POLS/SOCI 234 SU17

Introduction to Canadian Government and Politics

May 1 – June 19, 2017

Co-requisites or Pre-requisites: None

Semester Hours: 3 sem. hrs.

Location: **TBA**

Dates: May 1 – June 19, 2017

Instructor: Tyler Chamberlain, Ph.D. (cand.)

Contact Information: [tyler.chamberlain@twu.ca](mailto:tyler.chamberlain@twu.ca)

Office Hours: By appointment in Upper RNT 207

Course Description:

Provides the student with an overview of the Canadian system of government in a comparative approach that includes study of British, American, and Canadian political and government institutions and practices. It offers a comparative study of how basic concepts, principles, and institutions associated with different expressions of liberal democratic governments highlight the diversity of political experience, reveal the interdependence of political systems, and show the uniqueness of Canada’s political system. Particular attention is given to the manner in which Canada’s Parliament attempts to facilitate and develop public policy that reflects the diverse interests and aspirations of its citizens.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Knowledge and its application (Reflective Practice/Attention)

After taking POLS 234 students…

a. gain an in-depth understanding of comparative democratic political systems

b. are equipped to make insightful and inclusive analysis on the relationships within political systems and between political systems.

c. recognize that even a little knowledge carries great responsibility.

2. Cognitive Complexity (Wisdom)

After taking POLS 234 students…

a. respond with wisdom, humility and compassion to questions, issues, and problems related to the liberal arts. Politics is recognized as the arena in which decision about who gets what, when and how much.

b. critically evaluate political theories, practices and issues, in a broad historical, philosophical, social, legal and cultural context.

c. demonstrate information literacy, the ability to communicate effectively, think creatively and critically, and can use and collect qualitative and quantitative data to inform their practice.

d. articulate the inherent lure of political power with grace and humility.

3. Inter and Intra personal Wellness (Peace and Well-being)

While political studies students do not directly study personal wellness, the class simulation requires them to recognize that the decisions of political agents contribute to the health of a nation’s citizens…

a. understanding the importance of good policy development and implementation for both the physical and mental health of all citizens.

4. Spiritual Formation (Reverence in humility)

Students taking POLS 234…

a. develop a deep and personal understanding of how faith and political practice intersect.

b. recognize that learning begins with wonder, curiosity and a search for truth, beauty and goodness, and is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential and relational (revealed through community, reciprocal relationships, the arts, play, story and a sacred understanding of place and life).

5. Social and Global Responsibility (Compassion/Care)

Students enrolled in POLS 234…

a. become acquainted with the complexity of long term solutions to contemporary international problems. Governments cannot rush into action without a plan.

b. use culturally sensitive practices and are committed to social justice within the context of a diverse, yet potentially cohesive, pluricultural global society.

c. make personal and encourage community decisions that encourage respect for the environment and its sustainable use and care.

6. Leadership (Humility/Joy)

Students in POLS 234…

a. gain training through role playing as provincial decision makers.

b. understand the ethical nature of their role as citizen leaders and recognize that they ought to be servant leaders in their political communities.

c. understand and value the involvement and support of citizens from all walks of life, from all ethnic and national backgrounds for sound, well-developed policies which serve the public good.

d. endeavor to serve community they are a part of in responsible, other-centered actions.

Required Texts and Materials:

Malcolmson, Patrick, Richard Myers, Gerald Baier, and Thomas M.J. Bateman (2016), *The Canadian Regime: An Introduction to Parliamentary Government in Canada*, 6th edition. University of Toronto Press.

Russell, Peter (2008), *Two Cheers for Minority Government: The Evolution of Canadian Parliamentary Democracy*. Emond Montgomery Publications.

POLS 234 Coursepack.

Recommended Readings and Resources:

[www.nationalnewswatch.com](http://www.nationalnewswatch.com) (Canadian news aggregator, non-partisan)

[www.parl.gc.ca](http://www.parl.gc.ca) (Official website of Parliament)

<https://www.cardus.ca/> (Cardus – think-tank)

<http://www.cpj.ca/> (Citizens for Public Justice – think-tank)

<http://www.broadbentinstitute.ca/> (Broadbent Institute – think-tank)

<https://www.fraserinstitute.org/> (Fraser Institute – think-tank)

<https://www.cdhowe.org/> (C.D. Howe Institute – think-tank)

Ignatieff, Michael (2013). *Fire and Ashes: Success and Failure in Politics*. Harvard University Press.

