

Local Democracy in Comparative Perspective

Fall 2025

Loyola Marymount University
218 University Hall

MW 11:50 AM: 1:30 PM

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Although the media focuses on national politics, local government, policy, and electoral politics are critically important around the world. Local governments in the U.S., for example, manage the police, determine housing policies, provide basic public services such as garbage collection and water and sanitation; and implement national policies from welfare programs to climate change. Local governments in developing countries like India also have substantial powers including the implementation of large programs for the poor, deciding where a road will be built, and helping citizens access a distant and often unresponsive state. In this class, we will examine local democracies, or elected local governments, in a diverse array of contexts in developed and developing democracies. We will focus on answering four fundamental questions with applications to the U.S., India, Brazil, Ghana, and other countries.

- (1) What do local governments do and how does this vary across different local political systems and across developed and developing countries?
- (2) “Who governs” at the local level—that is, what types of people run for and hold office, and what types of individuals, social groups, institutions, or interest groups influence local government decisions?
- (3) When is local democracy most responsive to poor and marginalized groups? Specifically, in what types of social and political contexts does local democracy work best for the poor?

Goals/Objectives of the Course (intended outcomes):

1. Students will come to understand major debates in local politics in developing and developed countries.
2. Students will learn about the local political systems of different countries across the globe and their consequences for governance generally and the poor specifically.
3. Students will engage in effective written expression.
4. Students will learn to analyze complex political phenomena through careful engagement with theory and evidence.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your final grade will be based on the following components:

Attendance and Participation in Discussion (15%) You are expected to attend all classes and to read the required readings in advance of each class session. I recommend using the reading worksheet on the more difficult readings each week. To do well in this course, you must attend and actively participate in class regular class meetings and during Q & A sessions when we have

guest lectures or a film. Since this is a seminar, all students should speak in every class. You will not be penalized for 1 absence after the first week of class, but will lose points for additional unexcused absences.

Online (Brightspace) discussion board participation (5%) In this class, we'll typically have weekly discussion board activities due on Monday. These will include responding to mayoral debates, city council meetings online, and other activities related to course themes or course projects. I'll also ask you to participate in the [civic bootcamp activity](#). The winner and runner-up of the bootcamp will get full 1% extra credit (the difference between 89% and 90%) and a small prize.

Follow the News in a City, Town, or County (5%) You will be asked to pick a city to follow in the news throughout the semester. It can be anywhere in the world as long as there is a credible news source covering it. We'll discuss local news stories at the start of class. At the end of the term, post a 3 page memo on what you learned about your town/city/county as it relates to class themes.

Reaction Paper for the readings of a particular class (5%). Each student will select one class session to write a reaction paper on. The reaction paper should synthesize and critically assess the readings of a class session.

Case Study Presentation (15%) You will be asked to present on a topic relevant to a class theme. The presentation should provide a comparative case (2 cities/counties or a broader comparison) of some research question relevant to class. For example, on policing I you might look at community policing vs. other types of policing in LA and NYC. You can also compare two time periods in the same city (e.g., LA policing before and after Rodney King) or two areas of the same city (e.g., Bronx vs. Brooklyn) if relevant.

Partner Civic Education Activity (10%) People broadly have very little information about local government. For this assignment I will ask you to host a civic education session where you teach about 10 people one lesson about what you think they should know about government and local government specifically. You might gather your friends or people in your dorm or people you might know in your neighborhood back home. You might also look to bring in people particularly less informed such as STEM students without social science coursework. You will want to do a little bit of early research to understand what your target audience knows and wants to know, and what they might not know (which you will post about in a Brightspace activity). You will then hold the session and write about the material you covered, experience, and any feedback you received after the session. I'd also ask you to come up with a short questionnaire after the session to see how your attendees reacted to what they learned. We'll dedicate a class session to presentations and discussion on this activity in November. We will also have a session on civic education along with some check-ins to help you along.

(5) Local Democracy Field Assignment— (15%) For this assignment, I ask you to pick an institution of local government or organization active in local government (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, Housing rights groups, LA mission) that you will spend some time getting to know through interviews, background research, and field visits. It is acceptable to attend several local

government events such as town hall meetings, volunteer with a local campaign, or to spend time shadowing local officials. Past students, for example, have attended weekly office hours with the mayor, attended city council meetings or the meetings of a local government agency, and participated in local organizations active in lobbying local governments.

