

P0263B: Politics and Government in Canada

Wilfrid Laurier University

Fall 2016

Instructor: Karen Lohead, PhD

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Lecture Time: Tuesday, 7:00-9:50pm

Classroom: BA110

Office Hours: Monday, 12:30-1:30pm (or by appointment)

Office: DAWB 4-129

*Wilfrid Laurier University uses software that can check for **plagiarism**. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form and have it checked for plagiarism.*

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

Additional information on Foot Patrol, Counselling Services and the WLUSU Food Bank can be found on the last page out this outline.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to introduce students to the institutional foundations of Canadian politics and government. Topics to be explored in this course include: the central features and basic principles of Canada's Constitution; the evolving forms and functions of Canada's executive, legislative and judicial branches of government; and the merits and demerits of Canada's electoral system. Students will also be introduced to the roles and responsibilities of

Canada's major political actors, namely: the Queen and her representatives; the Prime Minister and Premiers; elected representatives; bureaucrats; judges; political parties and interest groups.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course students should understand:

- how Canada's system of government works
- how Canada's political institutions shape political behaviour
- how ordinary citizens can effectively participate in the democratic process
- some of the major critiques of Canada's system of government
- some of the proposals for change that these critiques have inspired
- some current political issues and controversies

REQUIRED TEXT

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, 2012). ISBN: 978-1-4426-3596-8.

ADDITIONAL COURSE MATERIALS

Additional required reading listed in the 'Lecture Schedule' section of this syllabus can be accessed on-line via the Library's e-reserve system.

You are strongly encouraged to read and/or watch a reputable national news source (for example: *The Globe & Mail*, *The National Post*, *The CBC*) **every day** to help you connect course readings and lectures to the real world of Canadian politics and government. Your learning experience and our class discussions will be much more interesting if you do.

COURSE EVALUATION

20%: Op-Ed #1. Due Tues, Sept 27 by 4:00 pm

20%: Op-Ed #2. Due Tues, Nov 1 by 4:00 pm

20%: Op-Ed #3. Due Tues, Nov 22 by 4:00 pm

40%: Final Exam. As scheduled by the Registrar's Office

These are **required** components of this course. You cannot receive credit for this course without submitting all 3 Op-Ed assignments and writing the final exam.

OP-ED ASSIGNMENTS

You are required to write three (3) Op-Ed pieces. Each piece should be between 500-800 words in length. Op-Ed #1 and Op-Ed #2 must be written on one of the topics that appear in the topic lists below; Op-Ed #3 must be written on a current Canadian politics topic that is related to some aspect of this course. You are strongly encouraged to talk to your instructor about the suitability of your chosen topic before beginning Op-Ed #3.

Before beginning your first Op-Ed you should read several Op-Eds from reputable Canadian publications that regularly report on Canadian political issues. For example: *The Globe and Mail*, *The National Post*, *The Toronto Star*, *The Record*, etc.

There are many guides to writing Op-Eds available on-line. Here are a few of your instructor's favourites:

- Advocates for Youth, "Writing an Op-Ed" – <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/topics-issues/organizational-development/246?task=view>
- The OpEd Project (click on the topics under "Resources (Write It!)" – www.theopedproject.org
- Smith College, "Op-Ed Guidelines" – <http://www.smith.edu/collegerelations/news-office/op-ed-guidelines>

You are encouraged to submit your Op-Eds for publication. If one of your Op-Eds is published before final grades are submitted to the Registrar's Office (usually within 72 hours of the date of the final exam), provide your instructor with proof of publication and 2% will be added to your final grade.

