

Dr. John C. Thomas
Office: 330 AYSPS
Phone: 404-413-0113

E-mail: jcthomas@gsu.edu
Office hours: Thursdays 1-4 or by
appointment

PAUS 8351

Local Government Management

Spring Semester 2009

Overview:

Course focus: This course examines how local governments—for central cities, suburbs, other local entities, and metropolitan areas as a whole—function and are managed, principally in the U.S. The course will examine (1) the context of local government, including the history, politics and economics of localities, (2) the roles of different types of local governments, (3) the principal actors in local government, both elected and appointed, (4) management of the principal functions of local governments, and (5) some contemporary problems of local governance and possible approaches to solving those problems.

Course objectives: This course has three objectives, one academic and two practical. As the academic objective, students should gain an understanding of how cities, suburbs, and their metropolitan areas function and are governed, including (1) which governments have which responsibilities, (2) what kinds of problems these governments must address, (3) who makes the decisions for those governments, and (4) how those decisions are put into operation. As the first practical objective, students should gain a sense of how the problems of urban areas might be better addressed by both elected policy makers and appointive public administrators. As the second practical objective, students should be prepared by the end of the semester to assist in solving the problems of their communities and local governments.

Format: The class will emphasize two principal formats: (1) lecture/discussion, meaning a combination of lecture by the instructor and discussion with the class, and (2) small-group case-study discussions. There will also be one or more guest speakers and perhaps a video or two.

Course Requirements:

1. Two essay examinations: Two examinations will together account for approximately **60%** of the course grade—**25%** for the first exam and **35%** for the second. The first exam will be given during the regular class session on **Thursday, Feb. 26**, the second exam at the regular final time, **5:00 p.m. Thursday, April 30**. Either or both exams may be given as open-book exams where students take the exams online at the place of their

choice, emailing their answers in a word processing format at the end of the exam time. That determination will be made and announced well in advance of both exams. The final examination may also include questions that cover the full semester.

2. Term paper: Each student will prepare a term paper (a minimum of 10 pages in length) on a topic related to local government management. Possible kinds of topics include a) the politics, governing arrangements, and contemporary issues facing a specific area local government (city, suburb, county, or other), b) a specific current area local government issue (such as launching a new local government in Johns Creek), or c) a broader local government issue (such as the diffusion of 311 call centers). Sources for these papers should include interviews with local government officials as well as library materials, newspaper accounts, and government Web sites. The papers should also include explicit comparisons to course themes and theories from class readings and discussions. **This paper must NOT duplicate or borrow from any paper used in other class unless permission has been obtained in advance from the instructors of both classes.**

The grade on the paper will count for approximately **30%** of the course grade. Initial one-page proposals are due **Thursday, Feb. 5 (email submission is permitted)**. The completed term paper is due **Thursday, April 9 (email submission is NOT permitted)**.

3. Class participation: Each student is expected to complete the assigned readings on schedule, to attend class, and to participate in class discussions, including small-group discussions. Class participation will be graded on the basis of a) responses to the instructor's questions of the class, b) participation in small-group discussions, and c) attendance, and will count for **10%** of the course grade.

4. Extra credit: Some students *may* be invited to earn extra credit through brief in-class presentations of their term papers. These opportunities are at the discretion of the instructor, and may be limited to the better term papers. No other extra credit will be available.

Required Texts:

Banovetz, James M., ed. *Managing Local Government: Cases in Decision Making*. 2nd ed. Washington, D.C.: International City/County Management Association, 1998. Paperback.

Lang, Robert E., and Jennifer B. LeFurgy. *Boomburbs: The Rise of America's Accidental Cities*. Brookings Institution Press, 2007. Hardcover.

Nivola, Pietro S. *Laws of the Landscape: How Policies Shape Cities in Europe and America*. Brookings Institution Press, 2007. Paperback.

Pelissero, John P., ed. *Cities, Politics, and Policy: A Comparative Analysis*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2003. Paperback.

Schedule of Topics and Readings:

1. Introduction: the changing demographic context (Jan. 8)

Laws, Chs. 1-2.

Boomburbs, Chs. 1-2.

