

SOCG 371M: Community Power (cross-listed as IDIS 400)

Dr. Leslie Martin
Sect 1: 10-10:50 MWF
Sect 2: 11-11:50MWF
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Ofc Hrs: MWF 8:30-9:30, 2-2:45
TR 1-2:30
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Course Overview:

Who has power at the *local* level? What do they do with it? What interests are protected, represented and advanced – and why? Whose interests are advocated for, and whose voices remain unheard? Do neighborhoods matter in city politics and policies? Do individuals? How do these different units of analysis - the city, the neighborhood, the resident – make waves, make change, or experience the short end of the policy stick? We'll be examining inequality, as well as multiple efforts to ameliorate inequality – all at the level of the local community.

In this course we will examine how power is distributed and used at the local level, as well as struggles for power at the community level. We will do this by examining formal governance (electoral processes and patterns, party machines, etc.) and informal urban governance (who actually has power in various communities). We will think also about smaller institutions that can wield influence in communities, such as community development corporations and other “grassroots” urban development forms, asking questions about how they came to be and the implications of their popularity for urban politics and for citizen/neighborhood empowerment. Finally, we will spend some time examining contests over power and influence, through looking at urban social movements and periods of “riots” (or unrest).

Course goals: by the end of the semester, you should:

- *Gain understanding of how power is patterned and enacted at the local level
- *Think critically about how power can be seen in both formal and informal organizations and activities
- *Conduct original research on several aspects of community, inequality and power
- *Hone your written and oral communication skills

Evaluation:

Quality of contribution to class community: 18%
Discussion leading: 18%
Reaction papers: 8% each, 24% total
Research projects and abstracts: 15%, 15%: (30% total)
Presentation of one research project: 10%

Quality of contribution to class community: A strong, vibrant, engaging class community is not automatic, and it is not purely the result of things that I (the professor) do. Rather, we all have responsibility for contributing to the care and feeding of our class community. Your “quality of contribution to class community” will include: participation in class, listening in class, being respectful to people and ideas throughout the class, responding thoughtfully to peers’ posts on course website, sharing things you find relevant to our class on the website, helping each other talk/think through research projects, and in many other ways shouldering your part of the responsibility for creating an exciting, challenging and supportive class.

When we each do this, it will help you actively engage the readings and the discussion material; and participation by many people with different experiences, insights, and understandings will enrich all of our understandings of our topics. I will try to make the classroom a learning environment where all viewpoints are respected. If you feel uncomfortable participating in class discussion or activities for any reason, please talk with me.

You will have 2 opportunities to evaluate your work on this element.

Discussion leading: To further the goal of making this course as participatory as possible, you will lead class discussion of our readings once during the semester. You will be responsible for guiding our discussion of readings for part of one class period. Depending on the schedule, you may be doing this in pairs. Guidelines for this assignment are available on the course website.

Reaction papers: You will write 3 short reaction papers in the course of the semester. These will be brief ways for you to summarize and critically assess materials we've been working with in the course. There are 5 possible due dates, choose any 3 you'd like. Further guidelines are on the course website.

Research projects: You will complete 2 short research projects in the course of the semester. I have created a "menu" of options for you for these papers. You have a lot of freedom to choose topics and methods that most interest you. Further guidelines are on the course website. You will post an abstract of your projects online, and you will be expected to read/comment on at least 2 of your peers' research projects.

Presentations: At the end of the semester, everyone will present one of their research projects to the class. These will be brief presentations that should focus on your substantive findings, and explaining to your peers why these findings are of interest to our course.

Grading Scale:

A: 93-100 A-: 90-92/B+: 87-89 B: 83-86 B-: 80-82/C+: 77-79 C: 73-76 C-: 70-72/
D+: 67-69 D: 60-67

Anything below 60 is a failing grade. Those selecting the Pass/Fail option must average a 60. Grades of D or below will be reported as Unsatisfactory on midterm grades.

HONOR CODE: All students are expected to follow the policies of UMW with respect to academic conduct. Anyone engaging in plagiarism, cheating, or any other form of academic dishonesty will be referred to the Honors Council. Please write and sign the following pledge on all assignments and exams:

I hereby declare, upon my word of honor, that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work. (Signature)

Disability Services: The Office of Disability Services has been designated by the University as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you receive services through that office and require accommodations for this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodation needs. Bring your accommodation letter with you to the appointment. I will hold any information you share with me in the strictest confidence unless you give me permission to do otherwise. If you need accommodations, (note taking assistance, extended time for tests, etc.) I would be happy to refer you to the Office of Disability Services. They will require appropriate documentation of a disability. Their phone number is 540-654-1266.

Required books:

Ferman, Barbara. 1996. *Challenging the Growth Machine: Neighborhood Politics in Chicago and Pittsburgh*. University Press of Kansas.

Arena, John. 2012. *Driven From New Orleans: How Non-profits Betray Public Housing and Promote Privatization*. University of Minnesota Press.

