

URB650: URBAN GOVERNANCE SPRING 2005

Instructor: Meg Holden

Meeting Time: Thursdays, 5:30-9:30p, Jan. 13-Apr. 7

Course Description

The world of local governance is complex, intertwined with rules of power, hierarchy, markets, and democracy that are largely invisible to our day-to-day lives. In this course, we will develop the conceptual tools to see and understand these processes and networks as they operate. When we talk or hear about what goes on inside “city hall,” what are the processes actually at work? Moreover, how can we think about the many aspects of decision-making and action affecting the city that happen outside the walls of city hall? How are citizens, small business owners, major corporate players, philanthropists, nonprofit interest groups, different levels of government and different demographic groups involved? This course will allow students to understand and evaluate the changing responsibilities of urban governance and to assess effective strategies of urban governance. It provides an essential introduction to the current concepts, debates, and strategies in the field of urban governance for those interested in effecting urban change, whether by profession or vocation.

Beginning with some of the classics in thinking about how cities work, we will explore the evolution of local politics and political economy, from times of a (mostly) obedient public and a government responsible for providing essential services and regulating markets, to today’s complex networks of government, citizen, and corporate policy actors vying with one another for spots on the policy agenda and the resources to make their ideas reality. No longer weak or instrumental actors, today, many local governance bodies have become entrepreneurs that play major roles at home and internationally, serving sometimes as bastions of capitalism and others as incubators of democracy. These varied actors engage in learning, lobbying, advocacy, coalition- and network-forming, and other activities to position their city for ‘world class,’ ‘livable,’ ‘global,’ ‘smart growth,’ ‘information-based’ or a number of other highly-valued outcomes. In considering cases as diverse as food policy councils, safe injection sites, and participatory budgeting processes, we will examine which responsibilities are favoured and which are forgotten in urban governance, what works and why.

Course Readings

Please purchase the URB650 custom courseware book along with the following title:

Edwards, Michael. 2004. *Civil Society*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Required readings from these two sources will be supplemented by others from the urban literature and popular press, including journal and news articles, and the following text on reserve at Belzberg Library:

Bridge, G. and S. Watson (eds.) 2002 *The Blackwell City Reader*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.

Course Evaluation

15% Class Participation: Attendance, Demonstration of Active Reading, Critical Discussion

10% Exercise #1: “The City That Never Sleeps” Pitch

10% Exercise #2: Canadian vs. US Governance Responsibilities

10% Exercise #3: Policy Issue Statement and Alternative

15% Presentation of Reading for the Week

40% Term Project: Strategic Plan