**Basic Urban Issues**

**Fall 2016**

**Political Science 103**

**Cooper Street Building 110**

**Tuesday/Thursday 3:00-4:20**

Dr. Melanie Bowers

Office: 401 Cooper St

Email: Melanie.bowers@rutgers.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday   
1:30-2:30 pm and By Appointment

**OVERVIEW**

This class introduces and explores the complex issues facing US cities using an engaged civic learning approach. This means that in addition to class time and traditional homework, students will be expected to complete a group project on an urban issue being addressed in Camden with a focus on the organizations working in, through, and in-spite of government to try to address urban issues. In class we will investigate the root causes and consequences of urban issues like housing, fiscal health, governance, and crime and delve into the ways that politics and policy can sometimes help ameliorate these issues while at other times making them worse. Throughout these investigations we will explore how the digital age has transformed the ways that cities respond to urban problems, for example policing and citizen-police relations have been fundamentally altered by Geographic Information Systems (GIS), which has made it possible to better map crime and utilize hot spot policing. The course is appropriate for students of all majors and does not assume any prior knowledge of the US political system. That said, the course requires a high degree of student engagement and accountability. In addition to completing the engaged learning component, the course is discussion-heavy and requires students to critically evaluate and discuss the readings, taking an active role in their own learning process. Students should carefully evaluate their schedules and ensure that they can devout adequate attention to this course before finalizing their classes.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the course students should be able to:

1. Identify and define the complex problems facing US cities, including those that result from technological advances
2. Explain and critically analyze the root causes and consequences of these problems and how they are connected to one another
3. Interrogate the ways that urban policy and politics influence urban issues, understanding that they can both improve and worsen urban problems
4. Understand the ways that technology has changed municipal responses to problems
5. Critically assess the ways that politics and policy create and reinforce social systems and stratification
6. Develop an applied understanding of the ways that local organizations define and respond to urban issues and how academic understandings of these problems stand up to real world experience
7. Engage with community partners to understand how organizations advocate for policy and engage the political system to help address problems, paying particular attention to the way that they use social media to educate and solicit donations from supporters
8. Practice and improve written and verbal communication skills

**DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities are welcome in this class.  If you have a disability or suspect you might have a disability but do not yet have documentation, please contact the Coordinator of Disability Services immediately: [(856) 225-6442](tel:%28856%29%20225-6442), Armitage Hall, Room 231 (in the Rutgers-Camden Learning Center).  No accommodations may be made without the explicit approval of the Office of Disability Service.  If you already have documentation of a disability, please present it to me within the first week of class so I may work with you to ensure you can properly access and complete the work for this course.

**INCLUSIVITY AND NAMES**

This is an inclusive classroom that is welcoming of all people and perspectives, including those of diverse races, religions, ethnicities, ages, gender identities and sexual orientations. If you go by a name or gender that is different from the one on official Rutgers documents, please let me know so that I can use the proper name and pronouns.

**EXPECTATIONS AND ATTENDANCE**

In this class we will create a learning community where we will discuss ideas, apply new concepts and begin to understand the relationship between government and urban issues. To do this, attendance and preparation are necessary. As your teacher, I expect you to complete the readings and assignments and show up to class, ready to actively engage in your own learning process. In return, you can expect me to be prepared, present the material enthusiastically, respond to your questions and concerns in a timely fashion, and lead you in a learning experience that will help you understand both urban politics and your own interests as learners.

**Class Attendance is Mandatory.** You may miss no more than three classes without providing documentation of an extenuating circumstance. After the first three absences, you will lose 10% of your participation grade for each unexcused absence. Legitimate reasons for additional absences include severe illness, death, family emergencies, and other issues evaluated at my discretion.

**Tardiness:** You are expected to be in class on time. Being late is disruptive, impedes others’ ability to learn and limits your access to valuable information and class time. I will take attendance at the beginning of class. If you are late you will be marked tardy. Every three tardies will convert to an absence and will be subject to the attendance policy. For example, if you are late 6 times it will count as 2 absences (6/3=2).

To reiterate:

1-3 absences: no penalty

4+ absences: -10% of participation grade for each absence after the initial 3

Tardies: Every 3 tardies = 1 absence and will count against your 3 allowable absences

**LATE POLICY**

Except for extenuating circumstances or with prior approval, late work will only be accepted within three days of the established due-date. You will lose 10% of your grade for each day that it is late. For example, if the assignment is due on Tuesday and you submitted it on Wednesday you would lose 10% if you, if you submitted it on Thursday you would lose 20%, and if you submitted it on Friday you would lose 30%. It would not be accepted after Friday. All work must be submitted in the manner identified in the syllabus (either paper, in Sakai’s Dropbox, or on the blog). I WILL NOT ACCEPT ASSIGNMENTS BY EMAIL.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

There are 1000 possible points.

