

PO263A: Politics and Government in Canada [Sussex Law Program]

Wilfrid Laurier University

Fall 2016

Instructor: Christopher G. Anderson

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Lecture time: Monday and Wednesday, 2:30-3:50

Classroom: Schlegel Centre, SBE1220

Office: Dr. Alvin Woods Building [DAWB] 4-128

Office hours: Tuesday and Wednesday, 12:30-2:00 (or by appointment)

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce you to core institutions, processes and principles that define politics in Canada, with a primary but not exclusive focus on the national level. You will become familiar with prominent and important debates concerning how well the Canadian political system functions and explore different positions as to how it might be improved. This will require that you develop both an understanding of the system's historical and intellectual foundations as well as an appreciation of some of the ways in which such debates and positions arise in and influence contemporary politics and government in Canada. During the term, you will have opportunities to improve your ability to describe these institutions, principles and processes and to apply your knowledge to contemporary political events and issues.

The easiest way to struggle in this course – or even to fail – is to not come to lectures. Unless you attend lectures regularly, you will find it difficult to know how to approach the material in – and will not receive information that moves beyond – the textbook. You will also miss important explanations concerning assignments. Lectures can be a place where some of the most significant learning that you will experience takes place at university, if you come prepared to listen and participate.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Identify core institutions in the Canadian political system and describe important

processes through which they operate and relate to one another;

- Explain core principles that underpin the Canadian parliamentary system, and differentiate them from those that define the American system;
- Understand the functions and evolution of these institutions, processes and principles, and consider ways in which they might continue to evolve and be improved;
- Apply your learning to contemporary political issues and debates; and,
- Express your ideas to a higher written standard than when you started the course.

Required Texts

The required text for this course is Patrick Malcolmson, Richard Myers, Gerald Baier and Thomas M.J. Bateman, *The Canadian Regime: An Introduction to Parliamentary Government in Canada* [6th edition] (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016). It is available in the Laurier bookstore. You can also use the 5th edition, if you have it. Copies of both editions have been placed on reserve at the library. Other required readings will be available online and are associated with assigned Critical Response Papers.

Most weeks (seven of the 12) you will be expected to study one chapter plus another 25 pages or so of associated material available online so it is important that you give some thought to both when and how you will read the material to ensure that you are able to learn from it individually and contribute to class learning collectively. The best approach is, of course, to read and study it before the lecture for which it has been assigned, taking notes as you go along (summarizing information in your own words alongside key quotes in a separate document, and not simply highlighting the text). If you can do this fairly consistently you will understand and remember the lecture material much more effectively. As a result, you will likely save time in the long term (especially when studying for exams) and perform better overall in the course.

Course Evaluation

Assignment	Due date	Percent course grade
In-Class Exercises (10)	Occasional, Weeks 1-12	10/100
In-Class Quiz (1)	October 17	15/100
Critical Response Papers (4)	Occasional, Weeks 3-12	40/100
Final Exam (1)	TBA [Exam period]	35/100

You will be able receive announcements and download documents (including assignment guidelines and readings) through the My Learning Space [MLS] page for this course (see <https://mylearningspace.wlu.ca/>). You can also use (and are encouraged to use) MLS to communicate with one another – to exchange ideas, solicit information, arrange study groups, etc. I do not check communications sent to me through MLS very often and therefore the most effective way to get in touch with me is through my Laurier e-mail addresses. In case of technical difficulties with MLS, you should alert me and contact myLS@wlu.ca without delay.

In-Class Exercises (10 percent)

Your engagement with course material will be furthered through a variety of in-class exercises [ICEs]. These will be given on an occasional basis and in a variety of formats. The primary purpose of the ICEs is to allow you to assess your understanding of course material in a non-stressful environment. There will be ten ICEs in all, each worth one percent of your overall course mark. It is not possible to make up a missed ICE for credit but adjustments will be made for valid and appropriately documented absences.

In-Class Quiz (15 percent)

On Monday, October 17, there will be a short quiz at the start of class to assess your understanding of the principle of responsible government in Canada. You will be provided with the question in advance and so my expectations for your performance will be quite high. The quiz will also provide you with a good sense as to my expectations for your written answers on the final exam.

Critical Response Papers (40 percent):

You will each develop a Writing Portfolio consisting of four 1,200-word maximum Critical Response Papers to assigned non-textbook readings. The objective is to develop both your written and critical skills through short but repeated and fairly specific written tasks. A physical copy of the paper must be handed in to me at the end of the Wednesday class for the week in which the readings have been assigned; an electronic version should be uploaded to the appropriate MLS Dropbox before the class as well. An important feature of the Writing Portfolio is that not all of your work is graded, although it all contributes to your overall course grade. The

first paper (due September 21) will be used in a peer review process to discuss how to write the papers successfully. The second paper (due October 5) will be graded so that you can get direct feedback. After writing both the third and fourth papers, you will choose which you want graded. You can select from among four different subjects/weeks for these last two papers. Each of the two graded papers is worth 20 percent of your total course grade. As for the two ungraded papers, you will lose up to 2.5 (of the 40 point total) per paper if you do not hand them in or if you submit work that reflects an insincere effort. Late papers must be submitted by the following Monday and cannot be one of the two selected for grading. Because this component of the course requires care and responsibility on your part, a more detailed set of guidelines will be made available on MLS and some class time will be devoted to working through the objectives and mechanics of the Writing Portfolio.

Final Exam (35 percent)

The final will take place during the exam period (December 10-21) at a time and place set by the Faculty of Arts. You are all **“advised not to make travel commitments during this time period.”** The exam will consist of short answer and essay-based questions that will allow you to demonstrate how well you have learned course material as contained in the readings, lectures and discussions throughout the term. Guidelines will be discussed in class concerning how you can best approach preparing for the exam, and at least one ICE will be used to respond to a practice exam question.

