

Wagner College  
Department of Government and Politics  
Course GOV291  
Mondays, 6-9pm  
Spring 2010  
Instructors: Dr. Richard Guarasci  
Dr. Abraham Unger  
Dr. Cassia Freedland

## **The City and Citizenship: To Be a New Yorker<sup>1</sup>** **Honors Seminar**

The “City” is both an ideal concept and functional reality. Conceptually and empirically, the city is a laboratory for the interaction of the full range of social expression. What are the primary competing normative visions of urban life, and how have cities actually behaved over time politically and economically? Additionally, how can urban residents impact upon their communities in meaningful ways that help to sustain local democracy and economic development? In response to these fundamental questions, we will explore the theoretical, historical, cultural, and political dimensions of urban spaces.

This seminar is divided into three complementary components:

1. The first reviews the major studies of urban life, covering theory, history, and public policy, with an emphasis on economic development and social justice issues.
2. The second brings this literature into the field through service learning facilitated by a Wagner College initiative in Staten Island called The Port Richmond Partnership. Students will participate in a major fieldwork project detailed later in this syllabus. This project will contribute towards immigration reform advocacy efforts on a civic and governmental level.
3. The third asks students to reflect upon the meaning of their own citizenship and democratic values based upon consideration of seminar readings, discussion, and fieldwork experience in the Port Richmond Partnership.

All students are expected to complete required readings and should be prepared to discuss and analyze them at each seminar session. Hand-outs will be distributed intermittently to supplement course readings. As this is an honors seminar which takes into account the discussions and interests that develop through class sessions, the assignments on this syllabus are subject to revision by the instructors.

Any student who misses more than 3 classes due to unexcused absence may be asked to leave the course. Any emails sent by the instructors to students in this seminar will only use a wagner.edu address. Please stay attuned to emails regarding this course.

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Grades for the course will be based on:

1. Citizenship autobiography. This is an analysis of how ideas explored in seminar sessions and fieldwork experiences have shaped your role as an urban citizen in a modern democratic city. 7-10 pages. 20%
2. 2 in class oral presentations. The first oral presentation should pose a question that emerges out of readings and class discussions and offer a response. The second oral presentation will be an oral presentation of your course research paper. See description of course research paper below. 5% for each presentation = 10% total for this requirement
3. Participation in the seminar fieldwork project collecting data based on personal stories of immigrants in Port Richmond (Dr. Freedland will guide this effort) 20%
4. Course research paper. This paper should explore an aspect of the politics of economic development in Port Richmond. It should draw upon scholarly sources, primary data, and the resources provided by the organizations involved with the Port Richmond Partnership. The methodology of this paper will be further described in class. It will follow the typical structure of an academic research paper, along the lines of those published in social science journals such as the Zeemering article listed on this syllabus. 10 – 15 pages. 20%
5. Class participation 20%
6. Two short essays. The first is a response to a short essay question distributed in class based on course readings. Each student will then receive another student's first essay to form a response for the second essay, which is a one to three page critique of that first paper. The second essay will also include recommendations for further development of the first paper. Though submitted individually, the second group of short essays can be worked on in groups. This is a typical practice of seminars. 5% for each paper = 10% total for this requirement

### **Required Reading**

*The following books can be purchased at the campus bookstore:*

Jane Jacobs The Death and Life of Great American Cities

Dennis Judd and Todd Swanstrom City Politics

Paul Kantor and H.V. Savitch Cities in the International Marketplace

Joel Kotkin The City: A Global History

John Kretzmann and John McKnight Building Communities from the Inside Out

*Monographs that will be distributed:*

Jonathan Bowles, David Giles, Joel Kotkin, Reviving the City of Aspiration: A study of the challenges facing New York City's middle class study funded by Wagner College, Center for an Urban Future, 2009

Arun Peter Lobo, Joseph J. Salvo, (both authors are directors at the Population Division of the New York City Department of City Planning) New Immigrants to New York **Hugh L. Carey Center for Government Reform, Wagner College, 2009**

*Readings from the following books and journals will be on electronic reserve:*

Lewis Mumford The City in History

Robert Caro [The Power Broker](#)

Paul Goldberger [Eminent Dominion: Rethinking the Legacy of Robert Moses](#), article from The New Yorker Magazine, February 5, 2007

You may also find a link to this article at:

