

POLM 5905C – Special Topics in Political Management

Winter 2026

Political Management and Provincial Politics

Course Description

Provincial governments and politics play an important role in the overall Canadian political landscape. Upcoming elections in several provinces will have a significant impact on the implementation of the federal government's agenda and on other provinces. This course will provide an overview of the current state of provincial governments and politics, the key issues facing the provinces and their impact on federal politics, and the changing nature of political staffing and management in provincial politics.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students should be able to:

- Think critically about political management in the context of provincial politics
- Effectively evaluate and debate political approaches to provincial political issues
- Understand the interplay between federal and provincial governments and parties
- Understand the dynamics amongst provincial governments
- Effectively evaluate and debate political developments in provincial politics
- Work professionally and collaboratively with colleagues

Texts

Students are not required to purchase textbooks or other learning materials for the course.

Course Schedule

Week 1 – Introduction and overview, course syllabus, expectations

Week 2 – Executive Federalism, division of powers, Federal government approaches to provinces, jurisdictional disputes, Cabinet government

Week 3 – Critical analysis of current status and recent developments in Newfoundland and Labrador, and Prince Edward Island

Week 4 – Critical analysis of current status and recent developments in the North (Yukon, NWT, Nunavut)

Week 5 – Critical analysis of current status and recent developments in Ontario

Week 6 – Critical analysis of current status and recent developments in Manitoba

Week 7 – Winter Break Week – no class

Week 8 – Critical analysis of current status and recent developments in Saskatchewan

Week 9 – Critical analysis of current status and recent developments in Quebec

Week 10 – Critical analysis of current status and recent developments in British Columbia

Week 11 – Critical analysis of current status and recent developments in Alberta

Week 12 – Critical analysis of current status and recent developments in Nova Scotia

Week 13 – Critical analysis of current status and recent developments in New Brunswick

This schedule is the plan but it is subject to change if some topics require more discussion and others less. There may be guest speakers from time to time and that may require some changes in the planned schedule. Students are expected to read a political analysis article, watch or listen to a political panel, or listen to a podcast episode relevant to the course each week and be prepared to discuss political developments.

Assignments and Grading

Students will be evaluated based on class participation, written assignments, and small group presentations.

Class participation – 25%

3 written assignments – 45% (15% each)

In-class presentation – 30%

Each written assignment is worth 15% of the final grade and they should be no more than 2 double spaced pages in length. Written assignments will be submitted electronically on Brightspace, via e-mail, or in hard copy to the instructor. Carleton's grading system is outlined in the Graduate Calendar.

For the written assignments choose 3 of these topics or suggest another to me.

1. Write a political briefing note to a Premier or Opposition Leader of your choice on an important provincial issue. Possibilities include emergency supports, health funding, interprovincial trade, tariff related supports, energy policy, Indigenous reconciliation issues, climate policy, equalization, etc.
2. Choose a reading/article/podcast and describe what you learned and what you want to learn more about.
3. Analyze a Leaders' Debate for the impact on a province of your choice.
4. Prepare an Issues Management plan on any difficult issue such as a court ruling, a mileage and expenses problem, sole source contracts, infrastructure decisions, labour disruption, surgical waiting lists, etc.
5. Prepare an Opposition Research plan on an issue of your choice such as severance payments, expenses, harassment, inappropriate social media posts, public health compliance, etc.
6. Prepare speaking notes for an elected official (Premier, party leader) to a membership meeting, convention, stakeholder group, etc.
7. Prepare a lobby plan for government, opposition, or a stakeholder organization on an issue of your choice such as cannabis, liquor privatization, trade, digital companies, public land use, arts infrastructure, arena development, new highways, etc.
8. Prepare a post-election transition plan for any party in any province.
9. Prepare a disaster management communications plan for any provincial emergency such as flooding, wildfires, hurricanes, power failures, etc.

Class participation grades require consistent attendance and engagement with the class discussion without dominating.

The composition of groups for the group presentation assignment will be assigned in class. The presentations can be on any of the written assignment topics or another topic relevant to provincial politics. Your group will research a topic, present it to the class, and lead a class discussion on it. The presentation will be approximately 30 minutes followed by approximately 30 minutes of questions and class discussion.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.