

POSC 427 (Independent Study): Metropolitan Governance and Policymaking

Summer 2026

Faculty Information

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Office Hours / meetings: By [appointment](#) — dadams.io/appointments

Course Communication

This is an independent study. All readings, assignments, and announcements are organized in *Canvas*, and we will communicate via *Canvas* and university email. Check both at least once daily during the ten-week term.

Response time: I will strive to respond to email and *Canvas* messages within 24 hours, except on weekends and holidays. If you have not heard back within 24 hours, send a follow-up; after 48 hours, contact me via phone or SMS at (657) 278-4770.

Bi-weekly check-ins: We will meet once at the end of each two-week content block (in person or by video) to discuss the readings, review your written work, and set goals for the following block. Meeting times are arranged at dadams.io/appointments.

Technical Problems

If you encounter any technical difficulties, contact the instructor immediately to document the problem. Then contact: [student IT help desk](#), [email](#), phone (657) 278-8888, walk-in [student genius center](#), or online chat via the [portal](#) (“Online IT Help” then “Live Chat”).

For issues with Canvas: Canvas Support Hotline = (657) 278-8888, [search the CSUF Canvas Guides](#), or [report a problem](#).

Alternative submission: If you cannot submit work via *Canvas*, contact the professor as soon as possible to document the issue and arrange an alternative.

Course Information

Prefix, number, title: POSC 427 (Independent Study), *Metropolitan Governance and Policymaking*

Format: Independent study, fully online/asynchronous with five bi-weekly instructor check-ins

Duration: Ten weeks, May 26–July 31, 2026

Units: 3 **Schedule Code:** [TBD]

Course requisite(s): Instructor consent; upper-division or graduate standing

Policy regarding the use of generative AI: See the *Policy on the Use of Generative AI and Other Technology* section below.

Course materials and equipment: Canvas; access to course readings; laptop and reliable internet

Overview

Metropolitan politics is the study of how fragmented systems attempt to govern interdependent regional problems. This ten-week independent study introduces major theories and institutional frameworks associated with metropolitan governance and policymaking, focusing on fragmentation, polycentric governance, intergovernmental relations, and regional policy coordination.

The independent study also serves as a pilot version of a future full-semester course on metropolitan governance (POSC 427). The central question guiding the work is:

Why is metropolitan governance in Southern California so fragmented, and how does anything get solved anyway?

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of the independent study, the student should be able to:

1. Explain major approaches to metropolitan governance.
2. Analyze the institutional consequences of fragmentation.
3. Apply polycentric governance frameworks to metropolitan policy problems.
4. Evaluate regional governance challenges in Southern California.

Required Texts

There is no textbook to purchase. All required readings—book chapters, journal articles, and policy documents—are provided on Canvas or accessible through the Pollak Library databases. Chapters from the following books anchor the course and are provided on Canvas:

- Feiock, Richard C., and John T. Scholz, eds. 2010. *Self-Organizing Federalism: Collaborative Mechanisms to Mitigate Institutional Collective Action Dilemmas*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Oakerson, Ronald J. 1999. *Governing Local Public Economies: Creating a Civic Metropolis*. Oakland, CA: ICS Press.
- Emerson, Kirk, and Tina Nabatchi. 2015. *Collaborative Governance Regimes*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

A recommended background text is Judd, Dennis R., and Annika M. Hinze. 2022. *City Politics: The Political Economy of Urban America*, 11th ed. New York, NY: Routledge. All required readings are listed in the course schedule below.

Student Resources Website

It is the student's responsibility to read and understand the required and important [student information for course syllabi](#). Included is information about:

- University learning goals and General Education learning objectives
- Students' rights to accommodations
- Campus student support resources and academic integrity
- Emergency preparedness; library and IT services
- Software privacy, accessibility statement, diversity statement, and land acknowledgement
- Final exam schedule and semester calendar

Assignments and Grading

Graded Work

- **Analytical Reflections (30%):** Five short analytical reflections, one for each two-week content block, connecting the readings to the course's central question. Submitted via Canvas before the bi-weekly check-in.
- **Governance Mapping Exercise (20%):** A mapping of the institutions, actors, and intergovernmental relationships that bear on one regional policy problem, with analysis of where fragmentation helps and hinders.
- **Final Metropolitan Governance Analysis (50%):** An original analysis paper applying course frameworks to a metropolitan governance problem, ideally drawn from Southern California.

a. Grading scale: See Table 1 for the full letter-grade percentage scale used in this course.

b. Assignment weighting: See Table 2 for assignment weights and due points.