[http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/skyline/2007/02/05/070205crsk\\_skyline\\_goldberger?printable=true](http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/skyline/2007/02/05/070205crsk_skyline_goldberger?printable=true)

Eric Z. Zeemering, *What Does Sustainability Mean to City Officials?* [Urban Affairs Review](#), Vol. 45, No. 2, November 2009, pages 247-273

Learning Outcomes if you fulfill the requirements of this course to completion, you should:

1. acquire knowledge of social science methodology
2. acquire knowledge of the literature of urban politics
3. acquire fieldwork experience in combining social science method with civic engagement practice
4. develop advanced skills in critical thinking
5. strengthen understanding of democratic citizenship

*Assignments on Citizenship and Democracy*  
**Urban Politics: The City and Citizenship**  
**To Be a New Yorker**

**Citizenship Autobiography**

In this seminar you have engaged writings of a number of authors as well as a meaningful immersion on the Port Richmond Staten Island community in New York City. This assignment asks you to answer a single question: How are these intellectual and field experiences affecting you –your values and your personal sense of democratic citizenship.

Have any of these authors given you perspective and insight to the context and meaning of their field experiences? And has your community work influenced your ideas about the meaning of democratic citizenship in urban America? Have your field experiences shaped these ideas and your sense of the appropriate role for citizenship participation in public policy formation?

Write a 7-10 page (typed/double spaced) essay on how the ideas of the course and the field work of the course are shaping your autobiography, and in particular, your role as an urban citizen in a modern democratic city.

In this sense you are writing a recounting of your community based field work as it is explained by the authors you find most useful in constructing your narrative.

*Fieldwork Project on Immigration*

The Port Richmond neighborhood is located on the north central edge of Staten Island, one of the five boroughs of New York City. The 2000 Census identified 62,000 residents living in a neighborhood which encompasses approximately one square mile. Thirty-one percent of these residents are younger than 17 years of age. The State identified Port Richmond as an “economically distressed community, with the

borough's second-lowest median household income, the second-highest poverty rate, and the highest concentration of older housing in the borough.”

Port Richmond has experienced a large growth in its immigrant population. In the past decade, the Mexican immigrant population has grown more than 400%, most of which are undocumented day laborers, sometimes as young as 14 years old. This rapid influx has deeply influenced the social and economic fabric of Port Richmond, and has created complex needs in the areas of health care, education, housing and employment.

In March 2008, a cross-section of leaders from the economically distressed Port Richmond community of Staten Island, NY, convened to propose an expanded partnership based upon the successful model of Wagner College's Civic Innovations Program (2006-2009). The committee sought to build significant, sustainable partnerships between Wagner College and numerous affected North Shore community groups, faith communities, businesses and schools. Members of this Civic Innovations-Port Richmond Partnership (CI-PRP) steering committee identified four objectives that anticipated the greatest community impact: Meeting Educational Needs; Meeting Health Care Needs; Meeting Economic Needs and Meeting the Needs of Immigrants.

This seminar class project will begin to address the fourth need – that of immigrants in the Port Richmond area. Immigration is at the focal point of national discussion, but in fact, many of the challenges being discussed have been faced by generations of immigrants. Thus, through their individual stories, we are able to frame the human face of immigration dialogue.

This project is directly linked to the Port Richmond Partnership. Gonzalo Mercado, Executive Director of El Centro del Inmigrante, an advocacy organization for undocumented workers in Port Richmond, has asked us, as part of the work of the CI-PRP immigration subcommittee, to collect these stories. He would like to bring these stories to immigration reform advocacy efforts.

We are interested in obtaining stories from many different individuals - day laborers, store owners, youth, and legal residents still facing risk of detention. Students will conduct open-ended surveys, known in social science as “semi-structured questionnaires.” They will ask several similar questions at the beginning of their interviews with subjects: “What triggered you to come here; describe your living conditions; what has been your experience as an immigrant,” and similar types of questions for these semi-structured questionnaires. Questionnaires will eventually form material for human interest profiles submitted at the end of the semester. These profiles will delve into the immigrant experience, taking into account the experience of past immigrants entering New York City, to find commonalities as well as challenges with the cohort we are working with in Port Richmond. They will be used as educational information sheets by El Centro or other immigrant rights groups. Mr. Mercado would eventually like to have this material tied to national immigration advocacy campaigns.

Interviews will take place at El Centro beginning the week of February 8<sup>th</sup>, the fourth week of the semester. Mr. Mercado will also come to class to discuss Port Richmond and the project. It will be important to coordinate your schedules for this project, so that Mr. Mercado can make appointments for interviews.