Learning Objectives

- To promote engagement in Canadian politics
- To link course materials to the real world of Canadian politics and government
- To promote critical thinking skills
- To develop written communication skills

Assignment Guidelines

- Each Op-Ed must be between **500-800 words** in length (a 10% penalty will be applied if your Op-Ed is too short or too long)
- Each Op-Ed must be typed in **12pt Times New Roman font** and **double spaced**
- Each Op-Ed must be prefaced by a **title that reflects its contents** (please don't call your Op-Ed "Op-Ed #1 " or "PO263B Assignment") and a **by-line** (i.e. your full name – first and last). **No Separate Cover Pages Please!**
- Each Op-Ed must begin with a **'lead'** (sometimes referred to as a 'lede') that captures the reader's attention and draws the reader into the piece
- Each Op-Ed must contain **relevant background information** pertaining to the issue at hand
- Each Op-Ed must present a **clear opinion** on the issue at hand (no fence-sitting)
- Each Op-Ed must present at least **2 logical reasons in support** of the opinion/proposition presented
- Each Op-Ed must **refute at least 1 counterclaim/counterargument**
- Each Op-Ed must conclude with **at least 1 recommendation** that compels the reader to act in some way

Evaluation

Each Op-Ed will be evaluated using the rubric posted on MyLearningSpace. Please review this rubric before beginning each of your Op-Ed assignments.

Submission Information

Each Op-Eds must be submitted in **electronic format** (i.e. as a Word, WordPerfect, or PDF file) to the appropriate Drop-Box on MyLearningSpace **before 4:00pm** on the day it is due. Do not email your Op-Ed to your professor or place a hard copy of it in her mailbox. Submission is via MyLearningSpace only.

If you experience technical difficulties with the MyLearningSpace system, you should contact myLS@wlu.ca.

Late Penalty & Final Submission Date

There is no “late penalty” but all Op-Eds must be submitted to the appropriate Drop-Box on MyLearningSpace within 7 days of their respective due dates, meaning that **the final submission date for each Op-Ed is 4:00pm on the Tuesday after its due date**. No Op-Ed will be accepted after its final submission date. This policy dismisses the need to obtain a doctor’s note for minor illnesses such as colds and flus, or for requesting an extension due to relatively minor or time-limited extenuating circumstances such as car trouble, computer problems, attending a funeral, etc.

- **Please Note:** You are strongly advised not to treat the final submission date as a **defacto extension!!** If you get sick or experience some other extenuating circumstance between an assignment’s due date and its final submission date you will not be granted an extension.

Extension Policy

Extensions will only be granted in the very rare event of a serious illness with an expected recovery time in excess of 7 days or in the event of some other truly exceptional circumstance. Requests for extensions should be made as soon as is reasonable possible, in most cases this means sometime **before** the assignment due date. Please note that all requests for an extension will need to be supported with relevant documentation.

Op-Ed #1 Topics

- 1) Should the Indigenous Peoples of Canada be asked to formally accede to Canada's constitution in some way?
- 2) Should the Quebec sovereignty movement be declared dead?
- 3) Should the incarcerated (i.e. prisoners) be permitted to vote?
- 4) Should taxpayers pay for PM Trudeau's nannies?
- 5) Should governments require welfare recipients to be tested for illegal drug use?
- 6) Should Canada have an official 'First Lady'?
- 7) Should elected officials be required to Tweet in both official languages?
- 8) Should the Government of Canada be allowed to spy on its own citizens? (discuss with respect to a specific surveillance tactic such as monitoring phone calls or emails etc.)

Op-Ed #2 Topics

- 1) Should elected MPs (or MPPs/MLAs) be permitted to take parental leave?
- 2) Should elected MPs (or MPPs/MLAs) be allowed to cross the floor?
- 3) Should party discipline be relaxed?
- 4) Should governments hold plebiscites (non-binding referenda) on major issues of public policy? (discuss in general or with respect to a specific public policy issue of your choice)
- 5) Should voting be mandatory?
- 6) Should the voting age be lowered?
- 7) Should the Senate be abolished? Or reformed in some other way?
- 8) Should Canada adopt a new electoral system? (discuss a particular electoral system if choosing this topic)

Op-Ed #3 Topics

Your choice of a current Canadian politics topic that is related to some aspect of this course. You are strongly encouraged to talk to your instructor about the suitability of your chosen topic before beginning Op-Ed #3. **Your instructor will not discuss topics between this assignment's due date and its final submission date.**

Final Exam

Each student is required to write a 2-hour final exam during the regular fall examination period. Please check with the Registrar's Office to confirm the date, time and location of your PO263B final exam. **Please do not make travel plans or other commitments until you know the date and time of all of your final exams.**

The format of the final exam will be announced on the last day of class but is likely to include: multiple-choice questions; identify questions; short answer questions; and at least one essay question.

