

POL214: Canadian Government

Section: L5101

Date/Time: Thursday, 6-8PM

Location: LM 162

Instructor: Prof. Eric Merkley

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Office: Room 3121, Sidney Smith Hall

Office Hours: 1:30-2:30 M and by appointment

1. Overview and Objectives

This course provides an introduction to the study of Canadian Politics, its historical foundations, institutions, and political processes. We will cover a range of topics, such as the constitutional foundations of Confederation, institutional structures (cabinet, parliament, the judiciary), political culture, and the behavior of elites and citizens. Over the course of the term students will engage with important debates in Canadian politics such as the centralization of power in the Prime Minister's office, federal decentralization, indigenous politics, multiculturalism, and the judicialization of Canadian politics.

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

- Describe the formal and informal features of Canadian politics, including the constitution, the three branches of government, elections and political parties, and Canadian political culture.
- Understand core theoretical concepts of political science, including power, collective action-problems, media effects, group identity, and partisanship, and apply them to phenomena in Canadian politics.
- Evaluate critical questions in Canadian politics, and develop and communicate evidence-based arguments through written composition.

2. Course Format

Your attendance at lectures is mandatory. In lecture you will be regularly asked quiz-style and discussion questions that require a response via TopHat. Your participation in these in-class question-and-answer and structured discussion sessions is the foundation of your class participation. Each in-person lecture will also include group activities that reinforce the material covered. Participation in these activities will also be graded.

In this class I will use different online tools to:

- Provide content (readings, lecture slides, assignments) – Quercus
- Participate in class and complete quizzes – TopHat
- Submit assignments – Quercus/Turnitin

2.1 Lecture and Tutorial Delivery Mode

This section of POL 214 is taught primarily in-person. However, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Science has committed to a transition period with online instruction for the first two weeks of the fall term. As a result of this commitment, the first three lectures will be taught in an online-synchronous manner using Zoom, while the remainder of lectures will be taught in-person. This is marked in the course calendar below. Note that tutorials will be taught either in-person or online depending on the section, but the first two “in-person” tutorials will also be taught online.

3. Required Texts and Materials:

- Brooks, Stephen. 2017. *Canadian Democracy* (Updated 9th Edition). Oxford University Press Canada
- **Readings available electronically.** As listed below in the detailed syllabus, required readings for the course are electronically available on the course website (see section below on the Course Website). It is your responsibility to download all readings from the appropriate location.
- **Course webpage and emails.** There is a course webpage on Quercus. I will use this page to post important course documents (readings, syllabus, lecture slides, etc.), post announcements and send emails to you throughout the term. Lecture slides will be posted after each class. I will also post Zoom links on Quercus for online-synchronous lectures. It is your responsibility to regularly check Quercus for updates.

4. Grading and Assessed Coursework

Assignment	Date/Due Date	Percentage of Overall Grade
Lecture Participation (TopHat/Activities)	All lectures	10%
Pop Quizzes	Any lecture	10%
Tutorial Participation	All tutorials	10%
Response Paper (X2)	Before lecture on assigned day	20% (10% each)
Research Outline	October 21st (11:59pm)	5%
Research Essay	December 2nd (11:59pm)	25%
Final Exam	TBA	20%

4.1 Final Exam (20%)

There is only one (final) exam. This exam will test you on all the material covered in the lectures, activities, and readings. The date and time of the final exam are to be set by the Registrar and will be released later in the term.

4.2 Class Participation (10%)

We will be using **Top Hat Pro** (www.tophat.com) for class participation. In all lectures you will be asked to answer questions using Top Hat. Part of your participation mark will depend on your engagement with these questions. Your mark does not depend on whether you get the answers right. The questions are exercises to provoke discussion and learning. However, to get credit for participation at a given lecture, you must be present at the lecture and input responses to all questions using your own device (Apple or Android smartphones and tablets, laptops, or through text message). If this is logistically a problem, contact me immediately. For instructions on how to create a Top Hat account and enrol in our Top Hat Pro course, please refer to the invitation sent to your school email address or consult Top Hat's [Getting Started Guide](#).

If you already have a Top Hat account, go to <https://app.tophat.com/login> to be taken directly to our course. If you are new to Top Hat, follow the link in the email invitation you received or...

- Go to <https://app.tophat.com/register/student>
- Click "Search by school" and input the name of our school
- Search for our course with the following join code: 368331

If a paid subscription is required, it will be listed at checkout when you enrol in our Top Hat Pro course. Should you require assistance with Top Hat at any time please contact their Support Team directly by way of email (support@tophat.com), the in-app support button, or by calling 1-888-663-5491. Specific user information may be required by their technical support team when troubleshooting issues.

