

**York University  
Department of Political Science**

**POLS 3110 3.0 W  
The Process of Urban Politics I  
Winter 2020**

Class: Tuesdays, 8:30a.m.-11:30a.m.  
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:00-2:00p.m. (or by appointment)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course examines the wide scale and variety of politics that play out within urban environments. We will address significant contemporary urban issues that frame metropolitan politics, drawing from examples from cities around the world. In particular, this course explores structures of power within cities, and the ways in which diverse communities experience, struggle over, and negotiate their economic, social, and political realities, and how they inform and create urban political movements.

**COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Identify multiple sources and forces of power within cities;
- Critically interpret the uneven impacts of power on different urban communities
- Understand the diversity of urban political movements against structures of power.

**CLASS TEXT:**

*No textbook is required.* All readings are accessible online through the [Omni search engine](#).

**CLASS FORMAT & ASSESSMENT:**

Students should be prepared to contribute to the analysis of the readings with specific and thoughtful reflection. Aim to read critically: seek to understand the content of the readings, evaluate the significance of the argument, and identify the validity of evidence for the author's claims.

*'Community Politics Day':*

You are expected to engage in fieldwork for the final paper of this course. In respect of your time, we will use class time – rather than your personal time – for you to engage in fieldwork. This is marked by “Community Politics Day” on February 4<sup>th</sup> and March 3<sup>rd</sup>. On these days, class will begin at 10:00am, rather than 8:30am. In total you have 3 hours to put toward your fieldwork (more detail below).

**COURSE EVALUATION:**

Discussion Participation: 15%

Reading Responses: 20%

'My Urban Politics' Fieldwork Journal: 20%

Paper Proposal: 10%

Final Paper: 35%

**Discussion Participation:**

I expect that you will engage in all course materials and attend all classes. Our time together will be a mix of discussion and lecture, and as such the success of our class depends on the quality and thoughtfulness of your comments and questions. You are encouraged to respond to myself and other students, think carefully about the readings, and contribute relevant and constructive ideas in class discussions. This grade is not based on how *much* you speak, but on being thoughtful, engaged, and contributing appropriately.

**Reading Responses:**

At the end of every lecture you will be provided four reading questions for the upcoming week. You will select one question to answer in 150-250 words, which will be due at the end of class reading discussions. Each reflection is pass/fail.

**'My Urban Politics' Fieldwork Journal** (due March 31)

You will spend a minimum of 3 hours conducting your own research (fieldwork) for your final paper, as described above. Select an example of urban politics to observe and attend (you will need to get approval by me), and take detailed notes in your fieldwork journal. Your journal must be a minimum of 500 words – the more notes you take, the more data you will have for your term paper – and will be due the last day of class. A full rubric for this assignment will be given in class.

**Paper Proposal** (due February 25):

Before submitting your final paper, you will need to complete a paper proposal. This will help you be prepared and on track for your final paper, and ensure success at the end of the term. This assignment must contain a thesis statement, a 250-word description of the paper, the specific political site you are using for your fieldwork, a bulleted outline of the paper, and a list of at least four outside scholarly articles you will be drawing from (not from this syllabus). A full rubric for this assignment will be given in class.

**Final Research Paper: Urban Political Action** (due March 31):

Write a 1500-word (six-page) research paper about the specific example of urban politics you researched, relating it to the themes and readings we have discussed in class. You will use this paper to argue how your chosen topic and research exemplifies the negotiations of power and politics that occur in cities. You will need to engage a minimum of four outside scholarly sources, and a minimum of three scholarly sources from the syllabus. A full rubric for this assignment will be given in class.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

*Academic Honesty:*

Cheating, plagiarism, falsification of academic documents, and obstruction of the

academic activities of others will not be tolerated. These are serious actions with penalties ranging from failure in the course to suspension. More information can be found here:

[http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/document.php?document=69#\\_Toc89156089](http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/document.php?document=69#_Toc89156089)

*Lateness and Attendance:*

Late assignments submitted without an accepted extension will be penalized 2% per weekday. Extensions on any assignment will only be given on medical or compassionate grounds validated by a note from a doctor or a conversation you have had with me during office hours.

Attendance is mandatory. Please note:

- Religious holidays do not count as absences, but please inform me ahead of time if you will have to miss class for this reason.
- If you are absent, you need to find out from other students what happened in class. Please do not ask me.

*Assignment Format:*

All assignments are to be submitted in size 12 Times New Roman font, with 1" margins, double spaced, without additional line spaces between paragraphs, and with page numbers. Please include a separate title page for any written assignment (your name, an original title for the assignment, class name, date, and word count), and a separate page for your bibliography in APA citation style. Points will be deducted if you do not follow proper format.

*Accommodation:*

If you need any accommodations for any sort of disability (including learning, mental health, or physical), please speak to me about it in the first or second week of class during office hours. Students who require teaching and evaluation accommodation are responsible for following York University's [guidelines](#) for assessment and documentation. Failure to follow the university guidelines may jeopardize a student's opportunity to receive academic accommodation.

Please come speak to me if you anticipate struggling with any of the assignments, including participating in discussion groups.

Please do not ask for extensions after due dates, or come to me at the end of the semester with an explanation for poor performance. At that point it is usually too late for me to do anything to help you.

