

# Local Governance – Pre-Class Syllabus<sup>1</sup>

**Instructor** - Stephen Buxbaum, email: [buxbaums@evergreen.edu](mailto:buxbaums@evergreen.edu)  
Winter Quarter 2014 – 2 Credits

## Schedule:

Weekend Intensive – February 28<sup>th</sup> (6 to 10 p.m.), March 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

Class location: TBA

## Course Description

Washington State's local governance system evolved out of a unique set of geographic and political circumstances leading to the creation of a web of over 50 different types of local governing bodies. This course explores how the state's system of local governance influences the delivery of public services and helps to determine the investment of public and private capital. We will examine how the existing governance system serves to drive public policy and consider how economic and environmental issues and interests are testing the viability of our current system. We will use case studies and systems thinking exercises to probe the dynamic relationships between cities, counties and special purpose districts as they struggle to deliver critical programs and services.

## Learning Objectives:

- Investigate how Washington State's local governance system evolved.
- Consider how the state's geography influences local governance structure and function.
- Examine how the structure of the state's governance system influences the delivery of services and investment of public and private capital.
- Investigate how the state's governance system influences public policy.
- Consider how viable the state's current systems of local governance are.
- Gain practical knowledge about the structure and function of Washington's county, city and special district governments.

## Methods and Assignments

- Collaborate to stay focused upon the course's ambitious learning objectives.
- Form a supportive "learning community" wherein class participants can be inquisitive, explore and share information about the course material and exercises.
- Use "system thinking" exercises to learn about what influences how organizations and governments work.
- Draw from the experience of practitioners.
- Investigate recent and historic events as a means of shedding light upon Washington State's system of governance.

We will draw from readings, case studies and internet resources as we work together to learn about and examine how Washington State's unique local governance system evolved and currently functions. Class sessions will be interactive, combining presentations by the instructor and guests with seminar style discussions. *Please check your schedule and your calendar to*

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<sup>1</sup> Our Moodle site will have the most up to date information on schedules and assignments. Look for Moodle availability by January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

*be certain you can participate fully at every class.* There is no option for partial credit or an incomplete. Students will provide a short paragraph addressing their background and interests relative to the course material to be shared during the first class and emailed to Stephen prior to the start of class (instructions will be available on Moodle at the start of the quarter). Students will complete seminar worksheets in class and participate in small and large group “system thinking” exercises. Students will write one short paper (3-5 pages) due the week prior to our first class (final instructions will be available on Moodle).

Please note: Students are required to use Moodle and email for assignments and distribution of class reading materials. Reading material for this class will be provided electronically via Moodle. None of the readings need to be purchased – they can be printed from Moodle at the students own expense. The class Moodle site will go “live” by Saturday, January 5, 2014.

All reading and one short paper assignment is due before the first evening class. Students are **required** to use Moodle and email for assignments and distribution of class materials.

## **Primary Reading Materials:**

***The Closest Governments to the People, A Complete Reference Guide to Local Government in Washington State***, by Steve Lundin. (By special arrangement with the author and publisher selected chapters will be available to students via our class Moodle site. There is no need to purchase this text.)

***Federalist 10***, by James Madison (Copy available on class Moodle site.)

***A History of Washington’s Local Governments, Volume I; Final report of the Washington State Local Governance Study Commission*** (available on the class Moodle site.)

## **Local Governance Credit Requirements (2 credits)**

For credit in this class, students are required to:

1. Complete all the assigned readings.
2. Attend all classes (entire weekend intensive).
3. Actively participate in class discussions, exercises and seminar team work.
4. Complete all written assignments – including worksheets to be completed during classroom exercises and seminars. Evaluation sheets will be provided to students and are to be completed and turned in at the end of each class.
5. All students are required to participate in co-writing a short paper (2-3 pages).
6. Consistent with MPA program requirements, students will prepare a self-evaluation and an evaluation of the instructor. Students should include in their self evaluation at least one important lesson or idea that has influenced their thinking relative to the course’s learning objectives.

Standards of Conduct: *Having respect for others is fundamental to an open, free, and educational dialogue. All students are expected to support and contribute to a well functioning classroom learning community. Behavior that disrupts the learning community may be grounds for disciplinary action, including dismissal from the class. All students will be held accountable for maintaining the highest of academic standards – plagiarism will result in a full loss of credit for the class.*

## **About the Instructor:**

Stephen Buxbaum has more than thirty years of management experience in the non-profit and public sectors focusing on community and economic development programs and policy. His background includes extensive work on farmland preservation, sustainable agriculture and water conservation beginning in the 1970's and '80's. He has worked at local, state and federal levels of government both in Washington State and Washington, D.C. As an executive manager for the state of Washington, he oversaw financing of hundreds of affordable housing, community facilities and public works projects. During his career he has managed some of Washington State's most successful grant and loan programs, including the Housing Trust Fund and the Community Development Block Grant program. In 2005, he received a fellowship to attend Harvard University's program for senior executives in state and local government. In 2006, he was appointed to chair the Governor's Interagency Council on Homelessness. Now, in addition to managing his consulting business, he teaches part-time for Evergreen's Masters of Public Administration Program and Evening and Weekend Studies Program. In November 2009 he was elected to serve on Olympia, Washington's City Council. He was elected by his peers to serve as Olympia's Mayor Pro Tem (Deputy Mayor) from April 2010 to December 2011. He was elected Mayor of Olympia in the 2011 General Election and assumed office on January 3, 2012 (term ending December 31, 2015).