Course Policies

As with any course that you take at university – indeed, as with any task that you take on in life – you will each need to decide how you want to approach it. In the past, I have provided a list here of general and specific actions that might help you to succeed but I have learned over time that you already know that you ought to (a) think about your goals in the course, (b) plan how you might accomplish the work necessary to achieve them and then (c) act upon that plan, adjusting it as you progress. No matter how high or low you set your goals, however, I hope that you will all take the opportunity to raise questions about not just the material that we cover in class but about the politics that you see or experience in the world around you – and to do so both within and beyond Laurier. This will allow you to develop and refine skills that you can use during and

after your university career. You should never hesitate to get in touch should you wish more individual guidance from me on these matters.

Two particular notes on student conduct are nonetheless worth mentioning at this stage. First, all students are expected to treat one another with respect in their interactions through this course. Second, all students are responsible for becoming familiar and acting with academic integrity as defined at Laurier, especially – but not exclusively – with respect to plagiarism. For more information, visit <https://students.wlu.ca/academics/academic-integrity/index.html>. You should feel free to discuss with me any questions you have on such issues at any point during the term. Please note that this course employs plagiarism software for all written assignments. No written work will be graded unless it is also uploaded to turnitin on MLS. Writing services are available to all students through the WLU Writing Centre, but you should consult with me when questions or concerns arise with respect to your writing as I am in the best position to help you understand and hopefully even surpass assignment and course expectations.

More generally, if you have any questions or concerns about the course, then do not hesitate to contact me. If you are unable to attend a class or complete an assignment on time, then you should get in touch as soon as possible so that we can discuss the matter and determine what options are available. Each case will be treated on its own merits. All cases will require appropriate documentation so be sure to be prepared to provide it when you come to see me.

Weekly Schedule and Required Readings

Note: Readings associated with a Critical Response paper are marked with a “CR” and will be available online, with guidelines, through MLS

Week 1 – September 12, 14 – Politics and Government in Canada

Note: “Writing a Critical Response Paper” session on Wednesday

Week 2 – September 19, 21 – Canada’s Regime Principles

Malcolmson et al., Preface and Chapter 1; additional reading on democracy in Canada [CR]

Note: Planned class visit on Monday by Dr. Sabrina Gilani, Lecturer in Canadian Law, Sussex

Note: First Critical Response Paper due in class on Wednesday for take-home peer review

Week 3 – September 26, 28 – The Constitution

Malcolmson et al., Chapter 2; no additional reading

Note: First Critical Response Paper peer review class discussion on Wednesday

Week 4 – October 3, 5 – Responsible Government

Malcolmson et al., Chapter 3; additional reading on constitutional conventions [CR]

Note: Planned class visit on Monday by Gareth Topp, Senior International Officer, Sussex

Note: Second Critical Response Paper due in class on Wednesday

No Classes – October 10, 12 – Thanksgiving Day // Reading Week

Week 5 – October 17, 19 – In-Class Quiz [Monday] // Federalism

Malcolmson et al., Chapter 4; no additional reading

Note: Second Critical Response Paper Return on Wednesday

Week 6 – October 24, 26 – The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Malcolmson et al., Chapter 5; no additional readings

Note: In-Class Quiz Return/Review on Wednesday

Week 7 – October 31, November 1 – The Crown and Its Servants

Malcolmson et al., Chapter 6; additional reading on prime ministerial power [CR]

Note: Potential Third Critical Response Paper due in class on Wednesday

Week 8 – November 7, 9 – Parliament

Malcolmson et al., Chapter 7; additional reading on Senate reform [CR]

Note: Potential Third or Fourth Critical Response Paper due in class on Wednesday

Week 9 – November 14, 16 – The Judiciary

Malcolmson et al., Chapter 8; additional reading on judicial power [CR]

Note: Potential Third or Fourth Critical Response Paper due in class on Wednesday

Week 10 – November 21, 23 – Elections

Malcolmson et al., Chapter 9; additional reading on electoral reform [CR]

Note: Planned Guest Speaker on Wednesday, Richard Myers (co-author of textbook)

Note: Potential Fourth Critical Response Paper due in class on Wednesday

Week 11 – November 28, 30 – Political Parties

Malcolmson et al., Chapter 10; no additional readings

Week 12 – December 5, 7 – Public Policy/Course recap

Malcolmson et al., Chapter 11 and Conclusion; no additional readings

General Information for Students

*Students with disabilities or special needs are advised to contact Laurier's **Accessible Learning Office** (<https://www.wlu.ca/accessible-learning/index.html>) for information regarding its services and resources. Students are encouraged to review the Academic Calendar for information regarding all services available on campus.*

Foot Patrol Walk Home Service:

1.519.886.FOOT x3668

Foot Patrol is a volunteer operated walk-home service, available daily during evening hours. Male-female, radio-dispatched teams trained in Emergency First Aid are available on request to escort students to and from campus as well as to off-campus destinations, either by foot or by van.

Counselling Services and Peer Help Line:

1.886.281.PEER x7337

Counselling Services are available to help students deal with emotional, psychological and social challenges of university. Counselling, consultation or referrals are available at the Student Wellness Centre. Peer Help Line, a confidential listening, referral, information and support line, is available during evening hours to provide support.

Student Food bank

All Laurier students are eligible to use the Student Food Bank. Anonymous requests can be made online at wlusu.com under the Services tab. All dietary restrictions are accommodated, and food hampers typically last up to a week.