*Resources:*

- Learning Skills Services:  
<https://lss.info.yorku.ca/>
- Student Counselling and Development:  
Walk-in hours 9:00am to 3:00pm  
<https://counselling.students.yorku.ca/>

- Student Accessibility Services:  
416-736-2100 ext. 77424  
<https://accessibility.students.yorku.ca/pmc@carleton.ca>

## **LECTURE OUTLINE AND REQUIRED READING:**

### **Week 1: Course Introduction** (January 7)

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#### **Cities and Power**

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### **Week 2: Governance and Policing** (January 14)

#### Reading:

Ellison, T. (2019). From sanctuary to safe space: Gay and lesbian police-reform activism in Los Angeles. *Radical History Review* 135, 95-118.

Mitchell, D., & Heynen, N. (2009). The geography of survival and the right to the city: Speculations on surveillance, legal innovation, and the criminalization of intervention. *Urban Geography*, 30(6), 611-632.

### **Week 3: Securitization in the City** (January 21)

#### Reading:

Burman, J. (2010). Suspects in the city: Browning the 'not-quite' Canadian citizen. *Cultural Studies*, 24(2), 200-213.

Lippert, R. (2009). Signs of the surveillant assemblage: Privacy regulation, urban CCTV, and governmentality. *Social and Legal Studies: An International Journal*, 18(4), 505-522.

#### **Forces of Power**

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### **Week 4: Dominating Infrastructures** (January 28)

*Guest talk*

#### Reading:

*TBD*

### **Week 5: Interventions into Public Space** (February 4, Community Politics Day)

#### Reading:

Blomley, N. (2007). How to turn a beggar into a bus stop: Law, traffic and the 'function of the place'. *Urban Studies*, 44(9), 1697-1712.

Bentley, G. C., McCutcheon, P., Cromley, R. G., & Hanink, D. M. (2016). Race, class, unemployment, and housing vacancies in Detroit: An empirical analysis. *Urban Geography*, 37(5), 785-800.

## **Week 6: Power, People, and City Services (February 11)**

*Guest talk*

### Reading:

Broadbent, A., & McIsaac, E. (Nov 25, 2019). Toronto City Council should vote to secure the future of Toronto Community Housing. Available:  
<https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2019/11/25/toronto-city-council-should-vote-to-secure-the-future-of-toronto-community-housing.html>

Listerborn, C. (2007). Who speaks? And who listens? The relationship between planners and women's participation in local planning in a multi-cultural urban environment. *Geojournal*, 70, 61-71.

Palmer, F. (Sept 12, 2019). If Auckland's plan to include Māori histories in city centre upgrade is genuine, it must act on inequalities. Available:  
<http://theconversation.com/if-aucklands-plan-to-include-maori-histories-in-city-centre-upgrade-is-genuine-it-must-act-on-inequalities-120407>

## **Urban Power and Politics**

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**Week 7:** (February 18, reading week)

## **Week 8: Migration and Sanctuary Cities (February 25)**

*Paper Proposal DUE*

### Reading:

Burman, J. (2006). Absence, 'removal,' and everyday life in the diasporic city: Antidetention/antideportation activism in Montréal. *Space and Culture*, 9(3), 279-293.

Ridgley, J. (2013). Cities of refuge: Immigration enforcement, police, and the insurgent genealogies of citizenship in U.S. sanctuary cities. *Urban Geography*, 29(1), 53-77.

## **Urban Social Movements**

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**Week 9: Multicultural Politics (March 3, Community Politics Day)**

### Reading:

Catungal, J.P. (2013). Ethno-specific safe houses in the liberal contact zone: Race politics, place-making and the genealogies of the AIDS sector in global-

multicultural Toronto. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 12(2), 250-278.

Germain, A., Dansereau, F., Gagnon, J. E. (2004). 'Ethnic' dilemmas?: Religion, diversity and multicultural planning in Montreal. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 36(2): 51-75.

### **Week 10: 'Community' Struggles (March 10)**

*Guest talk*

#### Reading:

Livermon, X. (2012). Queer(y)ing freedom: Black queer visibilities in postapartheid South Africa. *QLG*, 18(2-3), 297-323.

Podmore, J. A. (2006). Gone 'underground'? Lesbian visibility and the consolidation of queer space in Montréal. *Social and Cultural Geography*, 7(4): 595-625.

### **Week 11: Grassroots social change (March 17)**

#### Reading:

Enck-Wanzer, D. (2006). Trashing the system: Social movement, intersectional rhetoric, and collective agency in the Young Lords organization's garbage offensive. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 92(2): 174-201.

Whitzman, C. (2002). Feminist activism for safer social space in High Park, Toronto: How women got lost in the woods. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, 11(2): 299-321.

### **Week 12: Urban Indigenous Politics (March 24)**

#### Reading:

McRae Williams, L. (2014). Reclaiming spaces/places: Restoring Indigenous street names in Toronto. *Spacing.ca*, Nov. 4. Available at: <http://spacing.ca/national/2014/11/04/reclaiming-spacingplaces-restoring-indigenous-street-names-toronto/>

Rose-Redwood, R. (2016). "Reclaim, rename, reoccupy": Decolonizing place and the reclaiming of PKOLS. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 15(1): 187-206.

Thompson-Fawcett, M. (Jan 10, 2019). A tale of tū cities: The role of Māori thinking in shaping our urban future. Available at: <https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/atea-otago/10-01-2019/a-tale-of-tu-cities-the-role-of-maori-thinking-in-shaping-our-urban-future/>

**Week 13: Wrapping Up** (March 31)

*'My Urban Politics' Fieldwork Journal* and *Final Paper* DUE