

Canadian Studies/Political Science 345
“Introducing Canadian Politics”
Spring 2017

Tu & Th 2:00PM - 3:20PM
O’Brian 112
Office Hrs. –WED 10-12; 1-3pm
or by arrangement

Munroe Eagles
1013 Clemens
645-8440
eagles@buffalo.edu

The Course:

“Knowledge of Canada or the United States is the best way to gain insight into the other North American country. Nations can be understood only in comparative perspective. And the more similar the units being compared, the more possible it should be to isolate the factors responsible for the differences between them. Looking intensively at Canada and the United States sheds light on both of them.”

Seymour Martin Lipset, Continental Divide, (1990): xiii

This course introduces students 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 – and we will be making frequent and explicit comparisons across the shared border throughout the semester. No prior familiarity with Canada is presupposed.

Learning Objectives:

Students will learn about the leading alternative to our own Presidential system of government by appreciating how the British parliamentary system has been adapted to the Canadian reality. Frequent comparisons with the US system will help students understand and appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of each political system. These objectives will be delivered through lectures and readings and student performance will be assessed using a two non-cumulative in-class examinations. We will also discuss the required readings in class, so students will have an opportunity to formulate and present oral arguments in a small class setting. In addition, students will be given an opportunity to explore a topic of particular interest to them by preparing a research essay as described below (10-15 pgs. double-space). Students who wish to present their research paper at the “Crossing Borders” student conference to be held March 17th (opening reception) and 18th (paper panels) at Niagara University will have the opportunity of earning an additional 10% in extra credit points. Presenting a paper at an international conference is also a terrific learning experience makes an excellent addition to your resume.

Readings:

Required text: James Bickerton & Alain-G. Gagnon, eds., *Canadian Politics*, 6th edition, University of Toronto Higher Education Division, 2014. (Paperback) Please note that this book is substantially different from earlier versions of the text, so it will be important for you to obtain the 6th edition.

Requirements:

Students are expected to be regular in their class attendance and to participate in all in-class debates. Final grades will be assigned according to your performance on the following tasks:

- a) First Examination – 30% - Multiple choice and short answer – Thursday March 16th
- b) Second Examination – 30% - Multiple choice and short answer – Thursday, May 11th
- c) Research essay – 40% - Due April 20th in class
- d) Optional extra credit - 10% – “Crossing Borders Student Conference, Niagara University, March 17-18th, 2017. For those students who are interested, you can up to 10% in extra credit (and add a significant item to your resume) by presenting your research paper at this conference. More details will be given in class.

Paper Topics:

For your research essays, I ask that you develop a paper that essentially makes an argument for a political reform, policy change, or institutional reform in Canada based on the US experience, or in the US based on the Canadian experience. Your paper will, therefore, be an exercise in drawing lessons for one of the two countries based on the experience of the other country. Doing this kind of analysis is, of course, one of the possible uses for the study of comparative politics more generally. I will upload a couple documents that will help you think about this. If you would like some concrete suggestions, please see me ASAP.

Readings/Topics: (all readings are required)

1. **Historical, Geographic, and Cultural Foundations of Canadian Politics**

S.M. Lipset, “Historical Traditions and National Characteristics: A Comparative Analysis of Canada and the United States,” *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 11, 2 Summer 1986: 133-155. (available under “Course Documents” on our UB Learns class website)

Nick Baxter-Moore et al., “Explaining Canada-US Differences in Attitudes Toward Crime & Justice: An Empirical Test of S.M. Lipset’s Account,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* (2017).

2. **The Evolving Canadian Constitution: Federalism and Charter Politics**

Bickerton & Gagnon, Chapters 3-6

3. **The Structures of Canadian Government: Parliament, Executive, Bureaucracy & Judiciary**

Bickerton & Gagnon, Chapters 7-10

4. **Canada’s Political Culture**

Bickerton & Gagnon, Chapters 1-2, 11

5. **Linking Government and Society: Parties, Elections, and Pressure Groups***

Bickerton & Gagnon, Chapters 15-18

6. **Canada in a Transnational World**

Bickerton & Gagnon, Chapters 19-21

Academic Integrity

The instructor will strictly enforce the University's policies with respect to academic integrity. A full discussion of these policies can be found at <http://academicintegrity.buffalo.edu/>. As a UB student, you are expected to be familiar with these policies and to fully adhere to them.

Final Grades

Final letter grades will be determined using the following conversion from percentage grades:

A 86% and up; A- 80-85%; B+ 77-79%; B 74-76%; B- 70-73%; C+ 67-69%; C 64-66%;
C- 60-63%; D+ 57-59%; D 54-56%; D- 50-53%; F < 50%