

**POSC 321, Fall 2000**

***URBAN POLITICAL PROBLEMS***

6:30-9:20 Wednesdays, 114 Taper Hall

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Office hours: 3:30-5:00 MW, or by appointment

The social and political questions the United States faces today are by and large problems of cities and their surrounding regions. The vast majority of us now live in or around urban areas. Economic and cultural globalization and their consequences have often concentrated in these settings. Not only economic development, but widespread problems like poverty, social exclusion, racial discrimination, crime prevention, and environmental degradation all center largely in places like Los Angeles. The twenty-first century politics of the United States can only be comprehended fully from an understanding of the politics of cities.

This course will examine an array of important contemporary urban political and social problems in present-day Los Angeles. We will consider these problems in light of the experience of other cities both now and in the past, including cities outside the United States. Guest speakers, study visits and student assignments will offer a chance for close exposure to urban problems and their potential solutions. Throughout the course, in considering a variety of issues, we will ask:

*What problems do contemporary urban regions face, what role does politics play in those problems, and how can those problems be solved?*

This course will also give students a practical way to gain experience with and understanding of new media for the analysis of social and political problems. Under the auspices of the Multimedia Literacy Across the Curriculum Project sponsored partly by the USC School of Cinema-Television, students will receive instruction in the most up-to-date software and other techniques to incorporate graphical, photographic, audio, visual and internet content into class projects and presentations. You will have an opportunity to carry out assignments that apply these technologies to analyze some of the most pressing problems of our society. No prior experience with computer or other multimedia technologies will be assumed. Assignments will be designed to allow students to choose how much they wish to incorporate new media components into their work. As in other Political Science courses, grading will be based on the substantive content of

assignments rather than on the media techniques employed. Ultimately, we will draw on these exercises to consider how these new technologies themselves are likely to alter cities and urban problem-solving.

## **Course Requirements**

Assignments for the course will consist of a group project and a number of other individual assignments. The group project will center around preparation of a Web site that integrates themes and evidence from one of the weekly subjects of the course. Each group will consist of 3-5 students. With permission of the instructor it will also be possible for a group to select a different but related topic. Sign-ups will take place the second week of the course. As part of your project you will be expected to present initial ideas related to your website in the relevant class session, and to give a presentation that previews your website on November 29.

In addition to this project there will be three written assignments related to our analysis of the internet and related new technologies. In the initial session I will pass out an initial one-page assignment that will give you a first exposure to the uses of the internet in urban politics. A second assignment of 3-4 pages will require you to venture an initial analysis of how the classic readings in urban politics covered on September 6 apply to contemporary Los Angeles. A third assignment of 2-3 pages will require you to assess websites of different cities or urban organizations.

Over the course of the semester you will also be required to participate in our discussions by means of one-page postings on an internet discussion board. Every student will be required to submit at least *five* postings of this sort. Multiple postings in the same week will generally be counted as part of a single posting. Your posting should contain either an argument, a well-articulated point, or a series of questions addressed to the readings, or an assessment or account of web materials on closely related topics. All postings are due *by midnight on Tuesday, the day preceding the relevant class session*.

Finally, you will be expected either to take a final exam or to write a final paper of 4-6 pages. In the paper you may choose to elaborate on materials or themes in your website, but if so you must go beyond those materials and make additional arguments. You may also choose to assess what your experience with the website shows about the potential and limitations of new technologies.

I expect that all students will attend all classes on time, do all the required readings, submit assignments on the date due, and participate in class discussions. Shortcomings in any of these areas will be taken as just cause for lowering your grade. With this caveat, the assignments will be weighted as follows:

Initial internet exercise: 5%  
Paper on urban power: 15%

Analysis of website: 10%  
Discussion postings: 25%  
Website project: 30%  
Final exercise: 15%

## Readings

The following required books are on sale in the bookstore.

Robert Dahl, *Who Governs?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962)

Dennis Judd and Paul Kantor (eds.), *The Politics of Urban America: A Reader* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998).

Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

Donald A. Schön, Bish Sanyal and William J. Mitchell, *High Technology and Low-Income Communities* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999).

Allen J. Scott and Edward W. Soja (eds.), *The City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

Additional required readings may be found in a reader available at CopyPrint in University Village and placed on electronic reserve. The Bookstore has also ordered two recommended readings that you may want to purchase:

(A textbook on urban politics) John J. Harrigan and Ronald K. Vogel, *Political Change in the Metropolis*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition (New York: Addison-Wesley Longman, 2000).

(A textbook on web graphics) Lynda Weinman, *Designing Web Graphics.3: How to Prepare Images and Media for the Web* (New Riders, 1999).

## Class Schedule

August 30: Introduction

*For an overview of the subject matter, read the following in the first weeks of the course:*  
Edward W. Soja and Allen J. Scott, "Introduction to Los Angeles: City and Region," in Allen J. Scott and Edward W. Soja (eds.), *The City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 1-20.

Peter Hall, "Changing Geographies: Technology and Income," In Donald A. Schön, Bish Sanyal and William J. Mitchell (eds.), *High Technology and Low-Income Communities* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), pp. 45-65.

#### September 6: Understanding Urban Political Problems I: Classic Views of Urban Power

Ernest W. Burgess, "The Growth of the City: An Introduction to a Research Project," in Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, *The City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925), pp. 47-62.

Floyd Hunter, *Community Power Structure* (University of North Carolina Press, 1953), Chs. 1, 2 pp. 1-25.

Dahl, *Who Governs?* (Yale University Press, 1961), Chs. 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 15, 19, 24, 27, 28; pp. 1-8, 63-103, 163-165, 184-189, 223-228, 271-275.

*Los Angeles Times* article on power in Los Angeles

#### *Questions for discussion:*

1. According to Burgess, how does change in the city come about?
2. What do Hunter and Dahl mean by "power"? What role does power play in Burgess' analysis?
2. Who would Hunter regard as the key figures in the power structure of Los Angeles? What makes them powerful? What role do elected officials play?
3. How does Dahl's pluralist theory differ from Hunter's approach?
4. What does Dahl mean by "indirect influence?"

#### ***September 13: Initial internet exercise due in class***

#### September 13: Understanding Urban Political Problems II: The State, Policy and Urban Power (first workshop)

Paul Peterson, "The Interests of the Limited City," in Dennis R. Judd and Paul Kantor (eds.), *Politics of Urban America: A Reader*, Second Edition (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1998), 13-23.

Clarence Stone, "Urban Regimes: A Research Perspective," in Judd and Kantor, pp. 24-39.

Michael Dear, "In the City, Time Becomes Visible," in Scott and Soja, pp. 76-99.

#### *Questions for discussion:*

1. What problems does Peterson see in both sides of the community power debate? What does he see as the limits of cities?
2. How does Stone's view of power as "social production" differ from the pluralist account of Dahl? Would Stone side with Hunter against Dahl? Why or why not?
3. What does Dear mean by "modern urbanism" and "postmodern urbanism"? What sort of power relations do each of these terms describe?

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**Short Paper Assignment (3-4 pages, due September 20<sup>th</sup> in class):** Summarize the main differences between Burgess', Hunter's and Dahl's views of urban power relations, including (a) who the key players are, (b) the degree that power is centralized among power holders, and (c) what role non-elites play in policymaking. Which view strikes you as the most convincing as an account of politics in contemporary Los Angeles, and why?

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September 20: Machines/Reform (second workshop)

Edward Banfield & James Q. Wilson, City Politics (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), Chs. 9, 11-13; pp. 115-127, 138-186.

Eric Schockman, "Is Los Angeles Governable? Revisiting the City Charter," in Micheal Dear, Eric Schockman and Greg Hise, Rethinking Los Angeles (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 1996), pp. 57-75.

*Questions for discussion:*

1. What is a political machine? What are its drawbacks? Does it possess any virtues?
2. What types of government are associated with reform? What are their advantages and disadvantages?
3. What kind of government has the city of Los Angeles had? What changes has charter reform made? Why?