1. Unit Exams 300 points/ 100 points per test (30%)
2. Attendance and In-Class Participation 200 points (20%)
3. Blog Posts 100 points/ 50 points per post (10%)
4. Group Project 400 total points (40%)
   1. Group Contract and Work Plan 25 points
   2. Background Research Notes 100 points- 50 points/check
   3. Final Report Rough Draft 25 points
   4. Final Report 175 points
   5. In-Class Presentation 75 points

**GRADE SCALE**A= 90-100  
B+= 87.5-89.9   
B= 80-87.4   
C+= 77.5-79.9  
C= 70-77.4  
D= 60-69.5  
F= 0-59.5

**PARTICIPATION**

This is a discussion-based seminar. Because of this, I expect you to participate in class on a regular basis. This includes asking and answering questions, discussing core concepts with fellow students, and offering your own insights and understandings of class readings. I understand that many people are uncomfortable speaking in class and we will work as a class to develop a safe environment. That said, I expect students to step out of their comfort zones and be active members of the classroom community.

In order to earn a high grade for participation, students should:

● Attend class

● Arrive on time and stay for the entire class

● Read all assigned readings and come to class with questions and thoughts on the readings

● *Consistently* take an active part in class discussions

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

There are no required texts. All readings are available on Sakai or on the websites listed in the syllabus.   
  
**ACADEMIC HONESTY**

PLAGARISM AND CHEATING OF ANY KIND WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. Blatant plagiarism and cheating will be reported to the Dean of Students. I don’t want to do this, so don’t cheat. I have software that checks for plagiarism and I will use it if I feel this is becoming a problem.

It is your responsibility to be familiar with Rutgers’ academic honesty statement. This statement is available at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>.

**COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PROFESSOR AND STUDENTS**

Email is an essential communication tool between our class meetings. It is up to you to ensure that you are receiving the email updates I regularly send to the class. This includes letting me know the email address you use if it is not your Rutgers one! I may need to change the readings around a bit sometimes or make an important announcement to all students between classes. You need to regularly check your email and read the emails from me in full. Failure to do so could affect your grade and your preparation for our class meetings.

I also encourage you to talk with me in person before or after class or during my office hours (listed at top, along with office location information). If you have a scheduling conflict with office hours, I will happily meet you at a mutually-agreeable time and place – you may email me to set up a time.

**Email Response Policy***:* I will respond to all emails within 24 hours during the week, or by Monday if you write after Friday at noon. If I can reply more quickly, I will – but do not expect an immediate response. If you wait until the last day to email me about a project, I may not respond to your email in time for the project deadline. Please plan ahead.

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

# UNIT 1: Introduction and Background

# Week 1: Introduction and Background

## Tuesday September 6: Class overview, getting to know you etc.

READING: No Reading

# Thursday September 8: *The Building of Great Cities*

## READINGS: Douglas Rae. 2005. City: Urbanism and its End: Chapter 1 “Creative Destruction and the Age of Urbanism.”

## ASSIGNMENT: Establish groups in class & Sign up for Blog Weeks

## Week 2: Background

## Tuesday September 13: The Decline of Cities

# READING:Thomas Sugrue. 1998. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Chapter 5 “The Damning Mark of False Prosperities: The Deindustrialization of Detroit.”

## Thursday September 15: Local Government, The Basics READING:

## 1. Smith, Kevin B., Alan Greenblatt and Michele Mariani Vaugn. 2011. Governing States and Localities. Chapter 11 Local Government: Function Follows Form.

## 2. Paul Peterson, “The Interests of the Limited City.” In Urban Politics, A Reader edited by Stephen J. McGovern.

## ASSIGNMENT: Submit Group Contract and Work Plan

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**UNIT 2: Attracting and Keeping Residents: Meeting Resident Needs**

# Week 3: Housing

## Tuesday September 20: Where do People Live- Housing Quality and Affordability READING

## Defining Affordable Housing: “**AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** In general, housing for which the occupant(s) is/are paying no more than 30 percent of his or her income for gross housing costs, including utilities. Please note that some jurisdictions may define affordable housing based on other, locally determined criteria, and that this definition is intended solely as an approximate guideline or general rule of thumb.” HUD Glossary of Terms

## Daniel Hertz: The Problem With How We Measure Housing Affordability. 2/3/2016. On City Observatory’s Blog: CityCommentary. <http://cityobservatory.org/the-problem-with-how-we-measure-housing-affordability/>