Rathgeber, Brent (2014). *Irresponsible Government: The Decline of Parliamentary Government in Canada*. Dundurn.

Savoie, Donald (2010). *Power: Where Is It?* McGill-Queen’s University Press.

Savoie, Donald (2015). *What is Government Good At? A Canadian Answer*. McGill-Queen’s University Press.

Whittington, Michael, and Glen William, eds. (2004). *Canadian Politics in the 21st Century*, 6th edition. Nelson.

Wiseman, Nelson (2007). *In Search of Canadian Political Culture*. UBC Press.

Course Activities/Requirements:

1. **Reading of all the assigned texts and online forum discussions.**

You are required to carefully read all of the assigned articles and chapters. Every week I will post some discussion questions on in Mycourses forum. You must answer both questions, based on your reading of the assigned sections. There is no strict word count requirement for these answers, but something in the range of 250-400 words per question should be the goal. The idea is to substantively engage with and do some real thinking about these issues. After giving your answers, you must interact with other students’ responses. You are required to respond to at least 1 other answer, though you are of course encouraged to interact with more.

1. **Book Review – Due Midnight, May 29 (on Mycourses)**

You will write a **6-7 page** book review of *Two Cheers for Minority Government*. This book makes an interesting (and controversial) set of claims about Canada’s political institutions. Many Canadians feel (and rightly so) that their government isn’t truly representative of them or responsive to their interests. Russell attempts to place the blame for government’s unaccountability on some central facts about our parliamentary democracy.

Your review must explain, in your own words, the nature of the problem that Russell is addressing and what he thinks must be done in order to address the problem. Finally, you must provide your own response to his claims.

A few things to keep in mind for book reviews:

* What is important to the author must be important to you. I.E. you should focus your discussion on what the author/s seem to think are the most important parts of their argument. Do not focus on side issues or off-hand remarks.
* What is the main message the author seeks to communicate? How persuasively does he communicate it?
* Is there anything you would have liked to see the author take into account?

1. **Argumentative Essay – Due Midnight, June 19 (on Mycourses)**

**8-10 pages in length.** A strong argumentative essay must clearly state a thesis and provide a coherent argument for it. You will be graded on the difficulty and contentiousness of your thesis (i.e. “justice is good” is fairly obvious and easy to argue, whereas “an unelected senate is unjust” is contested and more difficult to argue) as well as the strength and cogency of your argument. There is no set minimum number of secondary sources, **although some engagement with scholarly literature is required.** You must consult and engage with scholarly sources representing at least 2 perspectives on your topic. The point of this assignment isn’t to read numerous books and compile footnotes, but to think deeply and profoundly about a particular issue, and formulate a cogent argument about it. It is better to use fewer sources and thoughtfully engage with their arguments than to pad your bibliography with superfluous quotes.

**Possible Essay Topics:**

* Should voting be mandatory?
* Does the Prime Minister have too much power?
* Has the Charter of Rights and Freedoms been the cause of more harm than good?
* Should Canada adopt a different electoral system? Which one?
* What effects will electoral reform have on Canadian politics? Are these desirable or undesirable?
* In the Canadian context, is freedom or equality the most important political principle?
* Should representation in parliament and/or cabinet mirror Canada’s social diversity?
* Is a vote for one of Canada’s minor parties a wasted vote?
* What is one change that you think will improve Canadian parliamentary democracy?

Students are welcome to use any of these topics. Other topics can be used with the permission of the professor. Let me know if you are having difficulty getting started. I am happy to help provide direction and guidance as you begin your research.

**5. Final Exam**

The final exam will contain multiple choice questions, short answer, and essay questions. It will be administered via Mycourses, and will be open book. There will be a time limit enforced by Mycourses, however, so I suggest you study before beginning the exam so you do not need to rely on the textbooks for every answer.

The Final can be taken at your convenience anytime from June 19 – 23.

You will be graded according to the following criteria: understanding of the readings and issues, grammar/clarity/spelling/etc., and the insightfulness of your evaluation of the key themes. Assignments must be properly formatted: size 12 font, double spaced, 1 inch margins.

Late assignment policy:

Late assignments will be accepted, but 1 grade step (i.e. from A to A-, or C+ to C) will be deducted each week until the paper is handed in. The only exceptions will be for health/family/etc. emergencies if proper proof is provided.

