

# PSC 226/226W

## Act Locally? Local Government and Public Policy in the United States

### Spring 2019 Syllabus

Instructor: Stu Jordan

Contact: [stuart.jordan@rochester.edu](mailto:stuart.jordan@rochester.edu)

Office: 2-141A Dewey Hall

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3:30pm-5:00pm

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## Aims and Scope

This course aims to give you a foundation for understanding whether and how local governments in the U.S. can contribute to the well-being of the persons who live within and around their boundaries. It will focus specifically on mid- to large-sized cities and their surrounding regions, with special attention paid to the City of Rochester, Monroe County and the finger-lakes region of western New York State. A major theme of the course will be the

spatial concentration of poverty that characterizes U.S. urban areas. We will ask whether and how local governments can avoid reinforcing and deepening the exclusion of poor residents from the material abundance that most residents of U.S. urban areas enjoy.

The course offers no easy answers. You won't walk away with a list of policies that local governments can adopt that will "fix" concentrated poverty. Instead, the objective of the course is for you to come away with an accurate grasp of the context in which local governments operate and the policy powers they customarily exercise. You will come to understand something about the history of U.S. cities and the ongoing political and economic processes that generate isolated pockets of poverty and sustain their segregation. Finally, you will come away with an awareness of some of the ongoing conversations about how local governments might respond.

## Assignments and Grading

This course takes an unusual approach to assignments and grading that can be confusing to navigate. Meeting your goals within this approach requires being clear at the beginning of the semester about what grade you want, whether you are willing to do the work required for that grade, and exactly what that work entails. So please scrutinize the following closely, and bring any questions you have to the instructor.

Here's the basics:

- + There are no exams in the course, only "assignments."
- + The course will be divided up into somewhere between six and eight units, each focusing on a different topic. At the beginning of each unit, ALL of the available assignments for that unit and their due dates will be posted in a document called "Current Unit" in the top-level directory of the course folder on Google Drive.
- + There are four types of assignments:
  - + Reading responses (between one and four per unit)
  - + Outside-the-bubble experiences and responses (between one and four per unit)
  - + Outside-the-bubble presentations (one or two per unit)
  - + Visual data exploration (one assignment during the entire course, broken up into a few parts, each part with a separate deadline, spread across the last few units of the semester)
- + On any assignment, there are only two possible "scores" you can get: "complete and satisfactory" (if you turn the assignment in on time and do all the work it asks for at the level of quality required) and "incomplete or unsatisfactory" (if you turn an assignment in late or not at all, or turn in an assignment that doesn't meet the specified requirements).
- + Your final letter grade only depends on the combination of assignments that you get "complete and satisfactory" marks on.

Here are the rules that determine your letter grade for the course:

Course grade	What you have to do
B	Earn a “complete and satisfactory” on <b>ALL BUT TWO <i>reading response assignments in the course.</i></b>
B+	<p>Earn a “complete and satisfactory” on <b>ALL BUT TWO <i>reading response assignments in the course.</i></b></p> <p>and</p> <p>Earn a “complete and satisfactory” on <b>ONE <i>outside-the-bubble experience and response from EACH of FOUR of the course units.</i></b></p>
A-	<p>Earn a “complete and satisfactory” on <b>ALL BUT TWO <i>reading response assignments in the course.</i></b></p> <p>and</p> <p>Earn a “complete and satisfactory” on <b>ONE <i>outside-the-bubble experience and response from ALL BUT ONE course unit.</i></b></p> <p>and</p> <p>Earn a “complete and satisfactory” on <b><i>all parts of the visual data exploration assignment.</i></b></p>
A	<p>Earn a “complete and satisfactory” on <b>ALL BUT TWO <i>reading response assignments in the course.</i></b></p> <p>and</p> <p>Earn a “complete and satisfactory” on <b>ONE <i>outside-the-bubble experience and response from ALL BUT ONE course unit.</i></b></p> <p>and</p> <p>Earn a “complete and satisfactory” on <b><i>all parts of the visual data exploration assignment.</i></b></p> <p>and</p> <p>Prepare, perform and earn a “complete and satisfactory” on <b>ONE <i>outside-the-bubble presentation during the course.</i></b></p>
Less than B...	If you do not earn “complete and satisfactory” on more than two reading

	<p>responses assignments, your grade will be less than a B. Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ C if you earn “complete and satisfactory on 60% or more of all reading response assignments.</li> <li>+ D if you earn “complete and satisfactory on between 50% and 60% of all reading responses assignments.</li> <li>+ E if you earn “complete and satisfactory on less than 50% of all reading response assignments.</li> </ul>
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## Planning Your Time and Effort

**Notice first of all** that the minimum requirement for getting a B or better in the course is completing all but two of the required reading response assignments. This will require reading somewhere between 50 and 100 pages and spending between 30 minutes and 1 hour writing a response each week for every week of the semester.

