# Political Economy of the City

Syllabus, Spring 2011

Tues. 6:00-7:50 6 E. 16<sup>th</sup> St. Rm 1106

Prof. Peter Eisinger Rm 507 72 Fifth Ave. Eisingep@newschool.edu

Ph: 212-229-5400, ext. 1516

Office hours: Tues 5:00-6:00 & Weds. 12:00-2:00; other times by appointment

#### Course Description

This is a lecture course devoted to exploring the theme of the autonomy of the American city: To what extent are the physical shape of the city, its government responsibilities, its resources, and its opportunities shaped by forces that local officials and citizens control? Can cities control their own destinies? Or to put the matter more narrowly: Does local politics really matter?

The question is not an obvious one. Cities are embedded in larger economic and political settings, and some people argue that the forces generated in those larger settings overwhelm the local political system. If local political power *does not matter*, then what *are* the shaping forces? To what extent, for example, do great national and international economic forces shape the city? What about migration and immigration? What about the federal government in Washington?

To answer these questions we will range widely across time and space, looking at the historical development of American cities in different regions of the country. We will then look at city resources and the relationships among cities, the state, and the federal government. A central part of the course focuses on the structures of municipal governments, their origins, and their implications for the distribution of power within the city. Throughout the course we study these questions in the context of the two dominant issues in modern urban politics, namely the politics of development (think Ground Zero, Atlantic Yards, Columbia University expansion) and the politics of race and ethnicity (think NYC mayoral races or school reform).

## Readings

Please purchase the following books (easiest and cheapest on Amazon):

- 1) Douglas Rae, City: Urbanism and Its End (2003)
- 2) Thomas Sugrue, <u>The Origins of the Urban Crisis</u> (1996)
- 3) Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf, and Todd Swanstrom, <u>Place Matters</u> (Second edition), 2004)

Readings below that are marked by an asterisk (\*) I will send to you as e-mail attachments. Other readings with website addresses are up to you to download.

#### Requirements

1) **Two Professional Memos**. Each is worth 30% of your final grade

This course requires two short professional memos of 4-5 pages in length each on the topics assigned below. They are the sorts of memos you might be asked to do as policy professionals in the workplace.

The word Aprofessional@ is important: I want you to imagine first of all that your boss has just walked into your cubicle and said to you, in effect, AWe need to know about X. Have a 4-5 page memo on my desk by the end of next week.@ I want you to approach this assignment, then, not as if you were doing a Aschool@ exercise, but rather as a project that might make a difference because real matters are at stake. I want you to pretend that you are writing not for a professor but for that agency or organization boss, who will be making a judgment about your job performance.

This is important: A professional memo must contain clear, concise, informative writing that is backed up by good research. It must get right to the point.

You will probably want to clear your topics with me, preferably in person during my office hours.

Here are the topics:

A) A labor sector analysis. This memo is due on March 8.

This memo is part of a larger report your agency is producing on the economic future of New York City called <u>New York Works</u>: 2025.

Your assignment is to profile the contribution of some particular labor sector to the New York City economy. Luckily, your boss has given you a free choice of which sector you will analyze, since you are the first person on the team. So you can pick any sector you want: for example, tourism, finance, the taxi industry, construction, the media, light manufacturing, day labor, restaurants, show business, and so on. Please note that your choice of sector may in part be determined by the availability of data. If your sector is very small and very specialized (e.g., bartenders in Aussie bars, truck vendors of high end cupcakes, church steeple repairpersons), you will be unable to write a very good report, unless you have access to some unique dataset or ethnographic study.

In describing this sector you=II need to answer the following questions: How big is it? Who are the workers? What is the distribution of occupational categories within it? What is the earnings profile? Is it a growth industry or in decline? What boroughs are affected? What does it do for the city more broadly (think of the role of NYC as the media capital of the nation and beyond.....)