Abu-Lughod, Janet. 2007/2012. *Race, Space and Riots in Chicago, New York and Los Angeles*. Oxford University Press.

*Additional readings will be placed online, and will be indicated on the syllabus. Please see course CANVAS site for the password to access readings on the course site.

Course website: All course documents will be made available on the course website (cmtypwr.lesliemartin.net) – including the syllabus, supplemental readings, and all other assignment guidelines. I will post grades on Canvas. Please let me know if you have any trouble accessing the class website or Canvas.

Schedule of Classes: This outline is subject to change, as needed.

I. Intro: What is power? What is community?

Aug 24-28 *on course website: Warren (Older & Newer Approaches to Community); Sadan (Empowerment Spreads/Theories of Power)

Aug 31 Guest speakers from Virginia Organizing
*online: Alinsky

II. At the level of the CITY**A. Formal Governance: elections and governing**

Sept 2 *Why study urban politics?*
*online: Brown et al (The Culture Wars and Urban Electoral Politics)
[DL 9/2](#)

Sept 4-7 *What are urban “machines”?*
*online: Kweit & Kweit (Political machines: 176-186); Plunkitt of Tammany Hall
[DL 9/7](#)

Sept 9 *Killing the machine: the Progressive era and reforms*
*online: Steffens (Philadelphia: Corrupt and Contented); Winders (The Roller Coaster of Class Conflict)
[DL 9/9](#)

Sept 11 *What happens when the disadvantaged get electoral power?*
*online: Marschall & Shah (Attitudinal Effects of Minority Incorporation); Hajnal (White Residents, Black Incumbents)
[DL 9/11](#)

B. Informal governance: community power debates

Sept 14 *We all govern, together. Pluralist approaches to urban governance*
Ferman ch 1, 2
[DL 9/14](#)

- Sept 16-18 *The deck is stacked: Elite theory, growth machines*
 Ferman chs 3, 4
 DL 9/16, 9/18
****Reaction paper due date #1: 9/16****
- Sept 21-23 *State of the art in urban governance*
 Ferman chs 5, 6
 DL 9/21
- Sept 25-28 *What does this look like on the ground? Case studies*
 Ferman ch 7
 *online: Kramer (Moral Panic and Growth Machines), Bartley (Green Development Zone)
 DL Sept 28

II. NEIGHBORHOOD-level power and politics

- Sept 30 *Doing it for ourselves – community-based development – professional organizations*
 Arena Intro, ch 1 (skim)
 DL 9/30
****Reaction paper due date #2 9/30****
- Oct 2-5 *Trends in organization form, function, accomplishments*
 Arena ch 2, 3
 DL 10/2, 10/5
- Oct 7-9 *Neighborhood Organizations*
 Arena ch 5, 6
 DL 10/9
- OCT 12 – NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK
- Oct 14-16 *Community organizing*
 Arena ch 7
 *online TBA
 DL 10/16

Research Project #1: Due Oct 14.

-comments on 2 peer abstracts due **Oct 19.**

- Oct 19-21 *Loss of neighbors, homeowners associations and NIMBYS – the conservative potential of local organizing*
 *online, Clampett-Lundquist (Everyone had Your Back); Chin (The Limits and Potential of NPOs)
 DL 10/21
****Reaction paper due date #3 10/19****

IIB. **Sneaky extra section: What about your OTHER community? Community organizations and organizing at UMW.

Oct 23-26 *Readings to be determined – hopefully by you. What documents should we be reading, as we explicitly turn our gaze to community, organizations, and power here at UMW?*

III. REALLY informal governance: popular unrest and uprisings

Oct 28-30 *Why participate in social movements, protests, uprisings, riots?*

*online, TBA

Abu-Lughod: ch 1

DL 10/30

****Reaction paper due date #4 10/30****

*For the next section of class, we will cover a variety of riots (to include: historical race riots, esp. those discussed in your book, Stonewall, current protests and unrest related to police violence, sports-related riots, riots rooted in austerity measures and to immigration in Europe...others?). We will do this to expose ourselves to a wide array of examples of this kind of political power. But we will also do this to try to pull together EXPLANATIONS for riots and uprisings. For this whole time, you will keep plugging away at the Abu-Lughod book, and then a few supplemental books. So, the syllabus lacks some specificity here – it is because we will need to be fluid in our approach.

Nov 2-13 *Case studies of riots to explain their emergence*

Abu-Lughod: chs 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8

DL 11/4, 11/9

Nov 16-20 *Other uprisings, other explanations*

*online: Jobard (Rioting as a Political Tool); Mele (Targeting the Middle Class), others TBA

DL 11/16, 11/18, 11/20

Nov 23 *Whatever we need to do. More talk about riots? Prep for presentations? Deep, yogic breathing? Food? All possible. Let's decide when we get closer.*

****Reaction paper due date #5 11/23****

Nov 30-Dec 4 AND THE FINAL EXAM PERIOD: Presentations of research projects.

Research Paper #2 due Dec 4 – last day of class.

-Comments on 2 peer abstracts DUE by the start of scheduled exam period.