We will have an in-class conference to present your field projects to the class toward the end of the course as well as a workshop to discuss ongoing field assignments in November. Plan on spending at least 8+ hours with your chosen organization/campaign over the course of the semester. This assignment can be done individually or in pairs with approval by the professor. If in partners, each student should spend a minimum of 8 hours in the field whether together, separately (dividing up events and meetings) or a mix of both.

(6) Final Paper (30%) You will write a final paper (10-12 pages) that examines a research question on local government that interests you. The paper will address a research question on local government and can extend the topic of your presentation in more depth if you wish. Your paper topic must be approved by the professor by October 30.

Classroom Etiquette

To make sure that we have a hospitable learning environment, I ask students to follow three simple rules:

- 1) Turn your cell phones off and close your laptops when class begins (unless you are in paired discussion looking over readings).
- 2) Respect your classmates. Debate is encouraged but disagree respectfully by engaging in ideas and evidence rather than personal attacks.
- 3) Coffee/beverages are fine, but food is not permitted in class since it can distract your classmates.
- 4) It is acceptable to use AI tools such as chatGPT or Pilot to identify relevant resources for papers or to find information relevant to the class. It is not acceptable to use AI tools to complete assignments or write papers beyond this. You are smarter and more creative than ChatGPT, and this class is the place to show me how you think about the material.

A Note on Academic Integrity

As goes without saying, it will not be possible to pass this course if I find any evidence of plagiarism/cheating of any kind for any assignment. At minimum, this will result in a zero for that assignment and will be referred to the Dean without exceptions. If you do the work yourself, and think a lot about the material, you'll be fine.

Some Useful Links to Follow

UN Habitat: <https://unhabitat.org/urban-themes/>
Centre for the Future State: <http://www2.ids.ac.uk/futurestate/>
Deliberative Democracy: <http://www.deliberative-democracy.net/>
The Ash Center (Harvard): <http://www.ash.harvard.edu/>
Ashoka, profiles of Fellows: <https://www.ashoka.org/fellows>

LA Forwards and Backwards: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/la-forwards-backwards/id1281847259?mt=2>

Not Safe for Government: <https://www.stitcher.com/podcast/govtech-social>

City Mayors: <http://www.citymayors.com>.

Required Books

Available at the bookstore and on course reserve:

Dahl, Robert. 1963. *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in the American City*. Yale University Press.

Oliver, J. Eric, Shang E. Ha, and Zachary Callen. 2012. *Local Elections and the Politics of Small-Scale Democracy*. Princeton University Press.

*Klein, Ezra, and Derek Thompson. 2025. *Abundance*. Simon and Schuster.

SCHEDULE AND READINGS

PART 1: THE POWER AND INSTITUTIONS OF LOCAL DEMOCRACY

8/25: Introduction

8/27: What is local democracy and why does it matter?

De Tocqueville, Alex. *Democracy in America* (on administrative decentralization) Chapter 5.

Oliver, J. Eric, Shang E. Ha, and Zachary Callen. 2012. *Local Elections and the Politics of Small-Scale Democracy*. Introduction.

9/3: How Much Power Does the Mayor Have? Variation Across U.S. Municipalities

Online activity: Learn about the powers of the mayor in a city of your choice (excluding LA). Is it a strong mayor or council manager system? What does the mayor do vs. unelected leaders? Post a paragraph on what you find on Brightspace.

Oliver, J. Eric, Shang E. Ha, and Zachary Callen. 2012. *Local Elections and the Politics of Small-Scale Democracy*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 1.

9/8: Decentralization in the Global South

Eaton, Kent, Ed Connerly, and Paul Smoke (Eds). 2010. *Making Decentralization Work*. Chapter 1 ("Democracy, Development, and Security as Objectives of Decentralization", pp. 1-18).

Heller, Patrick, K. N. Harilal, and Shubham Chaudhuri. 2007. "Building Local Democracy: Evaluating the impact of decentralization in Kerala, India." *World Development*, 35 (4) 626-648.

Crawford, Gordon. 2009. 'Making Democracy a Reality'? The politics of decentralization and the limits to local democracy in Ghana.

9/10: No Class. Attending the Annual Political Science Association Conference

Online activity: Watch a city council meeting or other local government meeting (e.g., water board, housing committee). Describe what you learn and what you notice about the attendees and questions being asked. What would make you want to participate in such meetings and what might keep you or your peers from doing so?

9/15: Film and Discussion: *Street Fight*; [Mayor Daily](#)

9/17: Turnout in Local Elections: U.S.

