliography of at least 5 scholarly sources that you will use in your final paper. This will be due on March 19.

- **Final paper (worth 50%)** should include a critical review of literature pertaining to the topic of study – particularly with respect to the ways in which popular ideologies, political economy, and social policy have influenced your subject of study – as well as a careful and critical analysis of the ways in which your subject intersects with/influences your understanding of urban politics more generally. You are required to draw from outside resources in this final paper – that is, texts that were not assigned readings for class – in order to develop a more thorough discussion on the subject you have chosen to explore. Your final paper should also draw from course readings and class discussions.
In terms of the structure for your paper, please include the following:

1. A clear introduction that outlines your paper and includes a thesis or argument you are trying to assert through your writing;
2. A critical review of literature pertaining to your topic of study;
3. An analysis and engagement with the texts you choose to include in your paper that will assist you in the development of your discussion. That is, a conversation that describes how particular works may support or challenge the position you may be trying to forward in relation to the subject of your final paper;
4. A conclusion summarizing what you have attempted to argue through the paper.

Your grade for this paper will be determined by how well you accomplish the following:

a) Identify and establish the significance of the subject/theme/issue you have chosen to explore;
b) Present your own particular thesis about this issue(s);
c) Include a range of texts (both in-class texts and outside resources) to develop your discussion;
d) Engage the readings you have selected to develop your discussion;
e) Organize your paper, develop your thesis, and express your ideas (in other words, the quality of your writing).

The final paper should be approximately 20 pages in length. Please refer to the syllabus for more information on formatting, citations, and submission guidelines. Please submit this paper to blackboard electronically as a word document by the deadline.

In summary, your grade breakdown is as follows:

Class participation 20%
Reading critique 15%
Paper proposal 15% Due on March 19
Final Paper 50% Due on May 14 (9 pm)

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:

A = 93-100, A- = 90-92, B+ = 87-89, B = 83-86, B- = 80-82, C+ = 77-79, C = 73-76, C- = 70-72,

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.

Readings

The following required books are available for purchase at university bookstore:


Additional readings will be available on Blackboard.

Course schedule & reading assignments

Week 1 (Monday, January 29): Introduction


Week 2 (Monday, February 5): Pluralism

Week 3 (Monday, February 12): Pluralism and its critics

Week 4 (Monday, February 19): Political Economy


Week 5 (Monday, February 26): Growth Machines

Week 6 (Monday, March 5): Regime Politics

*****SPRING BREAK*****

Week 7 (Monday, March 19): Critiques of Regime Politics
Reading: Stone, Clarence N. *Regime Politics*, Chapters 8, 9, & 11.


Week 8 (Monday, March 26): Urban Machines and Urban Reform

Week 9 (Monday, April 2): Federal Urban Policy


Week 10 (Monday, April 9): Deindustrialization, Race, and Conflict in Detroit

Week 11 (Monday, April 16): Race, Class, and Suburbanization in Oakland

Week 12 (Monday, April 23): Black Urban Regimes


**Week 13 (Monday, April 30): Urban Poverty**

**Reading:**


**Week 14 (Monday, May 7): Mass Incarceration**

**Reading:**


****FINAL PAPERS DUE MAY 14 BY 9 PM****