

**COLBY COLLEGE**  
**Government 312: Suburban Politics**

**Instructor, Carrie LeVan**  
**Fall 2025**  
**T/H: 1:00—2:15 PM**  
**Location: Diamond 141**

Email: calevan@colby.edu  
Student Hours: T/H 11:00 to 12:00  
W 2:00 to 3:00  
And, by Appointment  
Office: Diamond 267

**Course Description**

This course will examine the political, social, economic, and cultural evolution of American suburbs. The course will pay close attention to the post-WWII era, looking at historical patterns of suburban development, exclusionary housing policies, racial/ethnic and class conflicts, demographic shifts, and contemporary theories of suburban politics and governance.

**Course Learning Outcomes/Goals**

There are two types of Learning goals in this class. The first is “Substantive,” which describe the content I hope you learn by the end of this class. The second is “Skill-Development,” which describe the critical skills that I hope you develop or improve upon by the end of this class. They are as follows:

*Substantive Outcomes:*

1. To synthesize how past policy—Federal, State, and Local—continues to shape racial/ethnic and socioeconomic inequality today.
2. To evaluate contemporary policies that Federal, State, and Local governments develop to determine what potential consequences, whether positive or negative, may occur.
3. To differentiate between the stated purpose of a policy and the consequences. Rarely today is a policy written in overtly racist/classist language and yet, the consequences of a policy may perpetuate/exacerbate/alleviate inequalities.
4. To identify and critique contemporary political behaviors of Suburbanites: public opinion, ideology, participation, policy preferences, etc.

*Skill-Development Outcomes:*

1. To apply the scientific method to an observation:
  - a. Make an observation
  - b. Pose a question
  - c. Connect to the reading
  - d. Develop a hypothesis
  - e. Collect evidence
  - f. Interpret the evidence
  - g. Synthesize results in a conclusion
2. To improve the clarity—Planning, Organization, Language Choice—of writing
3. To practice public speaking skills
4. To develop Team Working skills
  - a. Leadership: organizing team meetings, setting team goals, holding individuals accountable to those goals

- b. Delegating Responsibilities: allocating pieces of a larger project to individual team members
- c. Reliability: following through with assigned tasks, making deadlines, producing high quality results

## **Requirements**

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The course will have the following requirements:

*Class Attendance and Participation:* This course will be taught in a seminar discussion format. In order for students to maximize their learning, they must attend class and engage in class discussion of the assigned readings. Attending class is critical to a student's success in this class.

*Homework:* Every week, a mini assignment will be posted to the Course Moodle page on Monday. The assignment, for most weeks, will be due the upcoming Thursday. Students must have the assignment complete before class on Thursday, as we will use the assignment in Thursday's class. The goals of these assignments are as follows:

- To **guide** students through the assigned reading. There is a lot of reading in this course and it has the potential to become overwhelming. The weekly homework assignments are designed to help you focus your reading and improve your reading comprehension.
- To **improve** class discussion. This class is designed to be student directed. Through the homework assignments you will be better prepared to serve as both a leader of class discussion and a participant.
- To **stimulate** reading retention. So much of assigned reading goes in and out of readers' minds. The homework challenges students to engage with what they just read, which leads to better cognitive learning.
- To **assess** reading comprehension. Through the homework assignments, I will be able to assess what students understood in the reading and where we need to spend more time unpacking challenging concepts.

*The Suburban Case Study:* The capstone project in this class is a case study of an American Suburb. In groups of 4, students will select a Suburb and complete an investigation of both the Socio-demographic residential patterns and the potential sources/causes of these residential patterns. The project will be submitted in stages throughout the semester.

