

**Urban Politics and Policy**  
**PLAW 206**  
**Fall 2024**

3:30–4:45 PM  
Tuesdays and Thursdays  
Buckman ###

Professor: Be Stone  
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Office: Buckman 307  
Office Hours: Mondays 2:00–3:00 PM and Thursdays 12:30–1:30 PM or by appointment

**Course Description and Learning Objectives**

This course is a critical introduction to the theories and practices of politics in urban America. We will consider some of the most pressing issues facing US cities and examine public policies designed to address them. A core theme of this course is the concept of power and its operation in urban spaces, in which race, class, and gender figure prominently. On completion of the course students should have:

- Knowledge of the political and social issues in contemporary urban America and how they came to be; including their manifestations in Memphis, TN.
- Critical thinking skills, including the capacity to assess the kind and quality of evidence writers use to support claims, the ability to reconcile conflicting evidence that seems to support different claims, and the ability to ask probing questions about complex issues.
- Analytical writing skills, including the ability to summarize the main points of an argument succinctly, use language precisely in service to one’s argument and to critique the arguments of others, and demonstrate command of urban politics terminology.
- Oral communication skills developed through class discussions and presentations.

**Texts**

The following texts are required for the course:

Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf, and Todd Swanstrom. 2014. *Place Matters: Metropolitica for the 21st Century*, 3rd edition (revised). ISBN 978-0700619276

Anne Gray Fischer. 2022. *The Streets Belong to Us: Sex, Race, and Police Power from Segregation to Gentrification*. ISBN 978-1-4696-6504-7

The rest of the readings are available on Canvas under “Modules.” **You are required to bring a printed copy of the readings to class with you. There are no computers or cellphones in the classroom.** (Unless you have a specific learning accommodation for an electronic device through Student Accessibility Services.) This is to enhance your engagement with each other and the assigned readings and to minimize distractions. If you need assistance with printing, please let me know.

## Lecture Slides

The PowerPoint presentations for each class will be posted on Canvas under “Pages” and then “Lectures.” These slides do not include everything covered in class, and you will need to take additional notes during class to supplement these slides.

## Canvas

You are required to log into Canvas regularly to access class readings, submit assignments, and check for announcements. Please ensure that you have access to Canvas the first week of class. The syllabus can be found on the “Syllabus” page. All of the required readings and assignments are available under “Modules” or on the Homepage in Canvas.

## Grading & Class Requirements

Your grade is based on the five requirements for this course:

### **1. Class Participation (20% of class grade)**

- Absences may be excused if you notify me in advance, but in all other cases, absences will be unexcused and will negatively affect your participation grade.
- Attendance includes being on time and staying for the duration of the class. Attendance will be marked during the first five minutes. Students arriving after that will be marked “late.” Two “lates” are equivalent to one absence.
- If you miss class it is your responsibility to get notes and assignments from a classmate. After you have received the notes from a classmate, you may schedule a meeting during office hours if you have questions for me.
- Participation in class discussion is a critical part of the learning process. You are expected to come to every class having read all of the readings, prepared to contribute to class discussion and participate in class activities.
- You are required to bring a printed copy of all the readings to each class. Failure to do so will negatively affect your grade.

### **2. Weekly Reading Responses (20% of class grade)**

- To foster your thinking outside of class and to facilitate discussion in class you are required to submit weekly reading responses. Response papers should be between 300–400 words in length and include three parts. See the handout (available on Canvas under “Pages”) for details.
- Reading responses are due via Canvas at 11:00 AM on Tuesdays OR Thursdays (half the class will be assigned Tues, the other half Thurs). We will determine Tues/Thurs assignments during our first class. Late responses will receive no more than ½ credit.

### **3. Memphis Policy Presentation (20% of class grade)**

- For this assignment you will work individually or in pairs to conduct research, write notes, and present to the class a local policy issue of your choice as it relates to Memphis. See the handout (available on Canvas under “Pages”) for details.
- Confirm your topic and presentation date by Thursday, September 12. Presentation dates are Tues Sept 17–Thurs Oct 17, topics and dates are first-come-first-served.

#### 4. Discussion Leader (20% of class grade)

- For this assignment you will work in pairs to serve as Discussion Leaders for one class meeting. This includes preparing a 5-minute presentation based on your written assessment of the day's readings and producing a handout for your classmates. See the handout (available on Canvas under "Pages") for details.
- Confirm your discussion date by Thursday, October 17. Discussion Leader dates are Tues Oct 24–Tues Dec 3 and are first-come-first-served.

