

# Canadian Politics

PSC 231, Fall 2018

M/W 12:45pm – 2:05pm in Marshall Sq. Mall 202A

Professor Audie Klotz

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Office hours: M/W 2:15-3:45pm in Eggers 330

(Optional signup via Orange Success or email for an appointment)

Course Description: This course is an introduction to Canadian politics, as well as political analysis. Therefore, the semester starts with some basics on political culture and historical geography before covering core features of government (parliament, courts, federalism, and parties). The second part of the course focuses on aspects of Canadian politics that are often regarded as distinctive: Quebec nationalism; immigration and multiculturalism; and indigenous rights. In the third section, we explore some current policy issues, modeled on parliamentary debate, thereby delving into policy-making processes.

No Prerequisites: I do not assume any common academic background, nor any knowledge about our neighbor to the north. Although some amongst us (including typically a few Canadian citizens) do already know a lot, this course offers a different perspective than a civics class in Canada would. Also, we will take a broader comparative perspective than the textbook, which is written mainly from a Canadian national perspective, using the United States as a foil.

Learning Objectives: By the end of the semester, you should exhibit a clear understanding of:

- how the Canadian parliamentary system functions, along with its limitations;
- the division of responsibilities in the Canadian form of federalism;
- major constitutional features, include reforms that led to the Charter.

In effect, you should be able to hold your own in a conversation with politically informed Canadians. Ideally, you might even develop sufficient knowledge to qualify as a permanent resident – if not a citizen already. Anyone previously educated in Canada will gain a deeper comparative perspective, which may prompt some rethinking of key assumptions or views.

Along the way, you will also engage with political science theories about the nature of democracy, nationalism, colonialism, and other core concepts. We will concentrate on reading skills – how to identify arguments and their logical underpinnings. Please be aware that some of these debates are extremely contentious, such as whether to view Canada as a colonial power. Therefore, you should exhibit sensitivity about how and why these issues matter for specific communities, even if we analyze them abstractly.

The third module of the course will provide an opportunity for us to focus on policy topics of your choice. In addition to gaining substantive knowledge about issues, you will hone verbal communication skills, through a debate format modeled on how parliament operates.

Required Materials: We will use one textbook: Kasoff and James, eds., *Canadian Studies in the New Millennium*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Toronto 2013), which is available (free!) as an e-book through the library or in used paperback at Schine bookstore. All other required materials will be available on [Blackboard](#), in the Assignments folder. The Documents folder contains a variety of additional resources useful for completing assignments, preparing for exams, and general amusement. Also keep up on Canadian news (some links are provided in the Media folder).

I also rely on Blackboard to distribute announcements by email. The University considers your <syr.edu> email the primary means of communication. If you do not regularly use SU email, be sure to set a forward to your preferred address. Email is the best way to reach me outside of class. Catch me after class for quick questions. For detailed questions, please see me during office hours (optional signup via Orange Success). If that's not feasible, make an appointment.

Assignments & Evaluation: Evaluation will be based on: **participation**, which includes attendance, discussion, homework, and in-class exercises; **two** in-class **exams**; and a **policy project**. **Each component is worth approximately 25%** of your overall grade. In determining course grades, I do take into account any significant change in trajectory during the semester.

**Participation (25%):** You will have daily opportunities to ask questions and offer comments. Some sessions may involve group activities. Therefore, you need to be present, both physically and mentally. To avoid distractions, always silence and put away cellphones. I do allow the use of laptops or tablets, but keep in mind that [studies](#) show that handwritten notetaking bolsters comprehension and test scores.

Remember that quantity is not quality, especially when it comes to participation. Everyone can and should ask questions! If you're a shy person, challenge yourself to contribute more often. You might bolster confidence by providing me with some of your questions or reactions in writing before class. Alternatively, if you're naturally talkative, be diligent about listening and responding to others instead of offering opinions. Also, you might wait to raise your hand or not offer a second comment until you've seen that many others have said something.

Keeping up on the reading will help you gain more out of the lectures and other activities. Prepare by identifying the author's main point. Textbook chapters typically aim to provide an overview. With other readings, keep in mind that reports, articles or books are written to expedite the reading process. Start with the main points in the introduction and conclusion, then look for how the subsections substantiate the overall argument. Writing up a brief summary or outline will help. Also consider how one week's readings fit with previous assignments. In-class quizzes may be used as diagnostic exercises.

You should attend every class, ready to participate. However, I understand extenuating circumstances. In accord with SU policies, I will accommodate [Religious Observances](#) and Athletic or Academic Teams, when you notify me in advance. Register any requests for religious holidays via MySlice at the beginning of the semester. Provide documentation for

Team events prior to any scheduled absence. If you are ill, contact me when possible. For extended illness, provide documentation from a doctor or clinic. To assist those who must miss class, and to facilitate review by all, any PowerPoint slides will be posted on Blackboard. Do not treat access to these materials as a substitute for regular attendance.