- **Report 1:** The first of four reports asks groups to provide a quick history of the suburb they have selected. I will distribute a description of this assignment in class during Week 2 on February 12<sup>th</sup>. The assignment will be due **Week 4**.
- **Report 2:** This second report asks groups to present a visualization of the past and current racial/ethnic and socioeconomic residential patterns of their selected Suburb. This Demographic Report. I will provide greater detail of this assignment in class during Week 2 on February 12<sup>th</sup>. The assignment will be due **Week 7**.
- **Report 3:** The third report asks groups to propose hypotheses for the observations they made in report 2. They need to connect their hypotheses to the literature. They also need to propose the type of evidence/data they will need to collect to test their

hypotheses. They need to propose at least two hypotheses. The assignment will be due Week 10

- *Final Case Study Report:* The final presentation of the complete Case Study Report will combine the three former reports and add their final analysis. In the final analysis they will: (1) present the data/evidence they found, (2) connect the evidence to their hypotheses, (3) draw conclusions—did the evidence support their expectations? Finally, they will need to provide an overall conclusion for the full report. I will give you greater detail of this final report during Week 7. The final draft of this paper will be due during **Week 14.**
- *Final Poster:* In place of a final exam, groups will present their findings in a poster. During our exam period, students will collect results from their classmate's research and write a reflection on what they have learned in this course. I will distribute an overview of the poster requirements during Week 13. The Final Poster will be due during **Week 15** (final exam period)

### **Grade Distribution**

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The weights of grades are distributed as follows:

Participation	10%
Homework	20%
Report 1	10%
Report 2	15%
Report 3	15%
Course Paper	20%
Poster Presentation	10%

### **Grading Scale:**

94-100 = A
90-93.9 = A-
87-89.9 = B+
84-86.9 = B
80-83.9 = B-
77-79.9 = C+
74-76.9 = C
70-73.9 = C-
67-69.9 = D+
64-66.9 = D
60-63.9 = D-
Below 60 = F

### **Required Texts**

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Frasure-Yokely, Lorrie. 2015. *Racial and Ethnic Politics in American Suburbs.*

(Abbreviated: REP) **[NOTE: Available in Digital Format Through Colby Library]**

Freund, David M. P. 2007. *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America.* (Abbreviated: CP) **[NOTE: Available in Digital Format Through Colby Library]**

Rothstein, Richard. 2017. *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America.* (Abbreviated: COL)

Lassiter, Matthew D. 2006. *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South.* (Abbreviated: SM)

Trounstone, Jessica. 2018. *Segregated by Design: Local Politics and Inequality in American Cities*. (Abbreviated: SBD) [NOTE: Available in Digital Format Through Colby Library]

Watts-Smith, Candice and Christina M Greer (editors). 2019. *Black Politics in Transition: Immigration, Suburbanization, and Gentrification*. (Abbreviated: BPT)

*Additional readings will be posted to the course website*

### **Student Hours/Office Hours**

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Student hours (a.k.a. Office Hours) are available on T/H 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM and Wednesdays from 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM. Students may also schedule a time to see me via email.

Student hours are an opportunity for you to discuss with me the following: (1) questions about course content, (2) conflicts with class schedule, (3) opportunities for internships, research, jobs, etc. (4) graduation requirements, (5) crazy stuff happening in the news, (6) problems with campus climate, (7) struggles with physical/mental illness, (8) drama with roommate/partner/friends/teammates, (9) just to say, “What up”, (10) all of the above and anything in between.

In other words, you don’t need a reason to stop by and talk, just do it.

### **Late Work**

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Assignments should be submitted to the course Moodle when they are due in order to avoid penalties. Students should not provide hard copies of assignments, unless otherwise told. Students should not email copies of assignments to me, unless otherwise told. Any work submitted late receives a *penalty of one-third of one letter grade* for every day it is late (starting immediately after the work is due).

### **Academic Dishonesty**

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All work completed in this course is expected to be your own. If you are unfamiliar or have questions regarding the College’s policy on academic dishonesty, see <http://www.colby.edu/academicintegrity/academic-integrity-on-the-syllabus/>

### **Students With Disabilities**

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Students with College documented disabilities should inform me as soon as possible, so that I can help meet their needs. If you have question or concerns about your disability or suspect that you may qualify for services, you should contact Assistant Dean of Students, Joseph Atkins at [jeatkins@colby.edu](mailto:jeatkins@colby.edu) or by calling at (207) 859-4250

## **Online Course Evaluations**

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Every student should complete an evaluation during the evaluation period near the end of the semester. I ask that you provide feedback so that I can improve the course and my teaching in general.

