

## **Urban Politics**

**Meets TR 12:45—2:**

**Instructor: Prof. Bob Cropf**

**Contact Info: [robert.cropf@slu.edu](mailto:robert.cropf@slu.edu)**

**314-605-2499**

### Overview of Course

Are cities undergoing a renaissance or are they dying? In this course we will explore this significant question that will help determine the future of the whole country. This is not an exaggeration. According to the most recent Census, 80 percent of all Americans live in urban areas and this figure is likely to increase (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2018/12/18/americans-say-theres-not-much-appeal-big-city-living-why-do-so-many-us-live-there/>). As the Washington Post article in the above link says, while most Americans live in urban areas many would prefer not to. Interestingly, 27 percent of the Americans polled said they preferred to live in rural areas. Nonetheless, because so many Americans live in urban areas, the future of the country is inevitably linked to the future of these areas.

Cities tend to be where the jobs and economic opportunities are. Big corporations like Amazon want to locate new corporate headquarters in cities like New York and Washington, DC, not in small towns. In this course, we examine why cities are economic engines of countries (not just the U.S. but elsewhere). Can cities continue to generate new jobs and economic opportunities for current and future residents?

While jobs are mainly found in cities, many people think rural life is more pleasant than urban living. Cities have higher rates of crime, mental illness, and poverty than rural and suburban places. In this course, we examine the forces that contribute to crime, poverty, drug addiction, and homelessness in urban areas. However, it should be pointed out that rural areas are not immune to social pathologies. Witness rural America's struggles with unemployment, opioid addiction and suicide.

The 2008 Great Recession exposed the weakness of many American cities. Our textbook discusses how Detroit went bankrupt in 2013. Alas, Detroit was not the only city to experience financial troubles during the last economic downturn. St. Louis still hasn't fully recovered from the Great Recession. Today, there are fewer jobs in the St. Louis metropolitan area than there was before the recession. Rust Belt cities have, on the whole, emerged from the recession weaker economically than going in.

On the other hand, cities like New York, San Francisco, and Seattle have prospered like never before. In fact, those cities have grown so much economically that it is harder for middle-class people to afford to live there. We examine the winners and losers in the urban economy. What insights can this give us to recommend policies that might assist cities like Detroit and St. Louis? How can places like Seattle and New York become cities that middle-class people can live in again?

The foundation of all we examine in this course is political in nature. But to understand fully the urban crisis we must draw on more than political science. As a result, this course will also draw upon geography, urban sociology, urban economics, urban planning, public policy studies, and public administration. It will also draw heavily on films. The films that are used in this course are mostly fictionalized accounts of urban living. Documentaries are excellent for understanding urban areas but

fictional films allow us to perceive urban area and urban life through a unique personal, point-of-view. Some of the films are dystopian (*The Warriors* and *Blade Runner*). But all take as the starting point, current cities and their problems as viewed through the creative lens of some of the most significant cinema artists of recent decades including Spike Lee and Martin Scorsese.

#### Course Assignments:

This section is subject to change as the semester progresses. The only firm promise I can give is that we will finish both books by the end.

Date Due	Reading Assignment	Films
8/27	None	
8/29	Levine: Chap.1;	
9/3 (Jessica Trout will discuss policy pods for part of class.)	Rothstein: Chap.1	The Warriors (A 1979 movie that paints a portrait of cities eerily familiar to current Detroit at least in terms of the desolation.)
9/5	Levine: Chap. 2	
9/10 (Librarian Rebecca Hyde will be guest speaker. Class will meet in library.)	Rothstein: Chap.2	
9/12	Levine: Chap.6	Gangs of New York (Masterpiece that shows that anti-immigrant fervor is deeply engrained in American history.)
9/17 (Prof. Vince Casaregola discusses how to read films and reads his urban poetry.)	Rothstein: Chap.3	
9/19	Levine: Chap. 7	Milk (Traces Milk's evolution from yuppie to gay activist and finally martyr.)
9/24	Rothstein: Chap.4	
9/26	Levine: Chap. 4	Do the Right Thing (Spike Lee's classic. Little has changed in terms of American attitudes about race.)
10/1	Rothstein: Chap.5	
10/3	Levine: Chap.5	

10/8	Rothstein: Chap. 6	
10/10	Levine: Chap.8	Chinatown (How the criminal element shaped modern L.A.)
10/15 (Paper Outline due)	Midterm review	
10/17	Midterm in class	
10/22	Fall Break	
10/24	Levine: Chap.9	
10/29	Rothstein: Chap.7	Pruitt-Igoe Myth (Documentary about what really happened at America's most notorious public housing units.)
10/31	Levine: Chap. 10	
11/5	Rothstein: Chap.8	
11/7	Levine: Chap.11	
11/12	Rothstein: Chap.9	
11/14	Levine: Chap. 3	Holding Ground (Another documentary about efforts in Boston to slow down gentrification.)
11/19	Rothstein: Chap.10	
11/21	Levine: Chap.12	Blade Runner (1982) (Dystopian classic about L.A. in the future. Sequel is also very good I hear.)
11/26	Rothstein: Chap.11	
11/28	Thanksgiving	
12/3 (John Wagner, Wash U., will talk about the future of Green Cities)	Rothstein: Chap.12	
12/5 (Policy Pod paper due)	Final Exam Review	
12/12	Online Final Exam due by 5 PM	

Topical Outline:

Date	Topic
8/27	Course Introduction.
8/29	The Urban situation: what is the role of cities in the global economy?

