Public Policy 135
Stanford University

Regional Politics and Decision Making
in Silicon Valley and the San Francisco Bay Area

Instructors:
Russell Hancock
Frank Benest

Spring Quarter 2024
Wednesdays, 4:30 to 5:50 pm

Course Overview
Many of the pressing issues affecting daily life (transportation, environmental sustainability, community infrastructure, homelessness, housing supply) cross beyond the traditional boundaries of local governments, and also span public & private sectors. In the absence of any overarching regional structure, however, these problems can only be addressed through regional collaboration, and social innovation.

This course will grapple with the problem and prospect of regional planning and decision making, discuss how regions fit into broader systems, examine cases of multi-sector innovation and problem-solving, and consider some of the most pressing regional issues of our time.

The course will have a particular focus on Silicon Valley within the greater Bay Area, since it is one of the world's most dynamic micro-economies and a leading example of the new models of regional collaboration.

The course format includes presentations by the instructors, class discussion, and team presentations. It will also match students with the leading practitioners in the Bay Area's regional organizations (public, non-profit, and NGO) for required case studies and team presentations.
Requirements, Grading

Students will:

1. Stay abreast of regional events by reading the local pages of the *San Jose Mercury News* and *San Francisco Chronicle*.

2. Come to each class having completed the assigned reading, and participate in discussion. Relative weight: **20 percent of grade**.

3. Make a **team presentation** (40-minutes, PowerPoint) which describes a regional problem, enumerates the players and points of view, summarizes all relevant jurisdictions and governance, describes current status, and evaluates problem-solving efforts to date. The presentation will be based on a review of relevant literature, and will draw on interviews carried out by team members with key players and stakeholders. Teams will field questions and entertain discussion; every team member will have a speaking role.

   **Note:** presentations will be made in front of invited guests who are actual practitioners in the subject matter. Presentations exceeding the allotted time will be penalized. Relative weight: **40 percent of grade**.

4. Submit a **final paper** at least 10 and not more than 15 pages in length. The paper will identify a regional issue in all its perplexity, provide the essential background, discuss the associated controversies, explore the solutions being advanced by the players, describe current status, interview a key player or players, and discuss to what extent the issue is moving forward (or not) and why. The paper may or may not be an outgrowth of the team presentation. Relative weight: **40 percent of grade**.

Weekly Schedule

**April 3: Introduction and Course Overview.** The problem and prospect of regional planning and decision making. Premises. Definitions. Course logistics. Please read:

April 10: The San Francisco Bay Area. Basic history. Distinguishing characteristics. Introduction to the regional agencies and NGOs. Implications for regional planning and economic development. Read:


- Jeanne Harris & Iris Junglas, “Decoding the Contradictory Culture of Silicon Valley” (Accenture, Institute for High Performance, 2013).


- Public Policy Institute of California, “Proposition 13: Some Unintended Consequences.”


- Anthony Downs, *Stuck in Traffic* (select chapters)

**May 8: Housing and Homelessness.** The extent of the housing shortage. Root causes. The development and approval process. The growth of homelessness. Policy tools and nascent initiatives. The specter of state intervention. Read:


- Committee to House the Bay Area, “CASA Compact: A 15-Year Emergency Policy Package to Confront the Housing Crisis in the San Francisco Bay Area (2019).


**May 15: Non-governmental Actors.** Silicon Valley’s regional organizations and NGOs: history and evolution, current status, strengths and limitations. (Note: team presentations might be substituted for this class). Read:


**May 29: Team 1 presentation.** Read: material assigned by Team 1.

**June 5: Team 2 presentation.** Read: material assigned by Team 2