Also notice that the *only* thing you have to do for a B are the reading responses. So, one way to approach this course is to say “I’m good with a B,” and just plan on completing and responding to the reading consistently. Knowing how much time it takes you to read about 100 pages will then give you a sense of how much time you need to put in each week get the grade you’re aiming for.

**The next thing you should notice** is that getting anything above a B requires completing some number of the “outside the bubble” experiences and responses. The typical “outside the bubble” experience will require you to go off campus, document what you see and hear through notes and sometimes photographs, and then write a report on the experience. There are a few critical things to know about this:

- + You are expected to pay out of your own pocket for the transportation required (e.g. RTS bus fare, Uber, gas for a personal vehicle, etc.). All trips are within the City, so maximum cost-per-assignment is probably about \$30 (that’s Uber both ways...but it will only cost \$2 if you take RTS!)
- + Some outside-the-bubble experiences will REQUIRE that you take the local bus system (called RTS) to and from your destination. RTS is difficult to navigate the first few times you ride. But learning to do so is a critical for gaining insight into how this city (and others) functions for all its residents.
- + The typical outside-the-bubble experience will take between 3 and 6 hours, including transportation time, plus about 1 hour of report-writing.

With all that said, notice that a B+ requires that you only complete one of these experiences for each of four of the course’s units. But an A or an A- requires that you complete one outside-the-bubble experience for all but one unit. Recalling that there will be between six and eight units in the course, this means that an A- or A will require setting aside a substantial chunk

of time for an off-campus experience (3 to 6 hours) for each of six to eight of the semester's weeks.

**Also notice** that an A or A- requires you to complete a visual data exploration assignment. This assignment will span several weeks of the end of the semester. It will guide you through a process in which you pick a city in the U.S., download publicly-available data that shows where jobs requiring low-levels of education are located in the city and where persons with low levels of education live, use GIS software to map this data, write a report and analysis of your findings, and finally share and discuss your findings with other students who have completed the assignment in a symposium during class time.

**Also, you should consider the possibility that it might be *harder* to earn a B than it will be to earn a B+ or higher.** Granted, earning a B doesn't require any outside-the-bubble assignments, and thus entails a much smaller time commitment than earning a B+ or more. However, earning a "complete and satisfactory" on the reading response assignments requires that you identify and describe a point of genuine connection with the reading -- something that you are actually motivated to learn from it -- and then describe what you learned. Genuine connection with the reading can be faked. But doing so is extremely tedious...leaving you slogging through readings that you don't have any real interest in, and the writing responses in which you pretend to be interested. We've all done that, and it sucks.

The outside-the-bubble experiences are designed, in part, to have you directly experience the phenomena that the readings are trying to grapple with. Having these direct experiences can help you cultivate genuine curiosity about the puzzles the readings explore. And if you have that genuine curiosity, you won't have to manufacture fake reactions to the reading.

So a B+ or higher will take more time, but it will include activities that help you locate genuine interest in the reading, sparing you the pain of having to read and write about material to which you have little or no genuine connection.

One last thing...**what about showing up for class meetings?** You might have noticed that your attendance and participation in class meetings isn't part of your grade. In principle, you can do the readings, write responses to them, and get a B without every seeing your classmates or the instructor in person! So why show up? Class meetings in the course are meant to provide a benefit similar to the outside-the-bubble experiences. Their purpose will be to articulate the questions addressed by the readings, and (hopefully) get you interested in those questions. They will do this by introducing you to current challenges facing U.S. cities, often through guest lectures in discussions by persons actively involved in policymaking in and around Rochester.

## Academic Honesty

Each assignment in this course will include detailed written instructions about...