September 27: Suburban/Segregation (GIS workshop)

Kenneth Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 283-305.

Douglas S. Massey & Nancy Denton, American Apartheid (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 17-114.

*Questions for discussion:*

1. What brought about suburbanization in the United States? Why was this process more far-reaching in this country than elsewhere in the industrial world? What were the consequences for political machines?
2. How did class and racial segregation in U.S. cities evolve over the first half of the twentieth century? To what degree did suburbanization cause the formation of ghettos in U.S. cities? To what degree did ghettos cause suburbanization?

#### October 4: Globalization and Urban Politics

Roger Keil, *Los Angeles: Globalization, Urbanization and Social Struggles* (Chichester, U.K.: John Wiley & Sons, 1998), pp. 8-13, 97-136.

Beng-Huat Chua, "World Cities, Globalisation and the Spread of Consumerism: A View From Singapore," *Urban Studies* 35(5-6) (1998), 981-1000.

#### *Questions for Discussion:*

1. What is globalization? What are its dimensions?
2. What has been the consequence of global processes for Los Angeles?
3. What are the most prominent dimensions of globalization in other cities like Singapore? Are the manifestations there the same as in Los Angeles?

#### ***October 11: Second internet exercise due in class***

#### October 11: Ethnic Politics

Read either Dahl, Chs. 4-5, pp. 32-62, or Massey & Denton, pp. 148-185.

Raphael J. Sonnenshein, *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), Chapters 14-15 (pp. 229-268).

Victor M. Valle and Rodolfo D. Torres, *Latino Metropolis* (St. Paul, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 3-14, 167-194.

#### *Questions for Discussion:*

1. What does Sonnenshein mean by the terms "political incorporation," "mobilization" and "urban populism"?
2. How does the political and social experience of African-Americans and Latinos as groups in American cities compare?
3. How does the political and social assimilation of these groups compare with those of European ethnic groups or Asian-Americans?
4. What are the political implications of the emergent role of Latinos as the largest minority in Los Angeles and other U.S. cities?

#### ***Week of October 18: Required Discussion of Website Plans Begins***

#### October 18: Economic Development Politics and Policy

John R. Logan & Harvey L. Molotch, *Urban Fortunes* (Berkeley: University of California Press,

1987), Ch. 3 (pp. 50-98).

Michael Porter, "The Competitive Advantage of the Inner City," *Harvard Business Review*, May-June 1995, pp. 55-71.

C. Michael Henry, "The Porter Model of Competitive Advantage for Inner-City Development: An Appraisal," in Thomas Boston & Catherine Ross, eds., *The Inner City* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1998), pp. 131-160.

*Questions for discussion:*

1. What do Logan and Molotch mean by the term "growth machine"? How does this concept compare with the other conceptions we have seen of community power? With Peterson's analysis of developmental policy and its politics?
2. What sources does Porter see as a potential for economic development in the inner city? How would he object to the analysis of Logan and Molotch?
3. What role do suburban areas play in the model of inner city development that Porter proposes? What role would he assign to public policies at the federal, state or local levels?
4. Is the Porter model a practical prescription for inner cities? What problems might it entail? Would alternative models such as th proposed by Henry work better? Why or why not?

October 25: Neighborhood Politics

Jeffrey M. Berry, Kent E. Portney and Ken Thomson, *The Rebirth of Urban Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1993), Chapters 1, 3 (pp. 1-17, 46-70).

Robert D. Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Journal of Democracy* (January 1995), pp. 65-78.

Mike Davis, *City of Quartz* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 153-213.

*Questions for discussion:*

1. What functions do we expect that citizen participation will perform in civic life?
2. How is the idea of citizen participation different from the concept of "social capital"?
3. What accounted for -- and made possible -- the rapid mobilization of community members in opposition to development in the Valley?
4. How representative of the community-at-large are proponents of such proposals as secession of the Valley?

November 1: Riots

Michael Lipsky, "Protest as a Political Resource," *American Political Science Review* (December 1968), pp. 1144-1158.

