

PSCI 226W: Act Locally? Local Government in the US
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The idea that “all politics is local” is a reference to the principle that a politician’s success depends on their ability to connect with the constituents of their district. This course will explore both politics and policymaking at a local level.

Readings, podcasts, guest speakers, and field trips will provide context about local politics, with a focus on Rochester. We will examine a number of significant issues and provide a full perspective by learning to use important texts like public meeting minutes, budgets, and newspaper articles.

Each student will be responsible for a 12-15 page paper that addresses a significant local political issue (in any municipality across the country). The paper will use primary resources to develop an explication of that issue – explaining its genesis, its controversy and/or significance, the various sides of the issue, the outcome, and the impact. As the course progresses, all student will present on the development of the topic, relevant sources, and overall findings.

Each class will consist of group reflections on the readings for the week, a facilitated discussion, and a presentation from either a student or guest lecturer. Final grades will consist of the paper (35%), attendance and participation (45%), and class presentations (20%).

Book List:

- *Place Matters: Metropolitcs for the 2st Century*
- *Strike the Hammer*
- *Your Children are Very Greatly in Danger*
- *Origin of the Urban Crisis*
- *The Powerbroker*

Week 1:

Discussion: Introduction.

Who are we and why are we in this course? What do politics mean to us?

- Reading: Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of *Place Matters* and *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, Part 1
- Ezra Klein Show Podcast: How Blue Cities Became So Outrageously Unaffordable.

Week 2:

Discussion: Mechanics of Government.

How do all of the various layers of government – City, County, State, Federal – interact with each other?

Focus on specific funding examples like ARPA and CDBG, and specific topics like affordable housing and public safety residency requirements.

- Reading: Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 of *Place Matters*
- *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, Part 2

Week 3:

Discussion: Primary Sources

An analysis of “The Degradation of the Food Retail Landscape” and the associated primary sources.

An explanation of the writing project for this course.

- Reading: Selected excerpts from Gruber dissertation that highlights the use of primary sources
- *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, Part 3
 - o A specific piece of Legislation and Video of the associated public meeting

Week 4:

Field Trip: City Hall, Public Library, and Public Market

- Reading: Your Children are Very Greatly in Danger, Chapters 1 – 4

Week 5:

Discussion: Policy insight – Education

Guest speaker: Justin Murphy

- Reading: Your Children are Very Greatly in Danger, Chapters 5 – 8

Week 6:

Discussion: Policy insight – Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning

Guest Speaker: Katrina Korfmacher

- Reading: Bridging Silos, Chapters 1, 4
 - o Articles: Murphy, D&C, Tree Equity and NYT Tree Equity

Week 7:

Discussion: Policy versus Practice

September 2020 – discuss the killing of Daniel Prude, the ensuing protests and resignations.

- Reading: Celli Report
 - o Strike the Hammer, Chapters 1-3

Week 8:

Discussion: Studying Policy

Analysis of Commissions, task forces, and studies. Do they work?

Guest speaker – Bill Johnson

- Reading: RASE Commission report
 - o Strike the Hammer, Chapters 4-6

Week 9:

Discussion: Budgets are a reflection of values

- Reading: 2022 City of Rochester Budget

Week 10:

Discussion: 2 students present on their work and get feedback from class

- Reading: Powerbroker, Part 1, 2

Week 11:

Discussion: 2 students present on their work and get feedback from class

- Reading: Powerbroker, Part 3

Week 12:

Discussion: 2 students present on their work and get feedback from class

- Reading: Powerbroker, Part 4

Week 13:

Discussion: 3 students present on their work and get feedback from class

- Reading: Powerbroker, Part 5

Week 14:

Discussion: 3 students present on their work and get feedback from class

- Reading: Powerbroker, Part 6

Week 15:

Discussion: 3 students present on their work and get feedback from class

- Reading: Powerbroker, Part 7