Proposed Course Outline:

**Week 1: May 1 – May 7**

Topic: The Principles of the Canadian Regime

Reading: *The Canadian Regime*, ch. 1 & 2

Constitution Act, 1867 (Appendix in *The Canadian Regime*)

**Week 2: May 8 – May 14**

Topic: Responsible Government

Reading: *The Canadian Regime*, ch. 3

Coursepack, ch. 6

Watch video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9VR33QY8AvU>

**Week 3: May 15 – May 21**

Topic: Federalism

Reading: *The Canadian Regime*, ch. 4

Pierre Trudeau, “The Reason Behind Federalism” (on Mycourses)

**Week 4: May 22 – May 28**

Topic: The Executive and Legislative Branches

Reading: *The Canadian Regime*, ch. 6 & 7

Coursepack, ch. 7

**Week 5: May 29 – June 4**

Topic: The Judiciary and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Reading: *The Canadian Regime*, ch. 5 & 8

Constitution Act, 1982 (Appendix in *The Canadian Regime*)

**Book Review Due**

**Week 6: June 5 – June 11**

Topic: Political Parties and Elections

Reading: *The Canadian Regime*, ch. 9 & 10

Coursepack, ch. 8 & 9

Samara Report on Electoral Reform: [www.samaracanada.com/docs/default-source/Reports/electoral-reform-report.pdf?sfvrsn=4](http://www.samaracanada.com/docs/default-source/Reports/electoral-reform-report.pdf?sfvrsn=4)

**Week 7: June 12 – June 18**

Topic: Ideology and Public Policy

Reading: *The Canadian Regime*, ch. 11

Coursepack, ch. 10 & 11

**Week 8: June 19 - end**

Reading: None. Study for final exam.

**Argumentative Essay Due**

Evaluation:

The final grade will be determined by the satisfactory completion of all requirements.

Forum participation 25%

Book Review 20%

Argumentative Essay 25%

Final Exam 30%

**Total 100%**

**University Standard Grading System**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Letter Grade | Percentage | Grade Point |
| A+ | 90-100 | 4.3 |
| A | 85-89 | 4.0 |
| A- | 80-84 | 3.7 |
| B+ | 77-79 | 3.3 |
| B | 73-76 | 3.0 |
| B- | 70-72 | 2.7 |
| C+ | 67-69 | 2.3 |
| C | 63-66 | 2.0 |
| C- | 60-62 | 1.7 |
| D+ | 57-59 | 1.3 |
| D | 53-56 | 1.0 |
| D- | 50-52 | 0.7 |
| F | Below 50 | 0 |

Policies:

**Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism at TWU**

As Christian scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire TWU community. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship at TWU. This includes, but is not limited to, avoiding all forms of plagiarism and cheating in scholarly work. TWU has a strict policy on plagiarism (see academic calendar). Learning what constitutes plagiarism and avoiding it is the student's responsibility. An excellent resource describing plagiarism and how to avoid it has been prepared by TWU Librarian William Badke and is freely available for download (PPT file) or used as flash (self running) tutorials of varying lengths from:  
   
<http://acts.twu.ca/library/plagiarism.ppt>

<http://acts.twu.ca/library/Plagiarism.swf> (14 minute flash tutorial) <http://acts.twu.ca/library/Plagiarism_Short.swf> (8 minute flash tutorial)

**Campus Closure and Class Cancellation Policy**

In the event of extreme weather conditions or other emergency situations, please consider the website the primary source of information, along with the TWU bulletin line 604.513.2147. The University will communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to the following radio stations: CKNW (980 AM), CKWX (1130 AM), STAR FM (107.1 FM), PRAISE (106.5 FM) and KARI (550 AM). Should there be conflicting reports regarding campus closures, the TWU website and bulletin line are to be considered correct.

The first announcement regarding status of campus is made at 6:30 am and covers the period up to 1:00 p.m. The second announcement will be made at 11 am and will cover afternoon classes. Students and faculty should assume that all night classes will continue to operate. If the emergency continues into the evening, students and faculty may check for a class cancellation notice on the University's weather bulletin line or the website after 3:00 p.m. that day.

If this specific class must be cancelled for any other reason, the instructor will communicate this in advance. In the case of an unexpected cancellation, a sign will be posted on the classroom door.