

**PSCI 3071: URBAN POLITICS**  
**UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO AT BOULDER**  
**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**  
**INSTRUCTOR: SCOTT L. MINKOFF**  
**SPRING 2011**

**COURSE INFORMATION**

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Instructor: Scott Minkoff  
Email: scott.minkoff@colorado.edu  
Office: Ketchum 130  
Office Hours: M: 8:45-9:45, 1:00-2:00; W: 1:00-2:30, and by appointment

Section 001: MWF 10:00-10:50 in DUAN G2B60  
Section 002: MWF: 12:00-12:50 in KTCH 234

**IMPORTANT DATES**

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Midterm: Wednesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Analytical Book Review Due Date: Friday, April 1<sup>st</sup> at the beginning of class.  
Section 001 Final Exam: Saturday, April 30<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm  
Section 002 Final Exam: Monday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> at 4:30pm

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

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With 50 state governments, 3,131 counties, over 36,000 city and town governments, more than 14,000 school districts, and about 35,000 special districts, American politics is going on in more places than just Capitol Hill! Indeed, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote that the American city “unites two advantages that, everywhere they are found, keenly excite men’s interest; that is to say: independence and power. It acts, it is true, in a circle that it cannot leave, but its movement within that are free. That independence alone would already give it a real importance if its population and its extent did not assure it.”<sup>1</sup> This seminar is about cities and the “circle” (more accurately, “circles”) that they operate in.

To understand the city and its circles, we will explore the evolution of the American local jurisdiction, the structure and operation of local government, and the politics that characterizes it. The term begins by examining how America transitioned from a rural country to an urban one. We then dive into the politics that shaped local forms of government including machines, bosses, and the reform movement. The remainder of the term is broken up into topics including national urban policy, education, city budgets, fragmentation, and finally, what it will take to be a prosperous city in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And along the way we frequently discuss issues of race and immigration and how they influence city life and city politics.

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<sup>1</sup> Tocqueville, Alexis de. 1992. *Democracy in America*. Edited by H. C. Mansfield and D. Winthrop. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. p62

This is an interdisciplinary seminar. By this I mean that the material comes from a range of disciplines including political science, public policy, economics, and history. This is also a discussion-based seminar and, as such, I will not be lecturing about the material. *Accordingly, you should only remain enrolled in this course if you intend on completing all readings and being an active participant in class.* The readings for the course have been carefully selected to provide you with both foundational information and to stimulate discussion about the topics.

## **BOOKS AND READINGS**

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The course has one required book: *City Politics* by Judd and Swanstrom (JS). All other readings will be available on CU Learn. Additionally, you will be required to purchase or loan one additional book for your analytical book review.

JS: D. Judd and T. Swanstrom. 2010. (7th edition) *City Politics*. Longman. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-205-73697-3

## **ASSESSMENT**

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Your performance in the course will be assessed based on reading quizzes/assignments, your participation in class, discussion leadership, two course examinations, and an analytical book review.<sup>2</sup>

**Reading Quizzes and Assignments (10%):** We will begin some classes with a short reading quiz. The quizzes will typically require you to either answer a question about the assigned reading (or movie) or to write a short summary/analysis. The amount of quizzes given will be determined based on whether students have demonstrated that they are doing the reading. Occasionally, I may assign the quiz question as an assignment the class before in which case students should bring it with them to class. Most quizzes/assignments will be assigned one of the following three grades:

- 0 = The student did not attend class or showed no evidence of doing the reading.
- 1 = The student provided an adequate answer that indicates he/she did the reading.
- 2 = The student provided a good answer that indicates he/she had a sophisticated understanding of the reading.\*

\*Quizzes/assignments for which no analysis is required will receive either a 0 or a 1.

**Participation Self-Assessment (10%):** In order for this class to work, *everybody needs to participate on a regular basis.* Participation involves asking questions and offering comments during our discussions. At the end of the term, you will submit a form indicating the grade you believe you deserve and why you deserve it. A rubric to base your self-assessment on will be provided. Except in extenuating circumstances, the grade you select for yourself will be your participation grade. If the instructor believes that the self-assessment is considerably off, a meeting will be held with the student.

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<sup>2</sup> The instructor reserves the authority to curve course grades.

**Discussion Leadership and Paper (10%):** Most classes will have one or two discussion leaders. The discussion leader(s) will come to class with an approximately 400-word *analysis of the reading* with at least three discussion questions included at the end. The analysis should include minimal summary but, beyond that, the approach is up to the student. One suggestion is to connect the reading(s) to current events, to other class readings, or the book you are reading for you analytical book review. The student might also consider connecting the reading(s) with his or her own personal experiences.

The discussion leader will also be charged with beginning each class with a short summary and analysis of the assigned reading(s) aimed at getting discussion going. Your discussion leadership grade will be evaluated based on both your written analysis and your in-class discussion leadership. In assigning the grade, I will consider the difficulty of the material and the amount of time that is available for discussion. Students are strongly encouraged to put full effort into their discussion paper in the event that the discussion is limited. I will assign the date that you will be discussion leader; students who would like to switch dates must find a student to trade with and notify me of the switch.

**Examinations (Midterm: 20%; Final: 25%):** There will be a midterm examination and a final examination. Details about the form of the test and the material it will cover will be offered as the exam dates approach.

**Analytical Book Review (25%):** You will write a 3-page review of a book about cities and/or city politics. I will provide a list of acceptable books though you may choose your own so long as you get it approved (many of the book on the list are available used online for less than \$20.00 and some are available in the library). Your *analytical* book review should be a carefully constructed analysis of the book that includes a thoughtful exposition on what can be learned about present day cities and/or city politics. More information about the analytical book review will be provided separately.

### **BOOK REVIEW DUE DATE: FRIDAY, APRIL 1, 2011**

#### **BE ON TIME**

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Each class will begin promptly at the designated time. Entering the classroom late is a distraction to the instructor and to your fellow students. Students who regularly come late to class will see it reflected in their participation grade and may be asked not to attend at all.

#### **LAPTOP COMPUTERS**

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Students are allowed to use their laptop computers during class. However, those who do should be aware that when they are not taking notes or reviewing course material (for example, when they are browsing the internet or sending email) it is a distraction to other students in the class who are trying to focus. *All students who know that they will be using their laptop for activities unrelated to the course should sit in the back of the*

*classroom with no one behind them.* Students not sitting in the back and found to be using their laptop for activities unrelated to the course will be asked to move to the back of the classroom. *Furthermore, if you believe (or have found) that using a laptop in class will be a distraction to your own learning and participation, be proactive and do not use it during class.*

## **UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

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If you qualify for **accommodations because of a disability**, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices>.

Campus policy regarding **religious observances** requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. See full details at: [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac\\_relig.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html).

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an **appropriate learning environment**. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at: [http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student\\_code](http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code).

The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on **discrimination and harassment**, the University of Colorado policy on **sexual harassment**, and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>.

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the **academic integrity** policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at: <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html>.