9/3	If SF, then everywhere? Public policy as a tool to segregate cities.
9/5	Significant factors in development of cities.
9/10	How public housing segregated America.
9/12	The machine vs reformers: the legacy of urban politics in the 19 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> centuries.
9/17	How city zoning segregated urban areas.
9/19	Citizen participation in urban politics
9/24	How federal homeownership policies segregated America
9/26	Political and economic power in cities
10/1	How federal policies reinforced private exclusionary practices
10/3	Formal political structure and leadership style
10/8	How white flight shapes urban areas
10/10	Efficiency and equity in urban service delivery
10/15	Review for Midterm
10/17	Midterm
10/22	Fall Break
10/24	Evolution of suburbia
10/26	How the IRS and other regulatory agencies were used to promote segregation
10/31	Regionalism and fragmentation
11/5	How local policies aided segregation
11/7	Intergovernmental relations
11/12	State-sanctioned violence as a means to prevent integration
11/14	Gentrification and the global city
11/19	Keeping African Americans' income low
11/21	The future of urban places
11/26	Looking backward, looking forward
11/28	Thanksgiving
12/3	How can segregation be reversed?
12/5	Final exam review

Assignments:

- 1) Bulletin Board (Brief responses to questions about the movies.)
- 2) Online Midterm exam
- 3) Policy Pod paper
- 4) Online Final Exam

Student Learning Objectives:

At the end of the course, students will be able to demonstrate the ability to:

- 1) Explain how globalization and other economic forces exert a powerful influence on urban areas for both good and ill;
- 2) Explain how formal rules and structures have a major impact on local politics;
- 3) Describe the important role played by the federal and state governments in cities;
- 4) Explain the importance of regional differences and their impact on urban affairs;
- 5) Describe why cities need economic development and what they do to attract jobs and business;
- 6) Explain the significant impact that race and ethnicity have in urban areas

Grading Scale:

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D	60-69
F	<60

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Attendance Policy:

Your success in this course will depend on your ability to complete the daily reading and weekly writing and discussion assignments as well as your ability to read the biography of Benjamin Franklin as if you were having a conversation with the author each day. (The last is just to make sure you're paying attention!) Absence in three classes without a reason that is out of the control of the student will result in a one level drop in the final grade (i.e. illness, work conflict, medical emergency, etc.) see more information at link below:

<https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/academic-policies-procedures/attendance/>

#### Courtesy Expectations:

Students will treat their classroom obligations as they would treat any serious professional engagement. That includes:

Preparing thoroughly for each session in accordance with the instructor's request;

Adhering to deadlines and timetables established by the instructor;

Providing constructive feedback to faculty members regarding their performance.

#### Honor Code:

Students are expected to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct at any time is, in its judgment, detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving ordering or soliciting information in examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations or quizzes. Violations should be reported to me and will be investigated and adjudicated according to the Policy on Academic Honesty of the College of Arts and Sciences. If the charges are found to be true, the student may be liable for academic or disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion from the University. Please refer to the university policy at <http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml>.

#### Expectations and Procedures:

##### Technology

Put your phone on mute. You do not need to use your laptop for this course but you will probably bring it to class anyway. Avoid the temptation to browse the web, check e-mail, and frequent social networking sites during lecture. Show a little will power for goodness sake! I will upload all lecture powerpoints to Blackboard.

##### Communication:

I will post grades, send class e-mails, etc. through Blackboard. Be sure that you can access the e-mail address listed. I will only send e-mail out to your SLU e-mail accounts listed on the course roster in Banner. I will not keep track of any other e-mail addresses you may use. Be sure to check the class' Blackboard announcements.

##### Disabilities:

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

\_ Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.

\_ University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by going to [www.slu.edu/success](http://www.slu.edu/success).

Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at the Student Success Center.

Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter

University Writing Services:

I encourage you to take advantage of University Writing Services; getting feedback benefits all writers! Trained writing consultants can help with any writing, multimedia project, or oral presentation. During one-on-one consultations, you can work on everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. These services do fill up, so please make an appointment! Also, bring your assignment description, and a few goals, to the consultation! For more information, or to make an appointment, visit [www.slu.edu/writingservices.xml](http://www.slu.edu/writingservices.xml) or call 977-3484.