- + how (or whether) you may collaborate on the assignment with your peers,
- + what (if any) sources you may consult, and exactly how you may use them
- + how you must cite any sources you use.

Staying on the right side of the policy simply requires you to follow these instructions to the letter.

You should expect that the instructions about collaboration and use of sources will be completely clear, leaving absolutely no ambiguity about what is permitted. So, if you find those instructions unclear in any way, ask the instructor for clarification.

Following the requirements of the College’s academic honesty policy, all suspected violations of the course-specific and college-wide academic honesty requirements will be reported to the Board of Academic Honesty for adjudication, even if the evidence of the violation isn’t conclusive.

## Requirements for the W Section

Assignments and grading are different if you’re enrolled in the W (writing-intensive) section. Your grade will depend in part on completion of some of the reading response assignments assigned to student in the regular section. But unlike students in the regular section, you must complete a sequence of writing assignments that entail independent reading of peer-reviewed books or articles or think-tank-produced policy analyses of your choice. These include short writing assignments (4 to 5 pages) that respond to those independent readings, and, ultimately, an 8 to 10 page final research paper that knits together and responds to the ideas and arguments presented in a total of six independent readings.

As in the regular section, individual assignments (that is, reading responses, short papers and the final research paper) are not given letter grades or numerical scores. Instead, they are each marked “complete and satisfactory” or “incomplete or unsatisfactory.” Earning a letter grade of B for the course overall requires “complete and satisfactory” submission of all of the following:

- + Four of the reading response assignments from the non-W section of the course.
- + Five short papers, each one based on independent readings
- + One 8 to 10 page research paper that knits together and responds to the ideas and arguments presented in at least six of the independent readings (four of which you responded to in your short papers)

You can earn a letter grade higher than B by adding to the above additional short papers based on additional independent readings, plus submissions of revised versions of the short papers. Specifically:

<b>For a...</b>	<b>You must submit “complete and satisfactory” versions of...</b>
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B+	<p>Four of the reading response assignments from the non-W section of the course.</p> <p><b>Five</b> short (4 to 5 page) papers, each one based on independent readings</p> <p>Revisions of <b>two</b> of the submitted complete-and-satisfactory six short papers.</p> <p>An 8 to 10 page research paper that knits together and responds to the ideas and arguments presented in six independent readings.</p>
A-	<p>Four of the reading response assignments from the non-W section of the course.</p> <p><b>Five</b> short (4 to 5 page) papers, each one based on independent readings</p> <p>Revisions of <b>three</b> of the submitted complete-and-satisfactory six short papers.</p> <p>An 8 to 10 page research paper that knits together and responds to the ideas and arguments presented in six independent readings.</p>
A	<p>Four of the reading response assignments from the non-W section of the course.</p> <p><b>Six</b> short (4 to 5 page) papers, each one based on independent readings</p> <p>Revisions of <b>three</b> of the submitted complete-and-satisfactory six short papers.</p> <p>An 8 to 10 page research paper that knits together and responds to the ideas and arguments presented in six independent readings.</p>

A grade of less than a C will be awarded if you don't meet the requirements for a B, depending on the proportion of required work submitted at a "complete and satisfactory" level.

## "Complete and Satisfactory" Papers in the W Section

### Selecting Independent Readings

To be "complete and satisfactory," the research paper and every short paper for the W section must be based on readings *approved in advance and with consultation of the instructor*. Thus, in order to earn a B or better, ***students in the W section must schedule and complete two individual consultations with the instructor.***

**The first individual consultation must occur during the week of January 21** (the first full week of the semester). In this consultation, you and instructor will agree on a topic or theme for the independent reading, and do some searching to select and locate two initial readings.

Within about four weeks of that meeting you must submit a list of the six independent readings on which you plan to base your short papers and final research paper. **The second consultation must occur during the 7 days after you submit your list of six readings.** In addition to these consultations, you can reach out to Justina Elmore ([jelmore@library.rochester.edu](mailto:jelmore@library.rochester.edu)), outreach librarian for the social sciences, for support in finding, selecting and obtaining readings.

As many as four of the six readings in your list may be selected from the readings assigned to students in the non-W section.

### Short Papers

Each short paper is based on at least one and as many as three of your independent readings. You must approach your short papers as “**They say...I say**” essays,<sup>1</sup> in that they (1) convey something about what “they” (meaning author or authors of the independent readings on which the paper is based) say, and (2) express a distinct position or point of view in response, making a clear distinction between what “they” say and “I” (actually “you”!) say throughout.