Learning Objectives

- To provide an opportunity to review and apply course knowledge
- To develop effective study skills
- To develop exam writing skills

Evaluation

The final exam will evaluate students' knowledge of all materials (lectures, required readings, discussions, and other incidental course materials) covered during the Fall 2016 semester.

COMMUNICATION

Office Hours

Your instructor is available to meet with you each week during her scheduled office hours. If you would like to meet with your instructor outside of her office hours, please contact her via email. Office hours are the best time to ask questions about an assignment, address a specific problem, discuss a concern, ask for help, etc. You are also welcome to stop by to simply chat about Canadian politics 😊

- **Please Note:** your instructor is not always able to remain after class to speak with students. If you would like to meet with your instructor after class please contact her via email in advance to confirm her availability.

Email

An active WLU email account is required as a means of communication. Please ensure that your account is active and remember to check it regularly. Outside of office hours, email is the most efficient means of contacting your instructor. **Please email your instructor using her WLU email account, not MyLearningSpace** (the MLS system is not checked daily but email is). Please allow 24 hours for a response to your email and please note that your instructor may not respond to emails on weekends, during holidays or after 4:00pm on weekdays. Please follow these guidelines when communicating with your instructor via email:

- use your official **WLU email account**. To insure your privacy, your instructor will not reply to emails sent from a non-WLU email account
- write something descriptive in the subject line of your email ('PO263B Meeting Request'; 'PO263B Op-Ed #1 Question', 'PO263B Exam Question', etc.)
- address your email to your instructor in a polite manner (for example: 'Dear Dr. Lohead' or 'Hello Professor')
- sign your email with your **first and last name** (please include your student number if your question pertains to an assignment, test or exam grade)

MyLearningSpace

The course uses a MyLearningSpace webpage. Please remember to check it regularly. Your instructor will use MyLearningSpace to post announcements, up-load lecture notes, provide feedback on assignments, and record grades. You are required to submit all of your assignments to the appropriate Dropbox on MyLearningSpace where they will be checked for plagiarism and graded electronically. If you experience technical difficulties with the MyLearningSpace system, you should contact myLS@wlu.ca.

UNIVERSITY AND COURSE POLICIES

Classroom Use of Electronic Devices

The basic rule of electronic etiquette is: if it might distract someone beside you, behind you, in front of you or otherwise near you, don't do it.

Off-task uses of electronic devices (e.g., communicating with friends or family; using social networking sites; playing games; accessing the internet on websites that do not relate to the course; reading an electronic book that is not related to the course; playing music or video, etc.) that are distracting to self or others during class time are prohibited. See: *WLU Policy on the Classroom Use of Electronic Devices (9.3)*.

- **Please Note:** If you engage in activities that are distracting to your fellow students and/or instructor, **your instructor reserves the right to confiscate your device** until the end of class and/or **ask you to leave the classroom**.

Academic Integrity/Misconduct (Cheating)

Laurier is committed to a culture of integrity within and beyond the classroom. This culture values trustworthiness (i.e., honesty, integrity, reliability), fairness, caring, respect, responsibility and citizenship. Together, we have a shared responsibility to uphold this culture in our academic and nonacademic behavior. The University has a defined policy with respect to academic misconduct. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with this policy and the penalty guidelines. In addition to failure in a course, a student may be suspended or expelled from the University for academic misconduct and the offence may appear on their transcript.

Ignorance of Laurier's academic misconduct policy is not a defense. See: *WLU Student Code of Conduct and Discipline (12.2)*.