## Capps, Kriston. 6/18/2015 “Every Single County in America is Facing an Affordable Housing Crisis.” CityLab <http://www.citylab.com/housing/2015/06/every-single-county-in-america-is-facing-an-affordable-housing-crisis/396284/>

## Sisson, Patrick. Why the Rent is Too Damn High: The Affordable Housing Crisis. May 19, 2016. Curbed <http://www.curbed.com/2016/5/19/11713134/affordable-housing-policy-rent-apartments>

## Explore this tool- what does housing look like in different cities: <http://www.governing.com/gov-data/economy-finance/housing-affordability-by-city-income-rental-costs.html>

## Thursday September 22: Homelessness

READING:

1. No Safe Place: The Criminalization of Homelessness in US Cities. A Report by the *National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty*. <https://www.nlchp.org/documents/No_Safe_Place> \*\*\***ONLY READ Page 7-41\*\*\***

# Week 4: Jobs, Goods and Services

## Tuesday September 27: Urban Governments and Business, A Dependent Relationship? READING:

## Christina McFarland, J. Katie McConnell and Caitlin Geary. 2011. Small Business Growth: US Local Policy Implications. National League of Cities: Research Briefs on America’s Cities. <http://www.nlc.org/documents/Find%20City%20Solutions/Research%20Innovation/Economic%20Development/small-business-growth-us-local-policy-implications-rbr-oct11.pdf>

## Florida, Richard. 2016. Which U.S. Cities Suffer the Most During a Recession? CityLab <http://www.citylab.com/politics/2016/06/which-us-metros-suffer-the-most-during-a-recession/486263/>

## Mike Maciag. April 2013. How Smaller Cities Hold onto Major Employers. Governing The States and Localities. <http://www.governing.com/topics/economic-dev/gov-company-towns-face-tough-decisions.html>

## Peter Dizikes. The High Price of Losing Manufacturing Jobs. 2012. The Fiscal Times. <http://www.governing.com/topics/economic-dev/gov-company-towns-face-tough-decisions.html>

## Thursday September 29: Cities as Growth Machines?

READING: Molotch, Harvey: The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place. In Urban Politics Past, Present and Future edited by Harlan Hahn and Charles Levine.

**Week 5: Education**

## Tuesday October 4: The Challenge of Urban Education – GUEST SPEAKER Gloria Santiago READING:

## Kozol, Jonathan. Children of the invincible City: Camden New Jersey in Savage Inequalities.

## Roey Ahram , Adeyemi Stembridge, Edward Fergus and Pedro Noguera, Framing Urban School Challenges: The Problems to Examine When Implementing Response to Intervention. RTI Action Network. <http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/diversity/urban-school-challenges>

## Thursday October 6: Charter Schools and E-Classrooms READING: Sarah Carr. 2013. Hope Against Hope: Three Schools, One City and the Struggle to Educate America’s Children Part 1 and II.

## ASSIGNMENT: Submit Background Notes 1 on Sakai

**UNIT 3: SAFETY AND SECURITY**

**Week 6: Crime and Policing**

## Tuesday October 11: Crime

## READING: No Reading, Prepare for your Test!

## Test: Unit 1 and 2 Exam (45 minutes)

## Thursday October 13: Policing and Community Relations READING:

## Community Policing and Procedural Justice. Center for Evidence Based Crime Policy, George Mason University <http://cebcp.org/evidence-based-policing/what-works-in-policing/research-evidence-review/community-policing/>

## Gabe. May 15, 2015. “Community Policing: Promise and Failure.” The Crime Report, John Jay College of Criminal Justice. <http://thecrimereport.org/2015/05/15/2015-05-community-policing-promise-and-failure/>

## Week 7: Group Conflict

## Tuesday October 18: Racial Tensions, Rioting and Social Movements READING:

## Race, Protest and Backlash, Introduction. In Urban Politics, A Reader Edited by Stephen J. McGovern.

## Zelizer, Julian E. July 8, 2016. “Is America Repeating the Mistakes of 1968?” The Atlantic. <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/07/is-america-repeating-the-mistakes-of-1968/490568/>

## Alana Semuels. July 30, 2015. White Flight Never Ended. The Atlantic. <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/07/white-flight-alive-and-well/399980/>.

## Thursday October 20: Immigration READING:

## Ray, Brian. The Role of Cities in Immigrant Integration. October 1 2003. Migration Policy Institute. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/role-cities-immigrant-integration>

## Monica Varsanyi “City Ordinances as “Immigration Policing by Proxy” in Taking Local Control: Immigration Policy Activism in US Cities and States.