Hajnal, Zoltan L., and Paul G. Lewis. 2003. "Municipal Institutions and Voter Turnout in Local Elections." *Urban Affairs Review*, 38 (5) 645-668.

Oliver, J. Eric, Shang E. Ha, and Zachary Callen. 2012. *Local Elections and the Politics of Small-Scale Democracy*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 2.

9/22: Why (Low) Turnout Matters for Local Governance

Online activity: Look at turnout levels in a city/town/county of your choice. Describe what types of people are turning out and what types of people are not turning out. If turnout looks low, when did the election take place that decides the winner? Come up with one idea on how to boost turnout among the groups that are turning out less (young voters, minorities, etc.).

Hajnal, Zoltan, and Jessica Trounstein. 2005. "Where Turnout Matters: The consequences of uneven turnout in city politics." *Journal of Politics*, 67 (2): 515-535.

Ahuja, Amit and Pradeep Chhibber., 2012. "Why the Poor Vote in India: "If I don't vote, I am dead to the state". *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 47, 389-410.

Skim: Trounstein, Jessica. 2013. "Turnout and Incumbency in Local Elections." *Urban Affairs Review* 49 (2) 167-189.

9/24: Get Out the Vote (GOTV) in Local Elections

We will have an in-class activity on designing a GOTV campaign after discussing two field experiments on GOTV interventions.

Increasing Voter Turnout in Local Elections. National Civic League:

<https://www.nationalcivicleague.org/ncr-article/increasing-voter-turnout-in-local-elections/>

Gerber, Alan, Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer. 2008. Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment. *American Political Science Review* 102 (1) 33-48.

Grumbach, J.M., Han, H. and Warren, D.T., 2024. Getting out the vote in the projects: lessons from a community organizing experiment. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 12(1) 245-256.

9/29: Local Information Deficits: The Decline of Local News

Online activity: Find a news desert (a place without a local newspaper or without a local paper that does its own reporting). Explore what local news sources exist in these places. What news is covered in these sources?

Watch in Class: [The Fall of Newspapers, Rise of Misinformation](#)

Brookings. "[Local Journalism in Crisis. Why America Must Revive Its Local Newsrooms.](#)"

Penn America. 2019. [Losing the News](#). [Read the executive summary and one of the case studies].

Rubado, M. E., & Jennings, J. T. 2020. "Political Consequences of the Endangered Local Watchdog: Newspaper decline and mayoral elections in the United States." *Urban Affairs Review*, 56(5), 1327-1356.

10/1: Vote Choice and Information in Local Elections in the U.S.

Online response: Look into the comptroller race or a judicial race and explain your choice among the available options if you were to vote in this election. What is your reaction to the information available for the average voter?

Oliver, J. Eric, Shang E. Ha, and Zachary Callen. 2012. *Local Elections and the Politics of Small-Scale Democracy*. Princeton University Press. Chapters 5.

Matson, Marsha, and Terri Susan Fine. 2006. "Gender, Ethnicity, and Ballot Information: Ballot cues in low-information elections." *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 6 (1) 49-72.

Anzia, Sarah F. 2021. "Party and ideology in American local government: An appraisal." *Annual Review of Political Science* 24 (1)133-150.

10/6: Civics Education Overview

Online activity: Interview 5 friends about what they know about local government and what they would like to know more about. Also look at civics education that is required to be taught in your home state or in the state where the people you interview are living. What do you think you should be including in civic education material based on what learned? What can we expect people to already know based on what is required in high schools? Describe what you learned in a post on Brightspace.

Skim: Levine, Peter, and Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg. 2017. "The republic is (still) at risk—and civics is part of the solution." *Medford, MA: Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life, Tufts University.*

Galston, William A. 2007. "Civic Knowledge, Civic Education, and Civic Engagement: A summary of recent research." *International Journal of Public Administration* 30 (6) 623-642.

Bringle, Robert G., and Patti H. Clayton. "Civic Education Through Service Learning: What, how, and why?." In *Higher education and civic engagement: Comparative perspectives*, pp. 101-124. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2012.

10/8: Do Local Politicians Face Accountability?

We will also have a discussion on the Civic Education project at the start of class.

Warshaw, C., 2019. "Local Elections and Representation in the United States." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 22(1), pp.461-479.

Hopkins, Daniel J., and Lindsay M. Pettingill. 2018. "Retrospective voting in big-city US mayoral elections." *Political Science Research and Methods* 6 (4) 697-714.