**Exams (2 x 25%):** Two in-class exams will cover readings, lectures, discussion, homework, exercises and current events for the relevant module of the course. These are closed-book exams, but you will be allowed to bring one sheet of notes. Questions will be a mix of multiple choice and short answer. No final exam in December! Ignore the exam date listed in MySlice.

Anyone requesting disability-related academic [accommodations](#), such as extended time or an alternative venue for taking these exams, must first register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 315-443-4498. After ODS issues an Accommodation Authorization Letter, we can make an appropriate plan. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your participation or achievement, please schedule an appointment with me to discuss additional strategies.

**Group Policy Project (25%):** In the third part of the course, you will have an opportunity to apply the knowledge gained of Canadian political institutions and key actors through an analysis of a current policy issue. In an informal parliamentary simulation, each of you will join a group representing the Cabinet Ministers of one major political party. Together, the class will choose three current topics for which each party will develop its position. In the last two weeks of class, we will cluster topics for presentations and mock debates. Each group will receive a baseline grade, from which individual grades will be determined. More details will be provided mid-way through the semester.

## SCHEDULE

### Module 1: Canadian Basics

#### Introduction

Canadians and Americans are nearly indistinguishable neighbors, who read the same books, watch the same movies, and sing the same songs. Or are they?

**M 8/27:** overview of the course

**W /29:** Holman and Thacker, "Literary and Popular Culture," in *Canadian Studies* [henceforth CS], ch.7.

Historical Geography

Like the United States, Canada spans a vast continent between two oceans, and they share a long peaceful border. But do they share a geographical destiny?

**M 9/3: No Class** (Labor Day)

**W 9/5:** Broadway, "Too Much Geography?" CS, ch.1. Peruse some maps too (BB).

Political Institutions

The Canadian political system has followed the British tradition of parliamentary primacy but also exhibits features more similar to American-style separation of powers, notably federalism and, recently, a Charter of Rights. Are any of these features inherently more democratic than others?

During these two weeks, we will cover material in slightly different order than chapters 2 (history), 3 (government), 9 (women) and 11 (civil society). I will provide specific pages to read from these chapters prior to each session.

**M 9/10:** Parliament & Cabinet

**W 9/12:** Constitution & Courts

**M 9/17:** Federalism & Provinces

**W 9/19:** Parties & Elections

Review & Assessment

**M 9/24:** Bring questions to class!

**W 9/26: Exam 1**

**Module 2: Distinctly Canadian**Quebec Nationalism

What are the origins of Quebec / Québec nationalism, and why does it persist?

**M 10/1:** *Lord Durham's Report on the Affairs of British North America*, ed. C. P. Lucas (reprint of original, Oxford 1912, three volumes), 27-47 (BB)

**W 10/3:** Bélanger and Doran, "Quebec's Destiny," CS, ch.6.

**Canadian Thanksgiving!** No class on M 10/8, in deference to any Canadians going home for the weekend. However, it's actually a provincial rather than national holiday, so there will be a (lighthearted) **homework** assignment for everyone.

Simulation Planning Session on W 10/10. Be prepared to "register" for a political party. Also bring suggestions for current issues that might work well for parliamentary style debates.

### Immigration & Multiculturalism

Who has migrated to Canada, how well have newcomers integrated, and why? Is Canada exceptional or a model for other countries?

**M 10/15:** Beaujot and Raza, "Population and Immigration Policy," CS, ch.5.

**W 10/17:** Bouchard & Taylor report (BB)

### Indigenous Peoples

Who are Indigenous Canadians? What does indigenous "self-government" mean in theory and in practice?

**M 10/22:** David Newhouse, "Aboriginal Identities and the New Indian Problem," in *Canadas of the Mind*, ed. N. Hillmer and A. Chapnick (Montréal: McGill-Queens 2007), 287-299 [BB].

**W 10/24:** Lusztig, "Native Peoples," CS, ch.8.

### Review & Assessment

**M 10/29:** Bring questions to class!

**W 10/31: Exam 2**

## **Module 3: Current Controversies**

We will focus on topics in the news, on the parliamentary agenda, and/or of particular interest to members of the class. Stay tuned, as we will likely have a few additional readings to prepare for debates and might shift the schedule a bit.

**M 11/5:** Kasoff and Storer, "The Economy," CS, ch.4.

**W 11/7:** Alm and Burkhart, "Canadian Environmental Policy," CS, ch.10.

**M 11/12:** Nord and Smith, "Canadian Foreign Policy," CS, ch.12.

**W 11/14:** Parliamentary Agenda & Presentation Schedule Finalized

**No Classes 11/19 & 11/21 (Thanksgiving break)**

**Parliamentary Debates** (topics to be determined)

**M 11/26**

**W 1/28**

**M 12/3**

**W 12/5: Wrap Up & Predictions**

How long do you expect the Liberals to remain in government? Regardless of the party in power, what do you expect to be the biggest challenges facing Canada in the next decade?

**Reminder: No "Final" Exam (ignore the listing in MySlice)**