**Week 8: Natural and Human-Induced Disasters**

## Tuesday October 25: Cyberterrorism READING:

## 1. Stuart Poole-Robb. April 7 2015. “National Power Grids Hit by Cyber Terrorist Onslaught.” ITProPortal. <http://www.itproportal.com/2015/04/07/cyber-terrorists-target-national-power-grids/>

## 2. Cesar Cerrudo. 2015. An emerging US (and World) Threat: Cities Wide Open to Cyber Attacks. IOActive Labs.

## [http://www.ioactive.com/pdfs/IOActive\_HackingCitiesPaper\_CesarCerrudo.pdf](http://www.ioactive.com/pdfs/IOActive_HackingCitiesPaper_CesarCerrudo.pdf 3)

## [3](http://www.ioactive.com/pdfs/IOActive_HackingCitiesPaper_CesarCerrudo.pdf 3). Wideman, Reeves. July 16 2016. “The Big Hack: A Scenario that Could Happen Based on What Already Has.” New York Magazine <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2016/06/the-hack-that-could-take-down-nyc.html>

# *Thursday October 28: Disaster Preparedness* READING:

# Prior, Tim and Florian Roth. 2013. Disaster, Resilience and Security in Global Cities. *Journal of Strategic Security.* [*http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1251&context=jss*](http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1251&context=jss)

# Junmookda, Kimberly, Jim Jarvie and Anna Brown. March 16 2015. Cities Must Plan for Climate Disasters: 5 Considerations for Sendai. *The Rockefeller Foundation.* [*https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/blog/cities-must-plan-climate-disasters-5/*](https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/blog/cities-must-plan-climate-disasters-5/)

# Greg Toppo. June 9 2013. Cities Step Up Disaster-Response Planning. *USA TODAY.* [*http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/06/09/cities-resilience-officer/2373911/*](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/06/09/cities-resilience-officer/2373911/)

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**UNIT 4: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

**Week 9**: **The Natural Environment**

## Tuesday November 1: Pollution and Environmental Remediation

## READING:

## “Understanding Issues: Answers to Common Questions Concerning the Urban Environment.” MIT. <http://web.mit.edu/urbanupgrading/urbanenvironment/issues/key-UE-issues.html>

## Darryl Fears. “It’s not just Flint. Lead Taints Water Across the US, EPA records show. The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2016/03/17/its-not-just-flint-lead-taints-water-across-the-u-s-the-epa-says/?utm_term=.bab05ff4e0d8>

## Jaren Imam. April 22 2016. Earth Day: Cities with Most Air Pollution Revealed. CNN. <http://www.cnn.com/2016/04/20/health/air-pollution-report-irpt/>

## “Our Most Polluted States” 5/9/2010. The Daily Beast. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2010/05/19/americas-28-most-polluted-places.html>

## Thursday November 3: Environmental Racism/Inequality, LULUs and NIMBYism

## \*Guest Speaker: Andy Kricun

## READING:

## Skelton, Renee and Vernice Miller. March 17, 2016. “The Environmental Justice Movement.” National Resource Defense Council. <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/environmental-justice-movement>

## Assignment: Background Notes 2 Due on Sakai

**Week 10: Blight, Urban Renewal and Gentrification**

## Tuesday November 8: Blight and Urban Renewal

## READING:

## Urban Redevelopment. 2003. Dictionary of American History. <http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Urban_renewal.aspx>

## Paul S. O’Hara. 2011. The Very Model of Urban Decay: Outsiders’ Narratives of Industry and Urban Decline in Gary Indiana.” In Urban Politics Reader.

## Richard D. Bingham. Economic Development Policies. In Cities Politics and Policy edited by John P. Pelissero.

## Thursday November 10: Gentrification

## GUEST SPEAKER for Day of Revolutionary Thinking: Chief Scott Thompson

## READING:

## Dealing with Neighborhood Change: A Primer on Gentrification and Policy Choices, Section I-VI ONLY

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**UNIT 5: RUNNING LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

**Week 11: Paying for it All**

## Tuesday November 15: Who Pays?: How Cities Get Funded

**Test: Unit 3 &4 Exam (45 minutes)**

READING :

## Thursday November 17: Fiscal Crisis and State Take Over READING:

## Wayne H. Winegarden. 2014. Going Broke One City at a Time: Municipal Bankruptcies in America. Pacific Research Institute. <https://www.pacificresearch.org/fileadmin/documents/Studies/PDFs/2013-2015/MunicipalBankruptcy2014_F.pdf>

