

“All politics is local.” This adage 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 critical issues and learn how to critically use key resources such as public meeting minutes, budgets, and newspaper articles. Every student is responsible to engage with the material, participate in course discussions, and write a brief overview of the readings for a selected week.

Each student will also 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 students will present on the development of the topic, relevant sources, and overall findings.

Final grades consist of the paper (35%), attendance and participation (45%), and presentations (20%).

Book List:

- *Origin of the Urban Crisis* (Sugrue)
- *Abundance* (Klein and Thompson)
- *Strike the Hammer* (Hill)
- *Your Children are Very Greatly in Danger* (Murphy)
- *The Powerbroker* (Caro)

Week 1: Jan 21

Readings due: Chapter 1, and Bibliography of “The Degradation of the Food Retail Landscape.”

<https://urresearch.rochester.edu/institutionalPublicationPublicView.action?institutionalItemId=32393>

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

Group to listen to podcast, “How Blue Cities Became So Outrageously Unaffordable”

Week 2: Jan 28

Readings due: Part 1 and 2 of *Origins of the Urban Crisis* and Intro and Chapter 1 of *Abundance*

Mechanics of government: How do all of the various layers of government (City, County, State and Federal) interact with each other?

- Deeper dive: public safety residency requirements

Week 3: Feb 4

Readings due: Part 3 of *Origins of the Urban Crisis* and Chapters 2-5 of *Abundance*

Primary sources: What makes a primary source? Why are they important? How have they changed in the 21st century?

- In depth discussion on the writing assignment

Week 4: Feb 11

Readings due: Chapters 1-4 of *Your Children are Very Greatly in Danger*

Public meetings and the legislative process; watch a portion of a City Council meeting

Guest speaker: Djifa Kothor, Rochester Refugee Resettlement Services

Week 5: Feb 18

Readings due: Chapters 5-8 of *Your Children*

Education policy insight with guest speaker Justin Murphy

Week 6: Feb 25

Readings due: 2023 City of Rochester Budget, and “City Budgets in an Era of Increased Uncertainty”

Discussion and small group work on Rochester’s municipal budget

Week 7: March 4

Readings due: Chapters 1-3, *Strike the Hammer*

Field trip to City Hall, Public Library, and Aqueduct

Week 8: March 18

Readings due: Chapters 1, 4 of *Bridging Silos* by Korfmacher and Chapters 4-6, *Strike the Hammer*

Policy insight on climate and the environment with guest speaker Professor Katrina Korfmacher

Week 9: March 25

Readings due: Parts 1 and 2 of *Powerbroker*

Rochester’s history of recycling and environmental services with guest speaker Norman Jones

Week 10: April 1 (*Draft of Final Paper is Due*)

No class due to Passover

Readings due: Parts 3, 4, 5 of *Powerbroker*

Week 11: April 8

Readings due: RASE Commission Report Executive Summary and “Celli Report”

<https://rocrase.com/>

<https://www.scribd.com/document/498472511/Celli-Final-Report>

Commissions, task forces, and studies with former Mayor Bill Johnson, Chair of the RASE Commission

Week 12: April 15 (Class via Zoom)

Readings due: Parts 6 and 7 of *Powerbroker*

Police-community relations: in-depth conversation about July 1964 and September 2020

- Deeper dive: Watch July 1964 and the RPD resignations in 2020

Week 13: April 22

8 Student Presentation

Week 14: April 29

All remaining student presentations

FINAL PAPERS DUE ON MAY 6th