Recommended: Avis, Eric, Claudio Ferraz, and Frederico Finan. 2018. "Do Government Audits Reduce Corruption?" Impacto

PART 2: WHO GOVERNS? POWER, INFLUENCE, AND ELECTIONS

10/13: Who Governs? Power, Influence, and Change

Dahl, Robert. 2005. *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*. Yale University Press. Chapters 1, 10.

Davis, Mike. 1989. *City of Quartz*, Chapter 4.

2013. "Koch Group Has Ambitions in Small Races." New York Times.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/04/us/politics/koch-group-has-ambitions-in-small-races.html>

Recommended: Reckhow, Sarah, et al. 2017. "Outsiders with Deep Pockets": The nationalization of local school board elections." *Urban Affairs Review*, 53 (5) 783-811.

10/15: Descriptive Representation: Race and Marginalized Groups

Online activity: Look into the first time a black, Latino, female mayor (or member of another underrepresented group) was elected mayor or was a candidate for mayor. How did the public react to the campaign? What was different after the election or did it look about the same policy-wise or otherwise?

Hajnal, Zoltan L. 2006. *Changing White Attitudes Toward Black Political Leadership*. Cambridge University Press. Introduction.

Sonenshein, Raphael. *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles*. Chapter 6.

Skim: Chauchard, Simon. 2017. *Why Representation Matters*. Cambridge Press, Chapter 6.

10/20: Descriptive Representation: Female Leaders

Online activity: Look into the first time a female mayor was elected mayor or was a candidate for mayor. How did the public react in the campaign? What was the media response? If elected, what was different after the election or did it look about the same policy-wise or otherwise?

Skim: Fox, Richard L., and Jennifer L. Lawless. 2024. "The Invincible Gender Gap in Political Ambition." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 57 (2) 231-237.

Holman, Mirya. 2015. *Women in politics in the American city*. Temple University Press. Introduction.

Chattopadhyay, Raghavendra, and Esther Duflo. 2001. *Women's leadership and policy decisions: Evidence from a nationwide randomized experiment in India*. Boston University, Institute for Economic Development.

Recommended:

Kirkland, Patricia A. 2022. "Representation in American Cities: Who Runs for Mayor and Who Wins?." *Urban Affairs Review* 58 (3) 635-670.

Crowder-Meyer, Melody, Shana Kushner Gadarian, and Jessica Trounstine. 2015. "Electoral institutions, gender stereotypes, and women's local representation." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 3 (2) 318-334.

PART 3: LOCAL DEMOCRACY, REPRESENTATION, AND SERVICE DELIVERY

10/22: Explaining Variation in Public Goods Provision

Online activity: Write a paragraph about the topic of your final paper. And comment on the proposal of one of your fellow students.

Putnam, Robert. 1993. "Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy. Princeton: Princeton University Press. "Introduction" (pp. 3-7) and "Explaining Institutional Performance" (pp. 83-116).

Hajnal, Zoltan L., and Jessica Trounstine. 2010. "Who or what governs?: The effects of economics, politics, institutions, and needs on local spending." *American Politics Research* 38 (6) 1130-1163.

Recommended: Ziblatt, D. 2008. "Why Some Cities Provide More Public Goods than Others: A Subnational Comparison of the Provision of Public Goods in German Cities in 1912." *Studies in Comparative International Development (SCID)*, 43(3), 273-289.

10/27: Housing in the U.S.

Online activity: What is the most important challenge for building new housing or affordability when it comes to housing in a city of your choice (or the one you are following in the news)?

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2014. "The Case for Reparations." *The Atlantic* (Read for the discussion of race-based redlining).

Klein, Ezra and D. Thompson. 2025. *Abundance*. Avid Reader Press. Chapters 3

Listen to an [interview](#) with Ezra Klein

Brouwer, N. R., and Jessica Trounstine. 2024. "NIMBYs, YIMBYs, and the politics of land use in American cities." *Annual Review of Political Science* 27.

Recommended:

Trounstine, J., 2023. You Won't Be My Neighbor: Opposition to high density development. *Urban Affairs Review*, 59(1) 294-308.

Hankinson, Michael. 2018. "When Do Renters Behave Like Homeowners? High Rent, Price Anxiety, and NIMBYism." *American Political Science Review*.

Rothstein, R. 2014. "The Making of Ferguson: Public Policies at the Root of its Troubles." *Economic Policy Institute* (pp. 1-2, "Executive Summary").