For more information, see

<http://www.colby.edu/deanofthecollege/deanofstudents/support/support-services/>

## **Schedule of Course**

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### **PART I: LAYING THE FOUNDATION—HOW DID WE END UP IN SUBURBS?**

#### **Week 1: Suburban Dream: What is it and Where'd it Come From?**

September 7: Introductions

*Reading:* ONLINE—

-Jackson, Kenneth T. Excerpt from: *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (1985)

-Green, Amelia Hoover. (2013). "How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps"

#### **Week 2: The Federal Government's Role**

September 12: How'd We Get Here?

*Reading:* COL—Preface and Chapter 1

*NOTE:* Distribute the Course Paper Assignment—Bonnie Paige (Government Resource Librarian coming to demo Social Explorer)

September 14: Federal Schemes Part I

*Reading:* COL—Chapters 2, 3, 4

HW: Organizing Schemes: Description, Evidence, Consequence (Start)

#### **Week 3: The Federal Government's Role (continued)**

September 19: Federal Schemes Part II

*Reading:* COL—Chapters 5, 6, 7

HW: Organizing Schemes: Description, Evidence, Consequence (Finish)

September 21: No More Redlining Means No More Segregation, Right?

*Reading:* COL—Chapters 10, 11

Online (optional): <https://la.streetsblog.org/2015/10/02/new-documentary-about-boyle-heights-opens-new-urbanism-film-festival>

HW: Mini-Reflection: *The Color of Law*—What Did I Learn?

#### **Week 4: Local Politics**

September 26: Theory Making—Laying the Foundation of Local Government

*Reading:* SBD—Chapters 1, 2, 3

**-Report 1 Due Today—Upload to Moodle before Class**

September 28: Local Schemes and Maintaining Segregation

*Reading:* SBD—Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7

Note: In class, you'll be assigned one of these chapters—Everyone Reads Ch. 7

Online: (optional)-- <https://www.segregationbydesign.com/los-angeles/sugar-hill>

Online: (check out the interactive map/visualizations)--

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/09/08/opinion/urban-highways-segregation.html?smtyp=cur&smid=tw-nytopinion>

HW: Evidence Expert: Complete the handout for your assigned chapter

#### **PART II: CONSEQUENCES OF POLICY**

#### **Week 5: Suburbanization: Was it Race or Economics?**

October 3: Spoiler Alert: It was Race

*Reading:* CP—Chapter 1

October 5: Myth Making: From Handouts to Free Market

*Reading:* CP—Chapters 2 and 5

HW: Myth Making: Mapping the Transition

#### **Week 6: Case Studies: A Closer Look**

**October 10: NO CLASS—FALL BREAK**

October 12: Case Studies in the Library

*Reading:* CP—Chapters 6 and 7

HW: Breaking Down a Case Study: What type of Evidence?

*Note:* Distribute Second part of Suburban Report and Librarian Bonnie Paige Returns

#### **Week 7: Midterm and Hypothesis Making**

October 17: Midterm—Poster Presentation

*Reading:* Start Reading *Silent Majority*: Chapters 1 and 2

**Report 2 Due Today—Upload Report to Moodle before Class**

October 19: From Observation to Hypothesis: I wonder why?

*Reading:* SM: Chapters 3 and 4

-HW: Making Observations and Drawing Hypothesis: Reflection on Residential Trends

### **Week 8: Suburban Transformations: Political Culture and Policy**

October 24: Setting the Stage: From Jim Crow to Colorblind Politics

*Reading:* SM—Introduction and Chapters 5 and 6

October 26: Race + Geography = Class

*Reading:* SM—Chapters 7 and 8

*HW:* Case Study Check-In—Hypotheses, Evidence, and Delegation Chart

### **Week 9: Suburban Strategies: Going National**

October 31: Southern Politics Head to the Suburbs

*Reading:* SM—Chapters 9 and 10

ONLINE: Reny, Tyler T. and Benjamin J. Newman. (2018). "Protecting the Right to Discriminate: The Second Great Migration and Racial Threat in the American West."