There will be one class visit to Port Richmond within the first several weeks of the semester, which will include a van tour and walk on the central area, and meetings with a store owner or community partner if possible.

Each student should meet their community member more than once, with general class discussion in between. In that way, issues posed during the first interview could lead the way to more refined questions for the second or even third meeting.

By the week of March 22<sup>nd</sup>, you should start consolidating your interview responses into the portraits that will represent your final product for submission not only to be graded by the seminar instructors, but for use by Mr. Mercado in his advocacy efforts.

This fieldwork combines the best of social science method in the form of learning to develop and analyze semi-structured interviews, alongside the practical significance of contributing to a substantial civic engagement project and the formation of public policy.

## COURSE OUTLINE

*Readings selected for each week's seminar session are considered in comparison with each other. Our goal is to accumulate a detailed comparative and working knowledge of differing perspectives on the politics of urban economic development, while always considering our role as citizens engaged in building local democracy.*

### **1/25 The City in History and Theory**

*Overview of the seminar*

Introductory visit by Dr. Cassia Freedland and Gonzalo Mercado to introduce the Port Richmond Partnership, the immigration issue, and your fieldwork project. Dr. Freedland will collect student schedules so that Mr. Mercado can arrange interviews for the fieldwork project.

Beginning of reading to open discussion: Kotkin and his analysis of the features that sustain successful cities over time

### **2/1 The City in History and Theory**

Reading for discussion: Kotkin, Mumford, Chapters 6, 16, and 17 and Jacobs, Chapters 2, 3, 5, and 8. Consider these urbanists in dialogue with each other.

### **2/8 Community Building and Sustainability: Theoretical and Applied Perspectives**

Zeemering article, on e-reserve

Kretzmann, Chapter 1

Discussion of these readings considering the **central issues of this seminar**: sustainability, civic engagement, community building, and economic development in connection with your course research paper and upcoming fieldwork participation in the Port Richmond Partnership

*We will hopefully have a tour of Port Richmond this week.*

### **2/15 NO CLASS – PRESIDENTS' DAY**

**2/22 The Politics of the City**

*Reviving the City of Aspiration* monograph

Jacobs, Chapters 12, 13, 16, 18, 19, 21, and pages 435 – 448

Please coordinate your fieldwork through discussions with Dr. Freedland and Dr. Unger.

**3/1 The Politics of the City**

Reading for discussion: Judd and Swanstrom, Chapters 1, 2, and 3

*New Immigrants to New York* monograph

***Submission of first short essay***

3/8 SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

**3/15 The Politics of the City**

Reading for discussion: Judd and Swanstrom, Chapters 6 and 8

Caro, on e-reserve

**3/22 The Politics of the City**

Kretzmann, Chapter 2

Goldberger, on e-reserve (to compare with Caro)

Judd and Swanstrom, Chapters 9, 11, 12

**3/29 The Politics of the City**

***1<sup>st</sup> Oral Presentations: Analysis of a core question that has emerged in the seminar to date***

Kretzmann, Chapter 3

Judd and Swanstrom, Chapters 13 and 14

***Submission of second short essay offering critiques of first essay***

**4/5 Globalization and the City**

**THIS IS EASTER MONDAY - CLASSES RESUME TODAY AT 4pm SO OUR SEMINAR MEETS**

Readings for discussion: Judd and Swanstrom, Chapter 15

Introduction to Kantor and Savitch, Chapters 1, 2

**4/12 Globalization and the City**

Kretzman, Chapter 4

Kantor and Savitch, Chapters 3, 4

**4/19 Globalization and the City**

***Citizenship Paper Due***

Reading for discussion: Kantor and Savitch, Chapters 5, 6

**4/26 Globalization and the City**

Kantor and Savitch, Chapters 7, 8

**4/28 WEDNESDAY: CLASSES MEET ON A MONDAY SCHEDULE**

Kantor and Savitch, Chapters 9, 10

**5/3 WEDNESDAY: MONDAY SCHEDULE**

**Seminar Conclusions: Citizenship, Neighborhood, and Globalization**

Kretzmann, Chapter 6

Kantor and Savitch still under consideration

***2<sup>nd</sup> Oral Presentations: Course Research Paper findings***

***5/10 Course Research Paper and Fieldwork Project Due***