10/29: Housing and Homelessness

Watch: [On the Streets](#)

Zillow. 2017. "[Rising Rents Mean Larger Homeless Population](#)."

Matthew Desmond. 2016. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the Inner City*. New York: Crown, Introduction, Epilogue.

Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative. 2023. *California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness*. University of California, San Francisco.

<https://homelessness.ucsf.edu/California-Statewide-Study>

11/3: Housing in Urban Slums in the Global South

UN Habitat. 2003. *Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements*.

Boo, Katherine. 2014. *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*. Random House. Selection.

Jha, Saumitra, Vijayendra Rao, and Michael Woolcock. 2007. "Governance in the Gullies: Democratic responsiveness and leadership in Delhi's slums." *World development*, 35 (2)230-246.

11/5: Presentations on Civics Education Projects

Online activity: Post a one-page progress report on your field project (one partner can post if it's a partner project). At this point, you should have completed at least 60% of your field visits. We will discuss field projects in the last 30 minutes if time allows.

11/10: Policing in America

Online Activity: Look into the policies of policing in the city you are following in the news. Have there been recent reports of bias or fatalities or protests related to policing? What recent reforms have taken place if any? Do these reforms seem relevant to address the problem?

Phelps, Michelle. 2023. *The Minneapolis Reckoning: Race, Violence, and the Politics of Policing in America*. Introduction and Chapter 6.

Farris, Emily, and Mirya Holman. 2016. "All Politics Is Local? County Sheriffs and Localized Policies of Immigration Enforcement." *Political Research Quarterly* 70(1): 142-154.

11/12: Police Reform

Watch in class: [Policing the Police](#)

Felker-Kantor, M. 2020. "Liberal Law-and-Order: The politics of police reform in Los Angeles." *Journal of Urban History*, 46(5), 1026-1049.

Fung, A. 2003. "Deliberative Democracy, Chicago Style: Grassroots Governance in Policing and Public Education" in *Deepening Democracy*. Verso.

Recommended: Leap, J., Brantingham, J., Franke, T., & Bonis, S. 2020. *Evaluation of the LAPD Community Safety Partnership*. UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs and Urban Peace Institute. <https://www.urbanpeaceinstitute.org/reports> [Reports on Reform Strategies].

11/17: Local Government and Civic Engagement/Protest

Katherine Levine Einstein, Maxwell Palmer, and David M. Glick. 2019. Who Participates in Local Government? Evidence from Meeting Minutes. *Perspectives on Politics* 17, 1: 28-46.

Gaikwad, Nikhar, and Anjali Thomas. 2025. "Getting on the Grid: A Field Experiment on Bottom-Up Political Pressure and Access to Essential Public Services."

11/19: Workshop on Research Papers

Submit a 2-3 page overview of your seminar paper. Read all students' proposals and comment on the proposals of 2 students before class.

11/24: Make-Up/ Climate Adaptation and Environmental Justice

Comfort, Louise K. 2006. "Cities at Risk: Hurricane Katrina and the drowning of New Orleans." *Urban Affairs Review* 41 (4) 501-516.

Congleton, Roger D. 2006. "The Story of Katrina: New Orleans and the political economy of catastrophe." *Public Choice* 127 (1) 5-30.

[The Case for Letting Malibu Burn](#)

[On LA Mayor Response to Fires](#)

11/26: No Class. Thanksgiving.

12/1: Field Assignment Presentations. Present on your field projects (10 minutes).

12/3: Course Conclusion

Reading Skills:

As you manage the reading for this and other courses, you are likely to find, if you have not already, that there is no correlation between effort and outcome. It is entirely possible to spend several hours reading something without “getting it.” And it is equally possible to spend less than a half-hour reading something else and getting to the heart of the argument. You will have to devise for yourselves ways to read efficiently. These are some devices that may help:

1. Figure out what the heart of an argument is before you read deeply: skim, read the abstracts, the jacket blurbs, often short reviews published elsewhere. When you know where the center of gravity is, you read more efficiently.
2. Read actively: do not simply soak up the reading for what the author wants to tell you, but approach it with questions, and try to answer them for yourself as you make your way through.
3. Use other peoples’ skills: you do not have to do all the work yourself. It is not “cheating” if you talk through the argument with someone else before or after you delve in, or look at reviews for explication, or form reading groups where you can discuss the argument with each other.
4. Write in order to read. The response papers for this class and the (non-graded) worksheet attached should help.
5. Use diagrams if necessary: often, the structure of an argument can be most clearly expressed if you “draw” it, using arrows and lines, than by trying to understand it in words.
6. Organize your notes in a way that makes retention and information retrieval possible: you could use index cards, annotated bibliographies, database programs like Filemaker Pro etc. These rules may be obvious to some and not to others. Basically, do whatever works for you. But be self-conscious about the reading process as a skill that has to be learned and not necessarily as an ability that either comes naturally or does not.

