

## GVPT 461

### Seminar in Local Politics and Government

Spring, 2023

Thursdays, 6:30-9:15  
Tydings Hall, 2102

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Office Hours: by appointment

### Course Description

This course is an introduction to local government and politics in the U.S. context. We will explore the evolution of local jurisdictions, particularly cities, and the politics that goes into local level decision making. At the end of the course, you will have a better idea of the challenges faced by localities, as well as the different outcomes associated with different choices about local governance. You will also be able to develop informed opinions about how local governments can and do adapt to political and policy challenges.

Classes will involve both discussions led by the instructor and discussions led by students. The subject of the discussions will be the readings for the week, the media supplements assigned most weeks, and relevant additional topics as they come up. Your active participation in this seminar is important both for both the quality of the discussions and for your grade in this class.

### Grades

In this class you will be assessed based on the following:

1. Performance on three **quizzes** (20% each, for a total of 60%)
2. Performance on a **seminar discussion assignment** (10%)
3. Quality of **participation** in seminar discussions (10%)
4. Performance on a **final project** presentation (20%)

**Quizzes** will be short-essay tests, requiring 2-3 paragraphs per answer. Questions will be drawn from readings and seminar discussions. Each student will either lead or be paired with another student to **lead the class discussion** based on the week's reading and the media supplements; the instructor will assess the students' preparation, presentation, and the extent to which the students generate and sustain a useful discussion. **Participation** in seminars will involve an evaluation of the frequency and quality of student participation in both in-class discussion and the online discussions related to final projects. **Final projects** will take the form of a Powerpoint (or similar) presentation on an instructor approved topic related to local government and politics.

Final grades will be assigned on the following scale:

A+	98-100%
A	92-97%
A-	90-91%
B+	88-89%
B	82-87%
B-	80-81%
C+	78-79%
C	72-77%
C-	70-71%
D+	68-69%
D	62-67%
D-	60-61%
F	59% or lower

### **Textbooks**

There are five required textbooks in this course:

- Glaeser, Edward. *Triumph of the City*. Penguin Books.
- Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Modern Library.
- Oliver, J. Eric. *Local Elections and the Politics of Small Scale Democracy*. Princeton University Press.
- Rothstein, Richard. *The Color of Law*. Liveright Publishing.
- Sadik-Khan, Janette. 2016. *Street Fight: Handbook for an Urban Revolution*. Penguin Books.

## Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Readings
Week 1	1/26	Introduction, Syllabus, Overview
Week 2	2/2	Jacobs, Part 1-2: The Strengths of Cities  Media: Radiolab podcast, “ <i>Cities</i> ”
Week 3	2/9	Jacobs, Part 3-4: Declining Cities and Repairing Cities  Media: TED Talk, “ <i>How to Protect Fast Growing Cities from Failing</i> ”
Week 4	2/16	<b>Final Project Virtual Workshop I</b>
Week 5	2/23	Oliver, Intro-Ch 3: Local Elections and Participation  Media: Documentary “ <i>Daley: The Last Boss</i> ”

Week 6	3/2	Oliver, Ch 4-6: Systemic Factors in Local Elections Media: Paul Stekler, Postcards from the Great Divide <b>QUIZ 1</b>
Week 7	3/9	Glaeser, Intro-Ch 5: How Cities Address Challenges Media: This American Life Podcast, “ <i>What Kind of Country</i> ” (Act Three, “ <i>Do You Want a Wake Up Call?</i> ”) Media: John Oliver, “Special Districts”
Week 8	3/16	Glaeser, Ch 6-Conclusion: Triumph of Cities? Media: TED Talk: <i>Why Glass Towers Are Bad for City Life – And What We Need Instead</i> ”
Week 9	3/23	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
Week 10	3/30	Rothstein, Ch 1-6: Inequality in Cities Media: TED Talk, “ <i>The Biggest Risks Facing Cities –And Some Solutions</i> ”
Week 11	4/6	Rothstein, Ch 7-12: Government’s Role in Segregation Media: WNYC Radio Podcast: “ <i>Forget ‘The Bronx is Burning.’ These Days, The Bronx is Gentrifying</i> ”
Week 12	4/13	<b>Final Projects Virtual Workshop II</b> <b>QUIZ 2</b>
Week 13	4/20	

Sadik-Khan, Intro-Ch 6: Transportation Infrastructure

Media: The War on Cars Podcast, “Why the World Needs the War on Cars”

Sadik-Khan, Ch 7-13: New Ideas and Future Cities

Week 14      4/27

Media: Vox Video, “Superblocks: How Barcelona is Taking City Streets Back from Cars.” (in class)

Week 15      5/4

**FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS**

Week 16      5/11

**FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS II**

When  
Scheduled

**QUIZ 3/FINAL EXAM**

### **Make-up Assignments**

Make-up Exams and Assignments will be given as a result of a documented, unexpected emergency or as the result of a university-authorized commitment.

### **Contacting the Instructor**

Students with requests or questions about the class should feel free to contact the instructor. I am happy to discuss issues related to DSS accommodations, class content, or other issues related to the class.

### **Additional Course Information**

The syllabus is tentative, and mid-semester changes to the class may be necessary. Changes are at the discretion of the instructor and will be announced in class. Students are required to ensure that their emails are registered with ELMS.

Additional information about course-related policies at the University of Maryland, including academic integrity, sexual misconduct, and discrimination, can be found on the Course Related Policies page, hosted by the Office of Undergraduate Studies:

<http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>