#### 5. Final Project (20% of class grade)

- The Final Project is an open-ended, creative project in which you are tasked with teaching the general public about a concept or idea we've discussed in class. See the handout (available on Canvas under "Pages") for details.
- Your Final Project will be due on the morning our final exam is scheduled (schedule TBA). There is no final exam. Instead, you will make a brief, informal presentation of your project during the time scheduled for our exam. Please note I will not grant extensions, and late projects will receive no more than ½ credit.

Your exams and assignments are graded on the following scale:

- A 100–93
- A- 92–90
- B+ 89–87
- B 86–83
- B- 82–80
- C+ 79–77
- C 76–73
- C- 72–70
- D 69–65
- D- 64–60
- F 59 or below

#### **Classroom Conduct and Community Standards**

Politics is personal. Discussing political topics can challenge deeply held or unexamined beliefs. Expect to be challenged in this class to think critically about the ideas presented in the readings and common assumptions made about urban politics. Given the difficult, sensitive, and political nature of the material to be discussed in this course, students are expected to conduct themselves in a mature and respectful manner. This requires both thoughtfully voicing your own perspective on the materials covered in class, as well as respectfully listening to and responding to the perspectives of others. The ultimate goal of this course is to develop critical thinking skills in order to construct and voice informed opinions on complex issues. You are not expected to know how to do this perfectly when you walk into the classroom. We will be learning in real time, together. We will make mistakes. I ask that we aim to be generous with each other and to acknowledge when we have fallen short of our community standards. If you feel you will not be able to adhere to these standards please come talk to me immediately. All students are encouraged to talk to me about any challenging or difficult issues that come up in class materials or in class discussion.

## Current Events

Our academic study of urban politics and policymaking will be enhanced by following relevant news in the media. To that end, you are expected to read at least one daily newspaper while taking this course, and to draw upon material from this newspaper during class discussions. Rhodes offers all students a free subscription to *The Daily Memphian* and *Commercial Appeal* online:

*Daily Memphian* (just click on the link, no need to sign up): [dailymemphian-com.relay.rhodes.edu/](http://dailymemphian-com.relay.rhodes.edu/)

*Commercial Appeal* (sign in to ProQuest with your Rhodes email): [relay.rhodes.edu:2048/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/publication/publications/45732?accountid=13503](https://www.proquest.com/publication/publications/45732?accountid=13503)

## Email policy

Email is the best method for getting in touch with me. My policy is to respond to email within 48 hours. I do not respond to emails on evenings, weekends, or national holidays. Please include “PLAW 206” in the subject line, and if your email address is not a variation of your name, indicate in the body of the email who you are.

## Access and Accommodations

It is the policy and practice of Rhodes College to create inclusive, equitable, and accessible learning environments for all students. If you have already established accommodations with Student Accessibility Services (SAS), please communicate your approved accommodations to me as soon as possible so we can discuss your needs in this course. If you have not yet established services through SAS but have a condition that requires accommodations (conditions include but not limited to mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or chronic health), please contact SAS at [sites.rhodes.edu/accessibility](http://sites.rhodes.edu/accessibility). SAS offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and temporary conditions.

## Academic Integrity

All Rhodes College students pledge to uphold the Honor Code: “As a member of the Rhodes community, I pledge I will not lie, cheat, or steal, and that I will report any such violation that I may witness.” The Rhodes Student Handbook states: “‘Cheating’ includes plagiarism. Plagiarism is an act of academic dishonesty. A student must not adopt or reproduce ideas, words, or statements of another person without appropriate acknowledgment.” See the Writing Center’s resources for more details on what plagiarism is and how to avoid it: [rhodes.edu/academics/majors-minors/english/writing-center/plagiarism](http://rhodes.edu/academics/majors-minors/english/writing-center/plagiarism).

**You may not submit work generated by an AI program (e.g., ChatGPT) as your own.**

**Doing so is plagiarism.** If you include material generated by AI, it should be cited like any other reference material (with consideration for the quality of the reference, which may be poor). No more than 10% of any assignment may be generated by AI. You may use AI programs to help generate ideas and brainstorm. However, you should note that the material generated by these programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic, and may stifle your own independent thinking. **Any assignment found to have been plagiarized—including submitting AI-generated text without proper citation—or that is the product of cheating or any other act of academic dishonesty, will automatically receive a zero grade and you will not be given an opportunity to repeat the assignment for a passing grade.** Ignorance of the

Honor Code or of what constitutes plagiarism, cheating, or any other form of academic dishonesty is not an acceptable excuse.

