

Western University · Dept. of Political Science
Urban Politics and the Politics of Urbanization
Political Science 9524
Winter 2023

Instructor: Dr. Zack Taylor
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Office Hours: By appointment
Dates: Wednesdays 1:30–4:00pm
Location: SSC 7236

Over the past century, human society has shifted from overwhelmingly rural to urban. Cities are increasingly socially and economically divided within themselves, even as we see growing economic and social gaps between big cities and rural areas. Both dynamics have shaped local and national politics and posed profound governance challenges. It is therefore not surprising that politics and political conflict within cities, domestic and transnational competition between localities, and conflict between urban and rural places within nation-states are enduring objects of study in political science, political sociology, and political geography.

Our goal in this course to survey and debate theories and empirical work on urban politics and the politics of urbanization, with attention to the methods used in different research traditions. We will balance attention to historical work with cutting-edge work. The course is divided into three sections, working from the national to the local scale:

1. The Politics of Urbanization
2. Governing Urbanization
3. Political Conflict Within Cities

This advanced, graduate-level course will focus on Canada and other countries of the Global North, and is designed to be of interest to students specializing in Canadian Politics and Comparative Politics, in addition to Urban Politics and Local Government. It is a required core course for all PhD students intending to write a Comprehensive Exam in Urban Politics and Local Governance. It complements POL 9755 Globalization and Urban Politics, which is not offered every year.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this course, you will:

- be familiar with leading theories and research agendas in the areas of urban politics, multi-level urban governance, and urban-rural conflict, and
- have sharpened your analytic and argumentative skills through classroom discussions and assignments.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

Class 1 Jan. 11 Introduction

Part I – The Politics of Urbanization

Class 2 Jan. 18 The Urban-Rural Cleavage in National Politics

Class 3 Jan. 25 Urbanization and Local Political Development

Part II – Governing Urbanization

Class 4 Feb. 1 Patterns of Multi-Level Democracy

Class 5 Feb. 8 Multilevel Urban Governance in Canada and the United States

Class 6 Feb. 15 Governing Metropolitan Areas

**** Family Day and Reading Week, Feb. 20–24 ****

Class 7 Mar. 1 Dimensions of Local Autonomy

Class 8 Mar. 8 City Limits? Agency and Constraint in Urban Governance

Part III – Political Conflict within Cities

Class 9 Mar. 15 The Community Power Debate: Elitism vs. Pluralism

Class 10 Mar. 22 Urban Regime Analysis

Class 11 Mar. 29 Group Conflict in Urban Politics

Class 12 Apr. 5 The Politics of Urban Development

COURSE WEBSITE

This course makes use of OWL. Please refer to the course website regularly for announcements and course information: <https://owl.uwo.ca/portal>.

COURSE FORMAT

This is a seminar course. There will be no lecture. Students will lead and actively contribute to the discussion. **Reading the required texts in advance is a necessary prerequisite for doing well in this course and will make for more exciting and insightful discussion.**

Unless university policy changes, we will be meeting in person on campus, taking all proper pandemic precautions. You are welcome to schedule consultations (over Zoom) with the instructor.

COURSE MATERIALS

All **required and supplementary readings** will be posted on OWL. Selections from books are mostly available on-line through Western Libraries. If you are interested in the topic, you may wish to invest in hard copies of these books.

Supplementary readings are not required for class discussion. They are primarily for the benefit of doctoral students who intend to write the comprehensive examination in Urban Politics and Local Governance. The Graduate Handbook states: “Students writing the exam are responsible for all readings (required and supplementary, with a stronger emphasis on the required readings) listed in the syllabi for the courses they completed”. You may also find them useful for writing your final paper.

EVALUATION

Participation (25%): Lively, informed, and thoughtful discussion is at the heart of this course. You will be expected to provide consistent, informed, and active participation throughout the term. Read the material, reflect on it before and during the seminar, and engage in the seminar discussion in an open-minded fashion. Grades will be assigned based not just on the frequency but also the quality of your oral contributions to the seminar.

Seminar leadership (15%): You will deliver one substantial presentation, of up to 25 minutes that will offer a brief introduction to some (but not necessarily all) of the week’s readings as well as *two* additional reading components you select. In addition to effective summary and integration of the selected readings, you should raise questions and challenges in such a way as to stimulate seminar discussion in the time to follow.

Reading commentaries (4 x 5% = 20%): Over the course of the term, you will submit *four* short papers of 3–4 pages in length that offer critical consideration of the assigned readings in a single class. You may emphasize any theme or themes within the readings, and you certainly need not cover all of the assigned items for the week. The aim is to identify what is at stake in

the selected material, evaluate the approach of the author or authors, and reflect briefly upon how the puzzle or debate in question might in your view best be addressed. Submit them to the OWL Drop Box the day before class. Which weeks you choose is up to you, but you must submit at least two prior to Reading Week.

Final paper (40%): Building on the course material, you will write a journal article-style paper that critically engages with an important question raised in this course. This may involve taking a deeper dive into the literature to compare and contrast diverse theoretical perspectives and their extensions, or it may involve applying a theory to one or more empirical cases. You may choose to undertake a quantitative analysis in your paper. **You will submit a short (1–2 pages) proposal for instructor feedback on or before March 1.** Doctoral students will submit a maximum 25-page paper, double-spaced. Papers are due on Wednesday, April 12.

Both your proposal and your final paper will be submitted via the OWL assignment submission system. Further details on the paper assignment will be discussed early in the term.

COURSE POLICIES

Communication with the instructor: Please do not hesitate to e-mail me if you would like to discuss course material. I will make every effort to respond to e-mails within 24 hours (weekends excepted). If you are having trouble with the course material or are falling behind in your work, please contact me as soon as possible.

E-mail policy: All Western University students are required to have an @uwo.ca e-mail account. The instructor will *only* respond to e-mails sent from your Western University account. The instructor will *not* accept assignments by e-mail.

Late assignments: The penalty for late assignments is two percentage points per day (including weekend days). If you foresee problems meeting submission deadlines please consult the instructor early; accommodations can always be made with adequate advance notice.

READING LIST AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

TBA