

Canadian Studies/Political Science 345

“Canadian Politics”

Spring 2009

TU-TH 2-3:20pm
Eagles
118 Baldy Hall
Office Hrs. –TU and WED 10am-12pm
or by arrangement

Munroe
835 Clemens Hall
645-8440
eagles@buffalo.edu

The Course:

This course introduces you to the politics and government of America’s ‘neighbor to the north’. As the US’s largest trading partner, the Canadian political experience holds special relevance for students of political science in America. The countries share many similarities (both are advanced capitalist economies, liberal democracies with federal regimes, etc.) but equally there are important differences. Most notably, Canada’s colonial experience with Britain is much different than that of America. It did not overthrow the British parliamentary tradition through revolution as did the US, but it has modified the British model by adopting a written constitution, a bill of rights, and a federal structure. For these reasons, Canadian politics offers a fascinating point of comparison with our American political experience.

We will be fortunate in having Hon. Gilbert Parent, former Member of Parliament (MP) and Speaker of the Canadian House of Commons, visit our class during the semester to give us an insider’s view on the operation of Canada’s parliamentary system. In addition, there are several voluntary extra-curricular activities that I would like to encourage all interested students to participate in. First, I would encourage you to consider taking part in this year’s “Crossing Borders” student conference to be held at Brock University, St. Catharine’s, Ontario, on March 26-27th, 2009 (see http://www.canadianstudies.buffalo.edu/crossing_borders/). Undergraduate and graduate students from Western New York and Southern Ontario will present papers at this meeting. Presenting your research in this forum is an excellent way to add an international conference paper presentation to your resumé. I have structured the research paper deadlines in such a way as to enable/encourage you to take part in this excellent annual conference. Secondly, if there is sufficient interest, I would be happy to organize a voluntary day-long field-trip to Toronto where we could visit Queen’s Park, the parliamentary assembly of Canada’s largest province, Ontario. I believe that this would help bring the operation of Canada’s parliamentary system to life, as well as give you some brief exposure to one of Canada’s – and arguably the world’s – most multicultural cities.

One final note. As Director of our newly-created Canadian Studies Academic Program, I have accepted some obligations (2 conference presentations and a site review of a program in Canadian Studies at another university) that will make it necessary for me to cancel several classes this semester. I regret this but hope that the activities that I will undertake will help strengthen UB’s position as a leader in the field of Canadian Studies.

Readings:

There is one required textbook for this course, but there will be several supplementary readings made available to you on UB Learns.

James P. Bickerton and Alain-G. Gagnon, eds., *Canadian Politics*, 4th ed., Peterborough, ON:

Broadview Press, 2004 pbk.

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to be regular in their class attendance. Exams are closed book and will be scheduled during regular class meetings. Final grades will be assigned according to your performance on the following 3 items:

- a) Mid-term examination - Thursday, February 26th
- b) Final examination - last class – Thursday, April 22nd
- c) Research Essay (10-15 pgs) (30%) – Proposal due February 10th
Final Papers due in class March 19th

Readings/Topics:

1. **Historical and Cultural Foundations of Canadian Politics (approximately 2 weeks)**
John Helliwell, "Canada: Life Beyond the Looking Glass," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 15, 1 (Winter 2001): 107-124 (UB LEARNS).
Bickerton & Gagnon, Chpts1-4
2. **The Evolving Canadian Constitution: Federalism and Charter Politics (approximately 2 weeks)**
Bickerton & Gagnon, Chpts. 5, 6, 10 and 11
3. **The Structures of Canadian Government: Parliament, Executive, and Bureaucracy (approximately 2 weeks)**
Bickerton & Gagnon, Chpts. 7, 8, 9,

Recommended:
Herman Bakvis, "Prime Minister and Cabinet in Canada: An Autocracy in Need of Reform?" *Journal of Canadian Studies* v.35 (4) January, 2001 pg 60-79 (UB LEARNS)
4. **Linking Government and Society: Parties, Elections, and Pressure Groups (approximately 3 wks)**
Bickerton & Gagnon, Chpts. 12-16
5. **Issues in Canadian Political Life (approximately 3 weeks)**
Bickerton & Gagnon, Chpts. 18-22

Research Essay – Important Notes:

While this assignment will be discussed in more detail during a class meeting early in the semester, there are three specific requirements to note.

- 1) All papers must have a title that ends with a "?". Your essay should clearly, concisely, and persuasively answer the question your title poses.
- 2) All topics related to Canadian politics or Canadian-American relations, or a comparative study of Canada and the US, will be acceptable for this research essay requirement.
- 3) All papers must demonstrate independent research beyond the required reading, and they should be fully documented by footnotes and bibliographic references. While internet sources may be appropriate to include, they are NOT sufficient. All students should consult academic (scholarly) journals and

books (see me if you have any doubt whatsoever about this requirement). Please see me in my office early in the semester if you'd like to discuss a topic, or if you'd like some suggestions.

- 4) **All work is subject to the University's policies on academic integrity.** For UB's policy, see <http://vpue.buffalo.edu/docs/documents.php>. Any and all violations will be treated severely.