### **Weekly Course Schedule**

*All dates, readings, and assignments are subject to change.*

## **Part I: Urban Politics: Conceptual and Political Foundations**

### **Conceptual Foundations**

Thurs Aug 29:

- Welcome and introduction.
- In-class: review Media Bias Chart.

Tues Sept 3:

- Michael Katz. 2012. “What is an American City?” in *Why Don’t American Cities Burn?*
- Urban Institute. 2018. “Strong Cities, Strong Communities: Memphis, TN Profile,” (“Local Dynamics and Program Overview” section).
- Encyclopedia Britannica. 2024. “Memphis, TN.”

Thurs Sept 5:

- *Class canceled, Prof. Stone at conference. Complete group work on Canvas and read:*
- John Mollenkopf. 1994. “How to Study Urban Power” in *A Phoenix in the Ashes*.
- Memphis Public Library. “Informed Voter Page.” Also review the Local-City and Local-County pages: <https://www.memphislibrary.org/informed-voter/>.
- City of Memphis. “Meet Your Government,” click on the “Learn More” buttons for Mayor and City Council, review 2–3 other pages in the gray navigation bar: <https://www.memphistn.gov/government/>.
- Shelby County Tennessee. “About Our Government,” <https://www.shelbycountyttn.gov/67/About-Our-Government>, “About the Mayor,” <https://www.shelbycountyttn.gov/213/About-the-Mayor>, and “Role of the County Commission,” <https://www.shelbycountyttn.gov/1208/Role-of-the-Commission>.
- Shelby County Growth Map: <https://shelbycountyttn.gov/DocumentCenter/View/38486/Reserve-Areas-2021>.

### **Theories and Practices of Urban Politics**

Tues Sept 10:

Split among the class:

- Robert Dahl. 2005 [1974]. “Preface” and “Introduction” in *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*.
- OR
- Dianne Pinderhughes. 1987. “Introduction” and selections of “Race and Ethnicity in America” in *Race and Ethnicity in Chicago Politics: A Reexamination of Pluralist Theory*.

Thurs Sept 12:

Split among the class:

- Paul E. Peterson. 1981. “The Interests of the Limited City” in *City Limits*.  
OR
- David Harvey. 2019. “The Right to the City” in *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*.
- **\*\*\*Last day to sign up for your Memphis Policy Presentation\*\*\***

### **Political and Historical Foundations**

Tues Sept 17:

- Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom. 2014. *Place Matters*. Preface, Chs. 1, 2 (everyone), Chs. 4–5 (split among the class).
- Policy Presentations:
  - TBA student(s), topic x2

Thurs Sept 19:

- Michael Omi. 2011. “Color-blindness, Racism, and Multiracial Democracy” in *America’s Urban Crisis and the Advent of Colorblind Politics*.
- Claire Jean Kim. 2000. Chs. 1–2 and conclusion in *Bitter Fruit: The Politics of Black-Korean Conflict in New York City*.
- Policy Presentations:
  - TBA

Tues Sept 24:

- Leslie Kern. 2022. “City of Men,” in *Feminist City*.
- Jennifer Gardner and Larissa Begault. 2019. “How Better Urban Planning Can Improve Gender Equality.” *Behavioral Scientist*.
- Policy Presentations:
  - TBA

### **Part II: Housing: Racial and Economic Segregation, Gentrification, and Under/Development**

Thurs Sept 26:

- Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor. 2019. Introduction and conclusion in *Race For Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership*.
- Revisit: Dreier et al., Ch. 4., p. 126–33.
- Policy Presentations:
  - TBA

Tues Oct 1:

- Alan Mallach and Todd Swanstrom. 2023. “Deconstructing Gentrification” in *The Changing American Neighborhood*.
- Vanessa Gregory. 2021. “How the Real Estate Boom Left Black Neighborhoods Behind.” *The New York Times*.