November 2: Suburban Entitlement: "Middle America" Taking Back What's Theirs

*Reading:* SM—Chapters 11 and 12

*HW:* TBD

### **Week 10: Democracy in Suburbia**

November 7: Suburban Income and Racial Segregation: Their Effects on Participation

*Reading:* Online—Excerpts from Oliver, Eric. *Democracy in Suburbia*

-Chapters 3 and 4

*HW:* Evaluating Results—Takeaways by Chapter (Start)

**Report 3 Due Today—Upload to Moodle before Class**

November 9: Suburban Land Use and Design: Their Effects on Participation

*Reading:* Online—Excerpts from Oliver, Eric. *Democracy in Suburbia*

-Chapters 5 and 6

*HW:* Evaluating Results—Takeaways by Chapter (finish)

## **PART III: SUBURBS TODAY AND TOMORROW**

### **Week 11: The Suburbs are Changing**

November 14: The New Neighbors: How Do Suburbs Respond to New Faces?

*Reading:* REP—Chapters 1 and 2

ONLINE: Frey, William H. (2014). "Segregation is Steadily Declining—But Whites Still Live in Least Diverse Neighborhoods."

LINK to Study: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/todays-suburbs-are-symbolic-of-americas-rising-diversity-a-2020-census-portrait/>

November 16: School, Labor and Accessibility in Government

- *Reading*: REP—Chapters 3, 4, and 5

*HW*: Chapter Experts: Assigned in class one chapter (but still read all three)

### **Week 12: Example of Schemes Today**

November 21: Racial Steering

*Video In Class*: “A Newsday Documentary: Testing the Divide—They Met with Real Estate Agents...Would they be Treated the Same?, 2019”

### **November 23: NO CLASS THANKSGIVING**

### **Week 13: Place and Politics: Minority Preferences in/out of the Suburbs**

November 28: Black Suburbanites

*Reading*: BLT—Chapters 5 and 6

*HW*: Chapter Takeaways (Start)

November 30: Gentrification: Suburbanization in Reverse?

*Reading*: BLT—Chapter 7

ONLINE: Fayyad, Abdallah. (2017). “The Criminalization of Gentrifying Neighborhoods.”

ONLINE-Link: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2022/09/let-brooklyn-be-loud/670600/>

*HW*: Chapter Takeaways (Finish)

### **Week 14: Where do We Go Now?**

December 5: Integrating Neighborhoods: Effects on Minorities

*Reading*: BLT—Chapter 8

ONLINE: Goodman, Rachel. (2018). “Minnesota City’s Ordinance Illegally Targets People of Color in Rental Housing.”

ONLINE: Einstein, Katherine Levine; Maxwell Palmer; and David Glick. (2018).

“Racial Disparities in Housing Politics: Evidence from Administrative Data.”

ONLINE: Julian, Elizabeth (2015) “Mobility Works America,” Learning from Inter-District School.

December 7: Solutions and Schemes These Days

*Reading*: COL—Chapter 12

ONLINE: Hannah-Jones, Nikole. (2017). “The Resegregation of Jefferson County.”

ONLINE: Forney, Elizabeth and Alexandra Tilsley. (2018). “Segregated Neighborhoods, Segregated Schools?”

ONLINE: (Optional) Ta-Nehisi Coates (2014). “The Case for Reparations.”

*HW*: Reflection: The State of Things Today—Looking back and Looking Forward

**Final Suburban Report Due Today—Upload to Moodle in PDF before Class**



**Week 15: Final Exam Week**  
**Final Exam—Posters**  
TBD