In addition to questions and structured discussion via TopHat, most class meetings dedicate some time to practical exercises, for which you will be working with your peers in small groups. You will be asked to discuss specific questions with your group, share your answers with the class, and submit your responses via Quercus's collaboration tool.

Participation in quiz-style questions via TopHat will constitute 5% of your grade. Participation in structured discussion via TopHat and in group activities via Quercus will constitute another 5% of your grade.

4.3 Pop Quizzes (10%)

You will be asked to periodically complete very short, surprise closed-book quizzes throughout the course of the term covering material in the course. These quizzes will be submitted via TopHat.

4.4 Tutorial Participation (10%)

Tutorials are an essential component to the course. Your TA will help you understand the material, prepare for the tests, and write good essays. Note that tutorial participation is marked on a cumulative basis throughout the entire year. You will receive 5% of your grade based on attendance and 5% based on the quality and quantity of your participation. When preparing for the tutorial, you should work on developing strategic reading practices. For example, ask yourself the following questions when you are reading:

- Do I understand the basic terms and concepts used by the author? *Keep a list of difficult concepts and bring it to the tutorial group.*
- What is the central point or argument that the author is trying to make? *Write out in a couple of sentences what you think the main point of the reading was (and keep this to study later).*
- How has the author organized his or her argument? What are the major themes? *Note the logical steps in the author's argument. Do these make sense? Are they supported by persuasive evidence?*
- How does the reading relate to other course material? *Do the authors say anything new or are they just repeating conventional wisdom? Do they help prove or counter points made in another week's readings?*

You should also continually self-reflect on your participation in tutorial. Ask yourself the following questions after each tutorial meeting:

- Did I initiate discussion? Did I provide some information when it was needed?
- Did I give or ask for some positive or negative opinions or reactions?
- Did I disagree with someone I thought was wrong?
- Did I try to restate what someone else had said to ensure I understood?
- Did I give examples or ask for others to provide examples when they were needed?
- Did I try or ask others to synthesize or summarize a part of the discussion?

Your TA will keep a formal attendance record. If you are concerned that the TA has failed to record your name properly, the time to bring this to his/her attention is **now**, not weeks later or at the end of term. Do not show up at the end of a tutorial and expect the TA to give you credit for attendance.

If you missed a tutorial for what you believe is a legitimate reason (such as a documented medical or family issue), bring this to the attention of the TA as soon as possible. We reserve the right to determine what is a legitimate reason for missing a tutorial. The medical/family excuse policy is designed to support students who encounter an unexpected problem once the term is underway, which causes them to miss the occasional tutorial.

However, if you have a chronic problem which causes you to miss tutorials consistently, week in and week out, your tutorial mark will suffer. Remember: your tutorial mark is a combination of attendance and participation. If you do not attend, you cannot participate. Students who do not attend are missing their opportunity to improve their participation mark. Please do not come to me weeks after a tutorial was held and claim the TA failed to record you as present. We cannot adjudicate questions about attendance or what may or may not have happened in a tutorial weeks after the event. Please do not come to me at the end of term and request an opportunity to do make-up work to compensate retroactively for missed tutorials. There is no provision for students to do extra work or assignments to make up for missed tutorials or low grades in tutorials. This policy applies to all students.

Students often attempt to switch between tutorial time-slots to accommodate changes in their personal schedule after the term is underway. You do so at your own peril. It is very difficult for the TA to keep track of students who do not stay in the time-slot to which they have been assigned. If you do for some reason wish to switch tutorial time-slots in mid-term, the onus is on you to make sure the TA formally notes this.

4.5 Response Paper (10% X 2)

You will write **two** response papers in reaction to assigned, *non-textbook* readings from *sections II to IV of the course* that are **no longer than two pages and in a proper essay format**. You cannot complete two papers based on readings on the same section of the course (i.e. Structures, Society, and Political Participation). These papers will *briefly* summarize the readings by identifying the main arguments of each. They should then draw out their implications for the theory and practice of Canadian politics. You will be graded for the quality of the summary and analysis, along with the clarity and succinctness of the writing. Marks will be deducted if students exceed the page limit. They are due on Quercus before lecture (6pm) for a given week's reading. Late papers **will not** be accepted without prior accommodation.