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Reading Worksheet

For each book, chapter, or article assigned in this course, you should fill out the following (non-graded) worksheet. Many of these points can be addressed in a sentence or two (e.g. Questions 1 and 2; in some cases, answers will not need even to be full sentences (e.g., Question); and in some cases, the answers may overlap. These worksheets should be retained: they will be useful for future reference.

1. State the central question that the reading addresses.
2. State the central argument(s) defended in the paper in response to this question.
3. What type of reasoning or evidence is used to support these arguments? If it is an analytical paper, what is the logic that undergirds the argument? If an empirical paper, what type of data is employed? Are there other data sources that you think might be more appropriate?
4. Do you find the claims of the reading convincing? What do you see as the main gaps that need to be filled?
5. Why (if at all) is the reading interesting?
6. Do you agree with the main claims? What are your hesitations? (This may simply involve restatement of previous points.)
7. Identify one or two implicit premises or background assumptions in the paper that you think are especially controversial or objectionable.
8. Considering your answers to the previous questions, write an abstract for the article of no more than 100 words. (Feel free to repeat formulations given in response to earlier questions.)
9. When you have done this for individual readings, take some time to think about the various readings you have been assigned in relation to each other. See if you can write or imagine a summary table for all the readings taken together which compares and contrasts them.

Local Politics Bootcamp

We will be trying an activity for civic engagement where you get points for each activity and document your points throughout the term. The winner and runner-up will get a prize TBD.

Learn

5 pts — Sign up for your Neighborhood Council’s newsletter (find yours at empowerla.org)

5 pts — Sign up for your City Council member’s newsletter (find yours at neighborhoodinfo.lacity.org)

5 pts — Follow both your City Council member and State Assemblymember on social media

5 pts — Find the bills your City Council member is sponsoring (use LA City Clerk’s Council File Management System)

5 pts — Subscribe to one local news outlet (LAist, LA Times, Knock LA, Crosstown LA)

10 pts — Form an opinion on a local office that’s not mayor (e.g. County Supervisor, City Attorney, Sheriff, School Board)

10 pts — Attend a Neighborhood Council or City Council meeting in LA or another city (online or offline)

10 pts – Attend a meeting of a local civic group (and ask one question or make one comment)

10 pts — Meet a local representative or civic organization

10 pts — Recruit a friend/classmate to do this bootcamp with you

10 pts – Attend a lecture on local government

Build Community

10 pts — Create a GroupMe/WhatsApp/Discord with 5+ classmates or neighbors on a local issue

10 pts – Take 5 friends to an event related to local government or government issues relevant to the state or local level.

20 pts — Organize a small campus event on civic issues (film screening, dorm discussion)

20 pts — Plan a volunteer day (LA River/beach cleanup, park beautification)

30 pts — Start a newsletter, flyer, or Substack for your dorm, building, or student org about local politics

20 pts – Join a student group related to any civic or social issue

40 pts – Run for a leadership position in any organization (or already serve in that position)

Teach

20 pts – Teach your friends or others about local government (everyone gets 20 pts for the assignment).

10 pts – Have a discussion about local politics with a family member

Influence Politics

10 pts — Register to vote in LA (or update your registration)

10 pts — Sign a petition about something you care about (housing, transit, climate, etc.)

10 pts — Volunteer for a local cause (food bank, housing advocacy, environmental group)

20 pts — Convince 5+ classmates to register to vote before the deadline

10 pts — Join a civic group or student org with a local politics focus (BruinsVote, TrojansVote, etc.)

20 pts — Attend a civic group event (workshop, rally, teach-in)

30 pts — Volunteer on a local campaign (City Council, Assembly, School Board)

20 pts — Give a 5-minute dorm/class talk on why local politics matters

10 pts — Share a post/article about LA local government on Instagram, TikTok, or Twitter and tag your councilmember.

30 pts – create an online video about local politics and share it on social media.