Michael Lipsky and David Olson, *Commission Politics: The Processing of Racial Crisis in America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1977), pp.1-23, 435-59.

“Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders,” in Judd and Kantor, pp. 308-317.

U.S.C. Website materials on LA Riots.

Jacqueline Leavitt, “Los Angeles Neighborhoods Respond to Civil Unrest: Is Planning an Adequate Tool?,” in W. Dennis Keating, Norman Krumholz and Philip Star, *Revitalizing Urban Neighborhoods* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1996), pp. 112-128.

*Questions for discussion:*

1. How does “protest” work as a political tactic?
2. Why is it difficult to sustain political influence through protest activities?
3. Are riots political events? In what sense(s)?
4. What *causes* riots? How do riots differ from other forms of crime?
5. How does the political system *respond* to the civil disorder of riots?
6. How well do the conclusions of Lipsky and Olson about responses in the political system to the riots of the 1960s explain the aftermath of the 1992 Los Angeles riot?

November 8: Crime and the Police

Sophie Body-Gendrot, *The Social Control of Cities? A Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 28-60.

History of LAPD, *Los Angeles Times*

Mike Davis, *The Ecology of Fear*, pp. 359-422.

*Questions for discussion:*

1. Why has crime control emerged as an increasingly prominent aspect of U.S. urban policy? What forms has this policy taken? What effects has it had?
2. What explains such recent police abuses of power as those in the recent Rampart scandal? Are these incidents the result of systematic influences, or isolated cases?
3. How can the policing of inner cities be accommodated with the preservation of citizen rights?
4. How can policing and its consequences be made more fair?

November 15: Welfare Reform and Homelessness

Christopher Conte, “Welfare, Work and the States,” in Sandra L. Stencel (ed.), *Issues for Debate in American Public Policy* (Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1999), pp. 79-97.

Jason DeParle, Articles about Welfare Reform, *New York Times*.

Jennifer Wolch, “From Global to Local: The Rise of Homelessness in Los Angeles during the 1980s,” in Scott and Soja, pp. 390-421.

*Questions for discussion:*

1. Why did welfare reform come about in the United States? What did it seek to accomplish?



2. Has welfare reform worked? Why or why not?
3. Why has homelessness increased in Los Angeles? Why have policies to address it proven inadequate?
4. What can be done to address the problems that homelessness has created for the homeless as well as for others?

November 22 (may be rescheduled due to holiday): Urban Environmental Issues

Mike Davis, "How Eden Lost Its Garden," in Scott and Soja, pp. 160-180.

Christopher Boone and Ali Modares, "Creating a Toxic Neighborhood in Los Angeles County," *Urban Affairs Review*, 35(2) (1999), 163-187.

Video on Playa Vista development controversy (to be shown in class)

*Questions for discussion:*

1. Why has local environmental policy like the protection of parks and open spaces proven inadequate in Los Angeles and other cities?
2. What do current controversies such as the fight over the Playa Vista project in Los Angeles demonstrate about the struggle for environmental protection?
3. How are politics of and policy toward the environment connected to issues of social equity?

### ***November 29: Presentations of Website Projects***

December 6: What difference will net technologies make?

William J. Mitchell, "The City of Bits Hypothesis," in Donald A. Schön, Bish Sanyal and William J. Mitchell (eds.), *High Technology and Low-Income Communities* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), pp. 107-129.

Anne Beamish, "Approaches to Community Computing: Bringing Technology to Low-Income Groups," in Schön, Sanyal and Mitchell, pp. 351-369.

*Questions for discussion:*

1. What differences will the spread of the Web and related technologies make for the future of cities and their politics?
2. What is the "digital divide"? How serious a problem is it? How can it be overcome or mitigated?
3. What do our experiences with Web and multimedia technologies suggest about the answers to these questions?

### ***December 11: Final Website Project Due***

*December 13, 5 p.m.: Final Exercise Due (if no in-class exam taken)*  
*December 13, 7-9 p.m.: Final Examination (optional)*