Smitt, Eric. "Whites in minorities in largest cities, the Census shows." *New York Times*, April 30, 2001.

Gurwitt, Rob. "Atlanta and the urban future." *Governing*, July 2008, 35-42.

2. Urban reform movement & the structures of government (Jan. 15)

Cities, Politics, pp. 1-42.

Frederickson, H. George, and Gary Alan Johnson. "The adapted American city: A study of institutional dynamics." *Urban Affairs Review*, 36 (2001), 872-884.

3. Political participation & political groups at the local level (Jan. 22)

Cities, Politics, Chs. 3-4.

Cases, 3-5.

4. Political leadership: governing regimes, mayors, and city councils (Jan. 29)

Cities, Politics, Chs. 5-7.

5. Administrative leadership: city managers & the municipal bureaucracy (Feb. 5)

Cities, Politics, Ch. 8.

Nalbandian, John. "Professionals and the conflicting forces of modernization and civic engagement." *American Review of Public Administration*, 35 (2005), 311-326.

Cases, 1-2.

Term paper proposals due

6. Suburbs, boomburbs, et al., & their governance (Feb. 12)

Cities, Politics, Ch. 13.

Boomburbs, Chs. 3-4 & 6.

7. Counties, special districts, & other local governments (Feb. 19)

Cases, 6-7.

Foster, Kathryn A. *The Political Economy of Special-Purpose Government*.
Georgetown University Press, 1-27.

Hoene, Christopher, et al. "The development of counties as municipal
governments: A case study of Los Angeles in the twenty-first century."
Urban Affairs Review, 37 (2002), 575-591.

Conte, Christopher. "Boss thy neighbor." *Governing*, April 2001, 38-42.

Schlauch, Brendan. "Dues blues." *Governing*, September 2008, 55-56.

Exam #1 (Feb. 26)

8. Growth & sprawl: causes, consequences, & (maybe) correctives (March 12)

Boomburbs, Chs. 5 & 7-8.

Laws, Chs. 4-7.

9. Municipal finances (March 19)

Cities, Politics, pp. 42-67 & Ch. 9.

Cases, 17-19.

Greenblatt, Alan. "Recipe for respect." *Governing*, February 2008, 22-26.

Goodman, Josh. "The tax grab game." *Governing*, April 2007, 46-48.

10. Economic development (March 26)

Cities, Politics, Ch. 10.

Cases, 8-9.

Ehrenhalt, Alan. "Extreme makeover." *Governing*, July 2006, 26-33.

11. Municipal service & contracting (April 2)

Cities, Politics, Ch. 11.

Cases, 11 & 16.

Prager, Jonas. "Contract city redux: Weston, Florida, as the ultimate new public
management model city." *Public Administration Review*, 68 (2008), 167-
180.

12. Managing human resources & organizational performance (April 9)

Cases, 10 & 12-15.

Edwards, David J., and John Clayton Thomas. "Developing a municipal
performance measurement system: Reflections on the *Atlanta Dashboard*."
Public Administration Review, 65 (2005), 369-376.

Term papers due (hard copies only—no email or fax transmission)

13. Norms & ethics & environment issues (April 16)

Cases, 20-21.

Dunn, Delmer D., and Jerome S. Legge, Jr., "Accountability and responsibility of local government administrators."

Swope, Christopher. "Local warming." *Governing*, December 2007, 25-30.

Perlman, Ellen. "Mr. Sustainability." *Governing*, April 2008, 36-41.

14. Schools and local governance (April 23)

Cities, Politics, Ch. 12

Gurwitt, Rob. "Battered school boards." *Governing*, May 2006, 38-45.

Moe, Terry M. "Opinion: Change our public schools need." *Wall Street Journal*, November 24, 2008.

Bohte, John. "Examining the impact of charter schools on performance in traditional public schools." *Policy Studies Journal*, 32 (2004), 501-520.

Exam #2, at regular final examination time, Thursday, April 30, 5-7:30 p.m.

CAUTION: Plagiarism on a paper, cheating on an examination, or unauthorized duplication of or borrowing from a paper written for another class is grounds for a failing grade on the work in question and for the course overall.