One more tip: this is an exercise in finding data. You will need to hunt carefully and thoroughly for reliable and pertinent information, using all sorts of sources (e.g., the US Census, the state Dept. of Labor, labor unions, trade associations, academic reports, various city government offices, and so on).

b) A political profile of some particular New York ethnic, religious, social or racial group. This memo is due on April 12.

You are now working for a person who plans to run for mayor of New York City. This person needs to know about the political behavior, involvement, interests, and inclinations of the city=s various ethnic, religious, social, and racial groups.

Again, you may pick any group (Haitians, Dominicans, Chinese, Orthodox Jews, Irish, the gay community). Here are some the critical questions you=II have to address in 4-5 pages: How big is the group? Where is it located in the city? How politically active is it (Aactive@ is open to various meanings)? How politically unified is the group? What are its dominant political concerns?

YOUR MEMOS MUST BE TURNED IN TO ME BY E-MAIL. THEY MUST BE SENT NO LATER THAN 4:00 PM ON THE DUE DATES.

# SAD TO SAY, THERE IS A PENALTY FOR LATE PAPERS. Anything sent after 4:00PM is considered late. SO JUST TO BE CLEAR, 4:01 IS A LATE PAPER.

2) **A final take-home exam**, distributed by e-mail on May 3 and due by e-mail no later than 4:00PM on May 7. This will be 8 pages in length. (40%)

### Lecture Schedule

1. Jan. 25. Introduction

Rae, Ch. 1

Sugrue, Introduction

2. Feb. 1. Urban Growth in the U.S.

Sugrue, Ch. 1

Wm. Frey, "Migration Declines Further: Stalling Brain Gains and Ambitions" (2011)\*

3. Feb. 8. Migration and Its Political Implications

Sugrue, Chaps. 4, 5, 6.

Wm. Frey, "Did the 2010 Census Tell Us Anything New?" (2011)\*

4. Feb. 15. Economic Transformations

Rae, Chaps. 2, 3.

C. Leinberger, "The Next Slum?" The Atlantic (March 2008)\*

5. Feb. 22. Federal Influences, Part I.

Sugrue, Chaps. 2, 3.

E.V. Savitch, AEncourage, Then Cope: Washington and the Sprawl Machine, @\*

6. Mar. 1. Federal Influences, Part II.

Dreier, et al., Ch. 4.

P. Eisinger, ACity Politics in an Era of Federal Devolution@\*

7. Mar. 8. Cities and States: Dillon=s Rule and Home Rule

NYC, Green Plan 2007, Introduction and Appendix B\*

H. Wolman, T. Swanstrom, and M. Weir, AThe Calculus of Coalitions: Cities and States and the Metropolitan Agenda@ <a href="http://www.Brookings.edu"><u>Http://www.Brookings.edu</u></a>

#### **SPRING BREAK**

8. Mar. 22. Revenue Issues

Dreier, et al., Ch. 5

9. Mar. 29 Urban Executives

Rae, Chaps. 6, 9, 10.

Mitchell Moss, "The Role of the City in the Redevelopment of Lower Manhattan," in J. Mollenkopf, ed. <u>Contentious City</u> (2005)\*

Joseph Viteritti, "New York: Past, Present, Future," in When Mayors Take Charge (2009)\*

10. April 5. Growth Machines and the Politics of Development

Rae, Ch. 7.

11. April 12. Race and Ethnicity in Urban Politics

Rae, Ch. 8

Sugrue, Chaps. 7, 8, 9.

S. Erie, ABig-City Rainbow Politics: Machines Revividus?@\*

12. April 19. The Suburban Noose

Rae, Chaps. 11, 12.

M. Danielson, ASuburban Autonomy@\*

13. April 26. Regional Solutions

Dreier, et al., Chaps 6, 7, 8.

F. Siegel, "Is Regional Government the Answer?"\*

14. May 3. Wrap-up: The Future of the American City

Sugrue, Conclusion.

Mark Branch, "Then...and Now: How a City Came Back From the Brink," Yale Alumni Magazine, May/June 2009.\*