Table 1: Grade scale

Grade	Percent	Grade	Percent
A+	98.0–100.0	C+	77.0–79.9
A	93.0–97.9	C	73.0–76.9
A-	90.0–92.9	C-	70.0–72.9
B+	87.0–89.9	D+	67.0–69.9
B	83.0–86.9	D	63.0–66.9
B-	80.0–82.9	D-	60.0–62.9
		F	0.0–59.9

Table 2: Assignment weighting

Assignment	Weight	Due
Analytical Reflections (5)	30%	June 5; June 20; July 3; July 17; July 31, 2026
Governance Mapping Exercise	20%	Saturday, June 20, 2026
Final Metropolitan Governance Analysis	50%	Friday, July 31, 2026
Total	100%	

c. Make-up and late submission policy: Because this is a compressed ten-week term with bi-weekly check-ins, deadlines matter. Extensions must be requested in writing before the due date and will be granted only for illness or other documented unforeseen circumstances. Late work without an approved extension loses one-third of a letter grade per calendar day.

Alternative procedures for submitting work: The student submits all written work via *Canvas*. If you cannot submit via *Canvas*, contact the professor immediately to arrange an alternative.

d. Authentication of student work: Work may be submitted to a plagiarism detection service. Cal State Fullerton uses Turnitin®. Submitted work may be checked for authenticity and originality.

e. Retention of student work: Work submitted for a grade shall be retained for a reasonable time after the term ends, not to exceed the last day of the subsequent semester. The student has the right to review graded work in the presence of the instructor. (UPS 320.005)

Academic Integrity

The student is expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity. Academic dishonesty will be subject to the sanctions described in the [Academic Dishonesty Policy](#) (UPS 300.021), which includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and submitting previously graded work without prior authorization.

Policy on the Use of Generative AI and Other Technology

Generative AI (including large language models, image generators, and other tools) is permitted in this course, but use must be transparent, intentional, and in service of learning. The core principle is simple: **you must do the intellectual work of this course**. AI can amplify your thinking, but not replace it.

Permitted uses:

- Brainstorming and outlining arguments
- Explaining concepts you don't understand (then explaining it back in your own words)
- Literature searching and summarizing sources
- Editing, proofreading, and revising your work
- Sanity-checking your analysis or logic
- Generating synthetic examples or test cases for your ideas

Not permitted:

- Using AI to generate your analysis, arguments, or conclusions
- Submitting AI-generated text as your own writing
- Using AI to avoid engaging with course concepts or readings
- Letting AI do the intellectual heavy lifting (interpreting sources, building arguments, synthesizing ideas)

Disclosure requirement:

If you use generative AI tools in ways beyond basic editing, you must disclose your use. Include a brief note at the end of your assignment explaining what tools you used and how (e.g., “I used Claude to help organize my outline and check the logic of my argument in Section 3”). This is not a confession—it’s transparency about your process.

What this means:

The goal of this course is for *you* to learn to think like a policy analyst and to develop your own informed arguments about metropolitan governance. AI is a tool that can enhance that learning if used thoughtfully. Using it to avoid thinking will undermine your own education and violates academic integrity. Questions about what constitutes appropriate use? Ask before you submit.

Technical Competencies

The student needs:

- Proficiency with Canvas, including submitting assignments and accessing course materials
- Ability to use university email and Canvas messages for course communication
- Ability to join video meetings for the bi-weekly check-ins
- Basic word processing skills and ability to export documents to PDF

Course Schedule

We will follow the schedule below as closely as possible. Adjustments will be confirmed at the bi-weekly check-in and on *Canvas*.

Reading structure: All readings are required. A short analytical reflection is due at the end of each two-week content block before the check-in unless otherwise noted.

Weeks 1–2 (May 26–June 5) — What Is Metropolitan Governance?