The short paper must be addressed to a reader *who has not read the readings on which the paper is based*. Thus it must fill the reader in on what it is “they” say. Critically, you should NOT try to convey and respond to *everything* said by the reading on which the paper is based. Instead, you should deliberately select a single aspect of the reading, then write a paper that accurately conveys and responds to *only* that single aspect. That single aspect can be, for instance, a claim or thesis the reading asserts, an argument it uses in support of its claims, an assumption on which the reading relies, or a historical event or research finding the reading reports.

Of the short papers you write, at least two must be based on two or more of the readings in your list. These should also be “they say...I say” essays, addressed to readers who have not read the readings on which they are based. The difference is that they aim to convey and respond to *something about the two or more readings as a whole*. For instance, they might convey and respond to a claim, perspective or argument the two readings have in common. Or they might convey and response to a contrast between the two readings.

Short papers that deal with multiple readings help you to lay groundwork for the final research paper, which will, of course, have to somehow weave together a statement about all six readings! Thus, although the course requires that you base only two of your short papers on more than one reading, I recommend you base as many of your short papers as possible on more than one reading.

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<sup>1</sup> This idea is based on a book by Birkenstein and Graff titled *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* (4th Ed.). You can find it on amazon here: [https://www.amazon.com/They-Say-Matter-Academic-Writing/dp/0393631672/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1547734156&sr=8-1&keywords=they+say+i+say](https://www.amazon.com/They-Say-Matter-Academic-Writing/dp/0393631672/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1547734156&sr=8-1&keywords=they+say+i+say)



In addition to the above requirements, to earn “complete and satisfactory,” a short paper must be...

- + written as a google doc (NOT uploaded as a word file!!!) in your student folder on google drive.
- + 4 to 5 pages in length, single spaced.
- + written in 11 point font.
- + use google doc’s default margins.

Finally, a short paper that contains grammar and spelling errors is neither complete nor satisfactory.

### Research Paper

You should also think of the research paper as a “they say...I say” essay -- i.e. it conveys something about what “they” (the authors of your six independent readings) say, and offers an independent and distinct perspective on or response to that thing. The difference from the short paper is it’s scope. It is trying to convey something about *all six papers as a unit* and respond to that thing.

This makes it much more complex than a short paper, but also more fun. As soon as you start reading the second reading in your list, you should be thinking about it *in connection* to the first reading you did. Ask yourself “what do these readings have to say to each other?” “What emerges from the combination of these two readings that isn’t apparent from either reading on it’s own?”

The research paper should be the culmination of this process, extended across all six readings. It describes to the reader a thing that all six readings convey *as a whole*. In this sense, it is a truly creative work, creating a synthesis that no other piece of writing in the world has produced thus far (unless it just happens that somewhere, someone else has written an essay responding to exactly the same six readings!)

The thing that the research paper says that “they say” should not be a comprehensive account of *everything* the authors say in each of the six readings. What would be the point of that? Instead, the goal is for you to *select* (perhaps invent!) a single thing that is jointly produced by the six readings, and convey that. As with the short papers, the research paper should be addressed to a reader who has not read the six readings on which it is based. Thus it must somehow accurately convey and explain that one thing that the six papers as a whole say, in addition to providing an “I say”...i.e. an independent perspective or response to it.

In addition to the above requirements, to earn “complete and satisfactory,” a short paper must be...

- + written as a google doc (NOT uploaded as a word file!!!) in your student folder on google drive.
- + 8 to 10 pages in length, single spaced.
- + written in 11 point font.
- + use google doc's default margins.

A research paper that contains grammar and spelling errors is neither complete nor satisfactory.

Finally, note that the research paper must be based on **six** independent readings. However, you only have to write six separate short papers (each dealing with at least one separate reading) if you want to get an A. Please keep in mind that the research paper must deal with six separate independent readings *regardless* of how many short papers you choose to do. For instance, if you aim for a B, B+, or A- (each of which only requires five short papers), your research paper still has to address all six readings in your list.

### Paper Revisions

In order to earn a letter grade better than a B+ or better, you must submit two or more revisions of your short papers (see the table above for the exact number for each letter grade).