## Brent Johnson. April 10, 2016. Is Proposed State Takeover of Atlantic City Legal? NJ.Com <http://www.nj.com/politics/index.ssf/2016/04/is_possible_state_takeover_of_atlantic_city_even_l.html>

**Week 12: Catch Up and Thanksgiving**

## Tuesday November 22: Catch up or Knowing What We Want: Government Responsiveness READING: TBD

## ASSIGNMENT: Detailed Outline of Report Due on Sakai and PRINTED in Class

## Thursday November 24: Thanksgiving

READING: No Reading

**Week 13: Intergovernmental Relations**

## Tuesday November 29: Devolution and Mandates READING:

## Tracy Neumann. 2014. Privatization, Devolution and Jimmy Carter’s National Urban Policy” Journal of Urban History in Urban Politics a Reader.

## Peter Eisinger. 1998. City Politics in the Era of Federal Devolution. Urban Affairs Review. In Urban Politics a Reader.

## Thursday December 1: Regionalism and Cooperation

## Guest Speaker: Mayor Redd

READING:

1. Karen M Paget. 1998. Can Cities Escape Political Isolation? *The American Prospect.* In Urban Politics a Reader
2. Carl Abbott. The Portland Region: Where Cities and Suburbs Talk to Each Other and Often Agree” *Housing Policy Debate in Urban Politics Reader.*

**Week 14: Corruption and Accountability**

## Tuesday December 6: Party Bosses, Urban Reform, and the Progressive Era READING:

## Milton Rakove. 1975. The Ward Organizations.

## Samuel P. Hayes. The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the progressive Era. In Urban Politics, A Reader.

## Steve Volk. George Norcross: The Man Who Destroyed Democracy. Philadelphia Magazine. <http://www.phillymag.com/articles/george-norcross-man-destroyed-democracy/3/>

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## Thursday December 8: Modern Day Corruption- Documentary: Street Fight READING: NO READING

## ASSIGNMENT: Final Report and Executive Summary Due

**Week 15: Group Presentations and Wrap Up**

## Tuesday December 13: Group Presentations READING: NO READING ASSIGNMENT: Group Presentations

## Thursday December 15: Group Presentations READING: NO READING

## ASSIGNMENT: Group Presentations

**Week 16: Finals Week:**

**Final Exam: Tuesday December 20, 2:45-5:45 p.m.   
Unit 5 + Synthesis Questions**

**EXPLANATION OF ASSIGNMENTS**

**Unit Exams:** You will have three unit exams that test you on BOTH lectures and reading, with particular emphasis on the readings. Tests will be 45 minutes long. If you have not read you will not be able to do well on these exams.

**Class Blog**

Each of you will contribute two posts to a class blog. For each post you must find a news article that deals with the topics being discussed for your chosen week. You then need to provide a commentary that connects class materials with the article. Commentaries must be a **minimum of** **500 words** and need to include: a brief description of the article, a discussion of how this article connects to the week’s readings and lecture material, commentary about what the article made you think about/how it connects to your community/what you think it says about urban politics. This should be a professional rather than personal reflection with emphasis on the ideas we are learning about. Commenting on one another’s posts is a great way to earn participation points, especially for those of you who are uncomfortable speaking in class.

**Group Project**

Your primary assignment for this semester will be to work in groups of 3-4 to complete a semester long, multipart analysis of an urban issue affecting Camden. This project will require you to apply the concepts we learn in class to your analysis. You will choose from the following issues:

1. State take over of Camden’s government
2. Camden education system and the rise of charter schools
3. Camden’s Economic Development and Business Attraction Efforts
4. Camden’s Environmental Contamination and Remediation
5. Camden’s Poverty and Poverty Alleviation efforts
6. Camden’s Fiscal State
7. Camden’s Crime and Policing
8. Camden’s Blight and Renewal Efforts

Your analysis must include four things:

1. A discussion of the problem in general terms
2. A discussion of what the problem looks like in Camden
3. An evaluation of what government and non-profits are doing to address the problem in Camden and how this compares to approaches in other areas
4. An assessment of where Camden is succeeding and where it is struggling in its efforts to solve the problem.

To do this assignment your group will need to use a minimum of 20 outside sources which can include academic articles, professional and government reports, official city and organization websites, and news stories from REPUTABLE sources. \*We will discuss citations and sources in class\*

Your group will produce the following:

1. 15-20 page report (December 8)
2. Executive Summary (December 8)
3. In-Class Presentation (December 13 and December 15)

In addition to this you must submit:

1. Group Contract and Work Plan (September 8)
2. Background notes 1 (October 6)
3. Background notes 2 (November 3)
4. Detailed Outline of Report (November 22)

We will discuss more details in class.