

PSCI 2003B
Canadian Political Institutions
Monday 2:35-4:25
Please confirm location on Carleton Central

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This course explores the major constitutional, political, judicial and bureaucratic institutions of Canada. It rests on the theme of “living institutions” – that institutions are more than just fixed rules and structures. They evolve over time, and shape our political choices and outcomes. To understand Canadian politics and political change, it is essential to understand how political institutions work and particularly how they form and shape us as much as we shape them. It is particularly important to understand the relationships between indigenous nations and Canadian political institutions and the gendered and racialized aspects of these institutions. The course is not an extensive formal study of rules and procedures. It does not necessarily defend nor argue for the reform of any particular institution, and strives to avoid any particular partisan or ideological viewpoint.

Text:

Christopher Cochrane, Kelly Blidook and Rand Dyck, *Canadian Politics: Critical Approaches* (8th edition) (Toronto: Nelson, 2016)

Grading:

Attendance and Participation	10%
Assignment #1 (Due February 4)	15%
Assignment #2 (Due March 25)	35%
Final Exam	40%

Attendance and Participation: Discussion groups will begin on January 14. These groups offer students the chance to engage further with each other and with the class material in a small setting. Students are expected to attend all discussion groups and to participate regularly, although *quality* of participation is more important than *quantity*. Students unable to attend a discussion group should inform their TA beforehand.

Final Exam: The final exam will be during the regular exam period at the end of term. Complete information on the format and review materials will be given in the latter part of the term.

Assignment #1: Due February 4

Read these two recent essays on the relationship between Canada and indigenous nations:

Robert Shepherd and Pamela McCurry, "Ottawa Must Talk To Canadians About Nation-To-Nation Agenda" *Policy Options* (October 2018) <http://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/october-2018/ottawa-must-talk-to-canadians-about-nation-to-nation-agenda/>

David Perley and Ian Peach, "Ottawa Should Abandon Flawed Indigenous Rights Framework" *Policy Options* (October 2018) <http://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/november-2018/ottawa-should-abandon-flawed-indigenous-rights-framework/>

In about 500 words answer the following questions:

1. What is each essay saying about the Trudeau government's approach to indigenous rights? To what extent does each essay support the government's approach?
2. What does each essay identify as the most important challenge or challenges toward reconciliation between Canada and indigenous peoples?
3. To what extent do the essays *agree* or roughly say the same thing? In what ways do they differ? Ultimately are they generally in agreement, or disagreement? And do you find one essay more persuasive than another?

The assignment may be structured as a single integrated response, or organized as individual responses to the three overall questions. Assignments will be evaluated based on:

- clear answers to the above questions
- display of a strong grasp of the specific arguments and points in each essay
- general understanding of the complexities of indigenous-Canadian relations

Responses are due February 4. Assignments not received by the deadline may receive a zero at the discretion of the instructor.

Assignment #2: Due March 25

Choose one of the following

Option 1 - Electoral Reform

Should Canada change its electoral system? In an essay of about 1500 words, argue either that Canada should retain its single-member plurality system, or that it should change to another

specific system. The essay should also discuss the 2016 federal electoral reform initiative and other recent provincial initiatives.

Useful starting sources for this assignment include:

Samara Canada with Stewart Prest, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Electoral Reform" <https://www.samaracanada.com/samara-in-the-classroom/electoral-reform>

Patrice Dutil, "Why Trudeau Abandoned Electoral Reform" <https://reviewcanada.ca/magazine/2017/05/why-trudeau-abandoned-electoral-reform/>

A large collection of short essays by experts: <http://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/june-2016/electoral-reform/>

Option 2 - Women in Parliament

Why do women comprise less than 30% of the House of Commons? In an essay of about 1500 words, analyze why the number of women MPs is at this level, and argue either that specific measures are needed to increase the number of women MPs, or that no specific measures are needed at this time. The essay must analyze trends in women's representation in the House since the 1990s, address whether Parliament is a hostile environment for many women, and clearly define "specific measures."

Useful starting sources for this assignment include:

Brenda O'Neill, "Unpacking Gender's Role in Political Representation in Canada" *Canadian Parliamentary Review* 38:2 (2015) <http://www.revparl.ca/english/issue.asp?param=223&art=1643>

Amanda Bittner and Melanee Thomas, "Moms in Politics: Work is Work" *Canadian Parliamentary Review* 40:3 (2017) http://www.revparl.ca/40/3/40n3e_17_Thomasbittner.pdf

Cheryl Collier and Tracey Raney, "Canada's Member-to-Member Code of Conduct on Sexual Harassment in the House of Commons: Progress or Regress?" *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 51:4 (December 2018) 795-815 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000842391800032X>

For both options, while it is important to conduct good additional research for this paper beyond the above, the focus is on the *quality of the arguments* more than extensive research.

Assignments will be graded on the following criteria:

- a clear thesis statement responding to the assigned option and requirements
- a strong grasp of the general topic (electoral reform or women in Parliament)
- appropriate sources and engaging use of these sources
- appreciation of and engagement with key counterarguments
- a clear grounding in theoretical and longstanding ideas about political institutions, while also appropriately engaging with recent trends and events
- the general organization and coherence of the paper
- spelling and grammar

Political science does not have a uniform citation style. Any established academic citation style is acceptable.

Papers are due on March 25 by the beginning of class. Late papers will lose one-third of a letter grade per day (i.e., from B+ to B), including weekends, unless valid reasons are presented.

Topics and Schedule:

Slides for the lectures will be posted on cuLearn before class. The slides are to structure and enhance the lectures. They will not serve as adequate class notes.

The textbook is your friend. Review it before and after class to ensure you are familiar with the concepts under discussion, and to further understand concepts covered in the lectures.

	Topic	Chapter from “Canadian Politics: Critical Approaches”
Jan 7	Introduction	
Jan 14	Historical Foundations	Chapter 2 – “Institutional Foundations”
Jan 21	Indigenous Peoples and Canadian Political Institutions	Chapter 4, “Aboriginal Peoples”
Jan 28	The Constitution and Constitutional Reform	Chapter 17 – “The Constitution and Constitutional Change”

Feb 4	Federalism	Chapter 18 “The Federal System”
Feb 11	The Judiciary and the Charter of Rights	Chapter 19 “The Charter of Rights and Freedoms”; Chapter 24 “The Judiciary”
Feb 18	Winter Break – no class	
Feb 25	Elections and Electoral Systems	Chapter 13 “Elections and the Electoral System”
Mar 4	Political Parties	Chapter 14 “Political Parties and the Party System”
Mar 11	Parliament	Chapter 23 “Parliament”
Mar 18	Executive	Chapter 21 “The Executive: Crown, PM and Cabinet”
Mar 25	Public Policy and Administration	Chapter 22 “The Bureaucracy”
Apr 1	Final Class and Review	