Revisions are NOT do-overs that allow you to take an “incomplete and unsatisfactory” paper and revise it to make it “complete and satisfactory.” In fact, you may only submit a revision on a paper that has already been marked “complete and satisfactory.” Instead, the goal in a revision is to (1) try to make the paper do more effectively whatever it tried to do in its first version, or (2) try to make the paper do something different than what it tried to do in its initial version.

I will provide feedback (sometimes in written form, sometimes as a video screencast) on every initial paper you submit within 7 days of receiving it. If you want to submit a revision, it is due fourteen days from the date on which I get feedback to you. The goal of my feedback will be to motivate you to try something different in the revision. For instance, I will try to point out an interesting idea or concept that your paper raises but does not develop. I will also try to come up with ideas about the way that your paper could more effectively convey the points it already makes. Your goal is to produce a revision that substantially changes the focus of your original paper (what you say “they say” or what you offer as “I say” in response), or that substantially changes the approach your initial paper took to conveying its main points.

A paper revision is complete and satisfactory if it makes a substantial change from the original *and* it meets the requirements of a complete and satisfactory paper listed in sections above.

### Deadlines

Meet with instructor to select a tentative theme for independent readings and select	By 5pm Friday, January 24
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two initial readings	
First short paper	8am Friday, February 8
Second short paper	8am Monday, February 25
List of six independent readings submitted to instructor for approval	8am Monday, February 25
Meet with instructor to discuss reading list	Between 8am Monday, February 25 and 5pm Friday, March 1
Third short paper	8am Monday, March 11
Fourth short paper	8am Monday, March 25
Fifth short paper	8am Monday, April 8
Sixth short paper	8am Monday, April 22
Final Research Paper	8am Monday, May 6

Notice that you only have to write six short papers if you want an A. For anything less, five short papers is enough. That said, **you must meet the first two short paper deadlines to get a B or better.** Getting those first two short papers done early in the semester is critical to succeeding on the all of the later papers.

## Academic Honesty for Papers

### Consultation of written material while working

When drafting, revising, editing or in any other way working on a paper, you may not look at or otherwise consult any textual material (printed or electronic) other than:

- + the readings on which the paper is based
- + written assignment instructions and guidelines provided by the instructor
- + any other written communications by the instructor
- + written guidelines on writing and academic honesty at [www.rochester.edu/college/honesty](http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty)
- + written guidelines on writing and academic honesty at <https://writing.rochester.edu/>

This absolutely rules out any use whatsoever (paraphrasing or copying) in what you submit of any written material other than the sources in your list of sources. For instance, it rules out consultation or use of any words written by a tutoring service, another student, a parent, or a service that writes (in whole or in part) papers for money.

## **Verbal consultation and support**

You may discuss your papers (before submission and after) with anyone, and you may show drafted material to anyone. You may receive only verbal feedback from anyone other than the instructor or a writing consultant from the College Writing, Speaking and Argument Program. You may not receive written feedback in any form (text, email, notes) from anyone other than the course instructor or a writing consultant from the College Writing Speaking and Argument Program.

### **Conveying What Your Independent Readings Say (quoting, describing, citing)**

To receive a “complete and satisfactory” score on a paper, you **MUST** write the paper as a “They say...I say” paper. This means that must describe something that the readings say or do and (this part is critical academic honesty) *distinguish* that thing from whatever it is **you** are saying in the paper. Thus, you should use turns of phrase, quotation marks, and similar devices that make the reader aware at each distinct place in your text whether at that place you are stating or describing something said by a reading on which the paper is based, or (on the other hand) you are stating or describing something that you, the paper writer, are saying. Failing to make this distinction clear, in a way that could cause a reader to mistake what the authors of the reading say from what you are saying as the author of the paper, violates the College’s academic honesty policy.

At a minimum, this requires quoting (with parenthetical citations) any verbatim material you use. And using indicators such as “the author claims that...” leading into any paraphrases of statements from the reading.

In addition, your papers must provide the information a reader needs to find the original reading and read it themselves. Thus you must include a complete citation to the readings on which every one of your papers is based at the end of the paper using the Chicago Style described here:

[http://guides.highpoint.edu/ld.php?content\\_id=643625](http://guides.highpoint.edu/ld.php?content_id=643625)