4.6 Research Outline (5%)

You will choose a topic provided by the instructor on Quercus for your research paper. You will write an outline for this paper to assist you in developing an evidence-based argument on the topic you selected. This outline (between 600 and 900 words) should cover your thesis statement, major arguments and topic sentences, and initial evidence in support for your arguments. The outline can consist of detailed bullet points, but evidence **must** be properly sourced. The outline is due on Quercus at 11:59PM on October 21st. It will be graded pass or fail. The main purpose of this task is to provide feedback for your research essay. Late outlines will be accepted for the purpose of providing feedback, but they will be assigned a zero unless prior accommodation has been made.

4.7 Research Essay (25%)

You will write an 1800-2400 word, properly sourced, research essay that further develops the argument from the research outline that takes into account feedback. The essay is due on December 2nd at 11:59pm.

Detailed instructions will be given and posted on Quercus. This assignment is worth 25% of your mark for the course. Extensions on deadlines will be given for documented emergencies only. Without documentation, late essays will be penalized 5 points out of 100 per day, including weekends. An example of the grading criteria can be found in the back of the syllabus.

5. Course Schedule and Readings

Section I. Foundations

Topic 1 (September 9/ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS) - Course Structure, Requirements, Objectives and Introduction

Readings:

- Course Syllabus

Topic 2 (September 9/ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS) – The Constitution

Readings:

- Brooks Ch. 6
- Peter H. Russell. “Constitution.” *Oxford Handbook of Canadian Politics*. John C. Courtney and David E. Smith, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Ch. 2.

Section II. Structures

Topic 3 (September 16/ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS) - Federalism

Readings:

- Brooks Ch. 8
- Herman Bakvis. “Federalism and Universal Healthcare: A Question of Performance and Effectiveness.” Herman Bakvis and Grace Skogstad, eds. *Canadian Federalism: Performance, Effectiveness, and Legitimacy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Ch. 12.

Topic 4 (September 23/ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS) – The Judiciary & the Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Readings:

- Brooks Ch. 9 (p. 260-265) & Ch. 7
- Miriam Smith. “Ghosts of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council: Group Politics and Charter Litigation in Canadian Political Science.” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 35(1): 3-29
AND/OR F. L. Morton and Rainer Knopff. *The Charter Revolution and the Court Party*. Peterborough: Broadview Press, Ch. 1 “Introduction”.

Topic 5 (September 30/IN-PERSON) – The Executive Branch

Readings:

- Brooks Ch. 9 (remainder) & Ch. 10
- Donald J. Savoie. “The Rise of Court Government in Canada.” *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 32(4): 635-664.

Topic 6 (October 7/IN-PERSON) – Parliament and the Bureaucracy

Readings:

- Brooks Ch. 9 (remainder) & Ch. 10
- Jennifer Smith. “Democracy and the Canadian House of Commons at the Millennium” Canadian Public Administration 1999.” *Canadian Public Administration* 42(4): 398-421.
AND/OR

- Jonathan Malloy. “The ‘Responsible Government Approach’ and its Effect on Canadian Legislative Studies.” *Parliamentary Perspectives*, No. 5. Ottawa: Canadian Study of Parliament Group.

Section III. Society

Topic 7 (October 14/IN-PERSON) – Multiculturalism and Diversity

Readings:

- Brooks Ch. 4
- Randy Besco and Erin Tolley. “Does Everyone Cheer? The Politics of Immigration and Multiculturalism in Canada.” *Federalism and the Welfare State in a Multicultural World*. Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant, Richard Johnston, Will Kymlicka, and John Myles, eds. Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, Ch. 12.

Topic 8 (October 21/IN-PERSON) – Regionalism and Language

Readings:

- Brooks Ch. 5 & 14
- Charles Taylor. “The Stakes of Constitutional Reform.” *Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism*. Charles Taylor, ed. Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, Ch. 7. **AND/OR** Loleen Berdahl and Roger Gibbins. *Looking West: Regional Transformation and the Future of Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Ch. 1 “The West Outside In.”

Topic 9 (October 28/IN-PERSON) – Indigenous Politics

Readings:

- Brooks Ch. 16
- Alan Cairns. *Citizens Plus: Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian State*. Vancouver: UBC Press, Ch. 3 “The Choice.”

Section IV. Political Participation

Topic 10 (November 4/IN-PERSON) – Parties & Elections

Readings:

- Brooks Ch. 11
- Leslie Seidel. “Public Funding of Political Parties: The Case for Further Reform.” *Money, Politics, and Democracy: Canada’s Party Finance Reforms*. Lisa Young and Harold J. Jansen, eds. Vancouver: UBC Press, Ch. 3. **AND/OR** R. Kenneth Carty and William Cross. “Political Parties and the Practice of Brokerage Politics.” *Oxford Handbook of Canadian Politics*. John C. Courtney and David E. Smith, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Ch. 11.