- Noah Robertson. 2023. “In Memphis, Hopes and Challenges of Black Middle Class Collide.” *The Christian Science Monitor*.
- In-class exercise: interactive map on racial segregation: <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2021/us/census-race-ethnicity-map/>; paired with interactive map on gentrification: <https://www.urbandisplacement.org/topic/global-urban-displacement/>
- Policy Presentations:
  - TBA

### **Policy Approaches**

Thurs Oct 3:

- Jacob Steimer. 2024. “Here’s how Paul Young intends to fix Memphis’ housing problems.” *MLK50*.
- Astrid Kayembe. 2022. “‘This is a long play’: City Council approves Soulsville TIF. Here’s what happens next.” *The Commercial Appeal*.

Split among the class:

- Dreier et al. *Place Matters*. Chs. 9–10.
- Richard Sander, Yana Kucheva, and Jonathan Zasloff. 2018. Chs. 21–22 in *Moving Toward Integration: The Past and Future of Fair Housing*.
- Policy Presentations:
  - TBA

## **Part III: Crime, Policing, and the Carceral State**

Tues Oct 8:

- Anne Gray Fischer. 2022. *The Streets Belong to Us*. Introduction and Ch. 1 (everyone), Chs. 3–5 (split among groups).
- Policy Presentations:
  - TBA

Thurs Oct 10:

- George Kelling and James Q. Wilson. 1982. “Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety.” *The Atlantic*.
- Brandon Welsh, Anthony Braga, and Gerben Bruinsma. 2015. “Reimagining Broken Windows: From Theory to Policy.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*.
- David Remnick. 2020. “Ten Years After *The New Jim Crow*: Interview with Michelle Alexander.” *The New Yorker Radio Hour*.
- Policy Presentations:
  - TBA

### **Policy Approaches**

Tues Oct 15:

- Erin Klinenberg. 2018. “The Other Side of ‘Broken Windows.’” *The New Yorker*.
- Rashawn Ray and Clark Neily. 2021. “A Better Path Forward for Criminal Justice: Police Reform.” *Brookings Institution*.

- Jaweed Kaleem. 2023. “What Tyre Nichols’ death at the hands of Black officers says about race in policing.” *Los Angeles Times*.
- Kayla Solomon. 2024. “Memphis mayor discusses meeting with gang leaders, more resources for young people.” *FOX13*.
- In-class exercise: re-entry simulator <https://reentryjourney.org/>.
- Policy Presentations:
  - TBA

Thurs Oct 17:

- Anne Gray Fischer. 2022. *The Streets Belong to Us*. Ch. 6.
- Danielle Sered. 2019. “Displacing Incarceration” in *Until We Reckon: Violence, Mass Incarceration, and a Road to Repair*.
- Mariame Kaba. 2020. “Yes, We Mean Literally Abolish the Police.” *The New York Times*.
- In-class exercise: Vera Institute, “What Policing Costs: Memphis, TN.”
- **\*\*\*Last day to sign up for your Discussion Leader Date\*\*\***
- Policy Presentations:
  - TBA

*Fri Oct 18: mid-term grades posted*

*Mon Oct 21– Tues Oct 22: Fall Recess, no class*

#### **Part IV: Racialized and Gendered Urban Poverty**

Thurs Oct 24:

- Matthew Desmond and Bruce Western. 2018. “Poverty in America: New Directions and Debates.” *Annual Review of Sociology*.
- Matthew Desmond. 2012. “Eviction and the Reproduction of Urban Poverty.” *American Journal of Sociology*.
- Discussion Leaders:
  - TBA

Tues Oct 29:

- Alex Vitale. 2021. “Criminalizing Homelessness” in *The End of Policing*.
- Jessica Gertler. 2023. “Cars, hotels, tents: What homelessness looks like in Memphis and what’s being done to help.” *WREG*.
- Reading on SCOTUS ruling TBA.
- Discussion Leaders:
  - TBA

#### **Policy Approaches**

Thurs Oct 31:

- Matthew Desmond. 2023. *Poverty, By America*. Chs. 7–9 (divided among groups), Epilogue (all).