STUDENT SERVICES

The University provides a large selection of professional, academic, and personal support services to assist students to succeed in their academic careers. For example:

- Laurier's **Accessible Learning Centre** provides a wide range of services and resources for students with disabilities or special needs
- **The Writing Centre** provides free writing instruction to students through workshops, individual consultations and on-line resources

Students are encouraged to review the "**Student Services**" section of the 2016-2017 Academic Calendar for information regarding the many services available to Laurier students.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Weekly Lectures and Required Readings

Please note that weekly lectures will **not** summarize the assigned required reading! Lectures will provide information not found in the textbook, situate learning materials within specific contexts, and develop linkages across lectures, readings and discussions. You will get the most out of lectures if you **read the assigned required reading before coming to class.**

- **Tip:** Taking notes that succinctly summarize your required reading on a week-by-week basis is a great practice to adopt. Not only will it help you to absorb what you are reading and get the most out of lectures, it will also save you considerable time (and stress!) when preparing for the final exam.

It is your responsibility to attend lectures and not to schedule other activities during scheduled lecture times. Although your instructor will post some of her lectures notes on MyLearningSpace, these are not a substitute for attending lectures in person. **If you miss a lecture due to illness or some other extenuating circumstance, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from a fellow student.** It will be very difficult to succeed in this course if you don't attend lectures regularly.

Lecture Outline:

Week 1: Introduction to Canadian Politics and Government (Sept 13)

- Textbook: “Chapter 1 – Canada’s Regime Principles”
- Reserve Reading: Alex Marland and Jared J. Wesley, “Ch 1: Canadian Politics” (pp. 1-33) in *Inside Canadian Politics* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2016)
- **Note:** The Op-Ed Assignment will be explained in class tonight

Week 2: The Constitution (Sept 20)

- Textbook: “Chapter 2 – The Constitution”
- Reserve Reading: Christopher Cochrane, Kelly Blidook and Rand Dyck, “Ch 17: The Canadian Constitution and Constitutional Change” (pp. 393-420) in *Canadian Politics: Critical Approaches, 8th ed* (Toronto: Nelson Education, 2017)

Week 3: Responsible Government (Sept 27))

- Textbook: “Chapter 3 – Responsible Government”
- **Note:** Op-Ed #1 due today by 4:00pm

Week 4: Federalism (Oct 4)

- Textbook: “Chapter 4 – Federalism”
- Reserve Reading: Guy Lachapelle and Stephane Paquin, “Ch 3 – The Myth of the Compact Theory: The Quebec challenge to the National Vision of Canadians” (pp. 40-58) in Joan Grace & Byron Sheldrick (eds), *Canadian Politics: Democracy and Dissent* (Toronto: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006)

--- Thanksgiving & Fall Reading Week (no classes October 10-14) ---

Week 5: The Executive Branch or Government (Oct 18)

- Textbook: “Chapter 6 – The Crown and Its Servants”

Week 6: The Legislative Branch of Government (Oct 25)

- Textbook: “Chapter 7 – Parliament”

Week 7: The Judicial Branch of Government (Nov 1)

- Textbook: “Chapter 8 – The Judiciary”
- **Note:** Op-Ed #2 due today by 4:00pm

Week 8: The Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Nov 8)

- Textbook: “Chapter 5 – The Charter of Rights and Freedoms”
- Reserve Reading: Robert Martin and Philip Bryden, “Issue #4: Is the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms Antidemocratic?” (pp. 94-107) in Mark Charlton and Paul Barker (eds), *Crosscurrents: Contemporary Political Issues*, 7th ed (Toronto: Nelson Education, 2013)

Week 9: Elections (Nov 15)

- Textbook: “Chapter 9 – Elections”
- Watch the “Billy Ballot” video at <http://www.citizensassembly.gov.on.ca/en-CA/The%20Classroom/Billy%20Ballot.html>

Week 10: **Political Parties** (Nov 22)

- Textbook: Chapter 10 – “Political Parties”
- Reserve Reading: William Cross and Lisa Young (2008), “Factors Influencing the Decision of the Young Politically Engaged to Join a Political Party: An Investigation of the Canadian Case”, *Party Politics* (14:3), 345-369.
- **Note:** Op-Ed #3 due today by 4:00pm

Week 11: **Public Policy** (Nov 29)

- Textbook: “Chapter 11 – Public Policy”

Week 12: **Course Wrap-Up and Exam Review** (Dec 6)

On behalf of WLUSU (www.wlusu.com)

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.