Topics

- Metropolitan regions
- Urbanization
- Governance and fragmentation

Readings

- Judd and Hinze, chapters 1–2
- Peterson, Paul E. 1981. *City Limits*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press (selected chapters).
- Ostrom, Vincent, Charles M. Tiebout, and Robert Warren. 1961. “The Organization of Government in Metropolitan Areas: A Theoretical Inquiry.” *American Political Science Review* 55(4): 831–842.
- Ansell, Chris, and Alison Gash. 2008. “Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 18(4): 543–571.

Assignment

- Analytical reflection due Friday, June 5, 2026

Weeks 3–4 (June 8–20) — Polycentric Governance and Institutional Collective Action

Topics

- Polycentric systems
- Institutional collective action
- Regional coordination

Readings

- Feiock, Richard C., and John T. Scholz, eds. 2010. *Self-Organizing Federalism: Collaborative Mechanisms to Mitigate Institutional Collective Action Dilemmas*. Cambridge University Press (selected chapters provided on Canvas).
- Oakerson, Ronald J. 1999. *Governing Local Public Economies: Creating a Civic Metropolis*. ICS Press (selected chapters provided on Canvas).
- Ostrom, Elinor. 2010. “Beyond Markets and States: Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems.” *American Economic Review* 100(3): 641–672.
- Dietz, Thomas, Elinor Ostrom, and Paul C. Stern. 2003. “The Struggle to Govern the Commons.” *Science* 302(5652): 1907–1912.

Assignment

- **Governance Mapping Exercise due Saturday, June 20, 2026**
- Analytical reflection due Saturday, June 20, 2026
- June 19 is Juneteenth; this content block’s due date is moved to Saturday.

Weeks 5–6 (June 22–July 3) — Power and Political Economy

Topics

- Urban regimes
- Growth machine theory
- Development politics

Readings

- Stone, Clarence N. 1989. *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946–1988*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas (selected chapters).
- Logan, John R., and Harvey L. Molotch. 1987. *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, “The City as a Growth Machine” chapter.

- O'Toole, Laurence J., and Kenneth J. Meier. 2004. "Desperately Seeking Selznick: Cooptation and the Dark Side of Public Management in Networks." *Public Administration Review* 64(6): 681–693.

Assignment

- Analytical reflection due Friday, July 3, 2026

Weeks 7–8 (July 6–17) — Governing Metropolitan Problems

Topics

- Housing
- Transportation
- Climate governance
- Homelessness

Readings

- Lubell, Mark, Adam Douglas Henry, and Mike McCoy. 2010. "Collaborative Institutions in an Ecology of Games." *American Journal of Political Science* 54(2): 287–300.
- Bryson, John M., Barbara C. Crosby, and Melissa Middleton Stone. 2006. "The Design and Implementation of Cross-Sector Collaborations: Propositions from the Literature." *Public Administration Review* 66(s1): 44–55.
- Imperial, Mark T. 2005. "Using Collaboration as a Governance Strategy: Six Lessons from Watershed Management Programs." *Administration & Society* 37(3): 281–320.
- Gerlak, Andrea K. 2006. "Federalism and U.S. Water Policy: Lessons for the Twenty-First Century." *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 36(2): 231–257.

Assignment

- Analytical reflection due Friday, July 17, 2026
- Final analysis topic confirmed at check-in

Weeks 9–10 (July 20–31) — Metropolitan Futures

Topics

- Smart cities
- Resilience
- Crisis governance

Readings

- Emerson, Kirk, and Tina Nabatchi. 2015. *Collaborative Governance Regimes*. Georgetown University Press (selected chapters; integrative framework).
- Thomson, Ann Marie, and James L. Perry. 2006. “Collaboration Processes: Inside the Black Box.” *Public Administration Review* 66(s1): 20–32.
- Scholz, John T., Ramiro Berardo, and Brad Kile. 2008. “Do Networks Solve Collective Action Problems? Credibility, Search, and Collaboration.” *Journal of Politics* 70(2): 393–406.
- Meijer, Albert, and Manuel Pedro Rodríguez Bolívar. 2016. “Governing the Smart City: A Review of the Literature on Smart Urban Governance.” *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 82(2): 392–408.

Assignments

- Analytical reflection due Friday, July 31, 2026
- **Final Metropolitan Governance Analysis due Friday, July 31, 2026**