- Neil Gong and Katherine Beckett. 2024. “Housing First Can Work–If Done Right.” *The American Prospect*.
- Discussion Leaders:
  - TBA

### **Part V: Education and (In)Equality**

Tues Nov 5:

- Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, Sarah Diem, and Erica Frankenberg. 2018. “The Disintegration of Memphis-Shelby County, Tennessee: School District Secession and Local Control in the 21st Century.” *American Educational Research Journal*.
- For reference: EdBuild. 2019. “Fractured: The Accelerating Breakdown of America's School Districts,” <https://edbuild.org/content/fractured#shelby>.
- Discussion Leaders:
  - TBA

Thurs Nov 7:

Split among the class:

- Russell Skiba, Mariella Arredondo, and Natasha Williams. 2014. “More Than a Metaphor: The Contribution of Exclusionary Discipline to a School-to-Prison Pipeline.” *Equity and Excellence in Education*.
- OR
- John Williams and Greg Wiggan. 2016. “Models of Success, Teacher Quality and Student Disciplinary Infraction: A Critical Analysis of Chicago’s Urban Preparatory Academies and Harlem Children’s Zone.” *Journal of Educational Issues*.
- Extra credit opportunity: “Growing Fairness” documentary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fOo2aGL0QMk>.
- DUE 11:59 PM: Final Exam Project brief proposal (see handout)
- Discussion Leaders:
  - TBA

### **Policy Approaches**

Tues Nov 12:

- Rucker C. Johnson. 2019. “Why School Integration Works.” *The Washington Post*.
- Eve L. Ewing. 2021. “Can We Stop Fighting About Charter Schools?” *The New York Times*.
- Sarah Mervosh. 2023. “Who Runs the Best U.S. schools? It May Be the Defense Department.” *The New York Times*.
- Rachel Wegner and Vivian Jones. 2024. “Tennessee school vouchers: What to know about the controversy, what could change.” *The Tennessean*.
- Discussion Leaders:
  - TBA

## **Part VI: Drug Consumption and Public Health**

Thurs Nov 14:

- Craig Reinerman. 1994. “The Social Construction of Drug Scares,” in *Constructions of Deviance: Social Power, Context, and Interaction*.
- Michael Fortner. 2015. Introduction (everyone), Chs. 4-5 (split with a partner) in *Black Silent Majority: The Rockefeller Drug Laws and the Politics of Punishment*.
- **DUE 11:59 PM: Final Exam Project full proposal (see handout)**
- Discussion Leaders:
  - TBA

### **Policy Approaches**

Tues Nov 19:

- Watch: American Public Health Association. 2022. “How does public health tackle alcohol and drug misuse?”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-m8UyCFeSM>
- Dina Perrone, Aili Malm, and Erica Jovanna Magaña. 2022. “Harm Reduction Policing: An Evaluation of Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) in San Francisco” in *Police Quarterly*.
- German Lopez. 2024. “Can San Francisco Solve Its Drug Crisis? Five Things to Consider.” *The New York Times*.
- Elana Gordon. 2018. “What’s the Evidence that Supervised Drug Injection Sites Save Lives?” *NPR*.
- Discussion Leaders:
  - TBA

Thurs Nov 21:

- Watch: Johann Hari. 2015. “Everything you think you know about addiction is wrong.” TED Talk: [https://www.ted.com/talks/johann\\_hari\\_everything\\_you\\_think\\_you\\_know\\_about\\_addiction\\_is\\_wrong?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/johann_hari_everything_you_think_you_know_about_addiction_is_wrong?language=en).
- Shira Hassan. 2023. “Holding Our Beautiful Mess: Liberatory Harm Reduction and Our Right to Heal” in *Healing Justice Lineages*.
- Jia Tolentino. 2024. “Legal weed in New York was going to be a revolution. What happened?” *The New Yorker*.
- Discussion Leaders:
  - TBA

Tues Nov 26:

- *Flex day*

*Weds Nov 27–Fri Nov 29: Thanksgiving recess*

## Part VII: Taking Stock and Possible Urban Futures

Tues Dec 3:

- Iris Marion Young. 1990. “City Life and Difference” in *Justice and the Politics of Difference*.
- DUE 11:59 PM: Final Exam Project progress report (see handout)
- Discussion Leaders:
  - TBA

Thurs Dec 5:

- Vincent Emanuele. 2017. “Rebel Cities, Urban Resistance and Capitalism: a Conversation with David Harvey.” Verso blog.
- Angela Davis, Gina Dent, Erica Meiners, and Beth Richie. 2020. “Now.” in *Abolition. Feminism. Now*.

Tues Dec 10:

- Class wrap-up

**TBD: Fri Dec 13–Weds Dec 18**

- **Final Exam Projects due 10:00 AM on exam day; short presentations during exam time** (see handout)



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