Fall Reading Week: No class on November 11

Topic 11 (November 18/IN-PERSON) – Media

Readings:

- Brooks Ch. 13
- Erin Tolley. *Framed: Media and the Coverage of Race in Canadian Politics*. Vancouver: UBC Press, Ch. 1. “Understanding Racial Mediatization.”

No Class November 25

Topic 12 (December 2/IN-PERSON) – Interest Groups/Review

- Brooks Ch. 12

6. Course Policies

6.1 Contacting Course Instructor

Your first point of contact in the course is your TA. I strongly recommend asking substantive questions about course content and requirements in their scheduled office hours. Email should be reserved strictly for time sensitive questions or quick points of clarification. We will try to respond within 24 hours, but emails received during the weekend will be answered on Monday and we will not respond to emails on the due date of an assignment. If further assistance is needed, then you should attend my scheduled office hours or set an appointment with me through email.

6.2 Possible Changes to the Syllabus

I reserve the right to make adjustments to the course syllabus depending on evolving COVID-19 policies set by the University of Toronto. I will give notice to students in the event of any changes, and amended syllabi will be posted on Quercus.

6.3 Re-grading

If you'd like anything re-graded, you must prepare a single-page memo outlining your case for re-grading. The memo needs to be serious and specific. I will then re-examine a particular item. Know, however, that a given grade can either increase or decrease.

6.4 Personal Electronics

Please put away your cellphones during in-person class. You should also try to take notes by hand in this course. That way, you process the information, instead of just [copying everything down verbatim](#). It will also make the studying environment more productive for yourself and your fellow students. Further, lecture slides will be made available on Quercus. There is little use in copying everything you see word-for-word.

6.5 Missing Class and Late Assignments

Attendance and participation is required at all class sessions due to the intensive nature of this course. Late short assignments **will not be accepted** except in the event of a documented serious illness or serious personal emergency (see section on Accommodation below). Late final papers will be penalized 5 points out of 100 per day, including weekends, except in the event of a documented

serious illness or serious personal emergency (see section on Accommodation below). Missed examinations will result in a grade of zero except in the event of a documented illness or emergency.

6.6 Accommodation for Emergency Situations

Students who need additional time for an assignment or will miss a lecture, tutorial, or exam for a medical or serious personal reason must contact me **before** the due date or exam/lecture/tutorial date and as soon as the problem arises. All requests for accommodation must be made to the professor directly, in writing, via email.

Some documentation will usually be required to make accommodation. For the 2021-22 year, students who are absent from academic participation for any reason (e.g., COVID, cold, flu and other illness or injury, family situation) and who require consideration for missed academic work are to record their absence through the ACORN online absence declaration. Please note that accommodations will not be made for foreseeable circumstances, such as having multiple papers due in the same week. Accommodations are reserved for unforeseeable events that are outside a student's control (e.g., illness, a death in the family).

Requests for accommodation **made on or after an assignment's due date, or after the missed exam or lecture will not be considered.** Due date extensions will not usually be granted for work lost due to computer crashes or the loss of a computer file. There are simple and free ways of regularly and automatically backing up your work. Students are strongly advised to backup copies of their essays and assignments before submitting via Quercus. These backups should be kept until the marked assignments have been returned.

6.7 Other Accommodations

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible.

The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the University's courses and programs.

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the [Accessibility Services office](#).

The University provides reasonable accommodation of the needs of students who observe religious holy days other than those already accommodated by ordinary scheduling and statutory holidays. Students have a responsibility to alert members of the teaching staff in a timely fashion to upcoming religious observances and anticipated absences and instructors will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, examinations or other compulsory activities at these times. Please reach out to me as early as possible to communicate any anticipated absences related to religious observances, and to discuss any possible related implications for course work.

6.8 Equity and Harassment

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

6.9 Academic Integrity and Responsibility

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The [University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor in all relevant courses
- Making up sources or facts
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment

On tests and exams:

- Using or possessing unauthorized aids
- Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test
- Misrepresenting your identity

In academic work:

- Falsifying institutional documents or grades
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, please reach out to me. Note that you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from me or from other institutional resources (for example, the [University of Toronto website on Academic Integrity](#)).

6.10 Plagiarism Detection

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database,

where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>)

Marking Descriptors

The following marking criteria for coursework, exams and dissertations, have been established as guides about what is normally expected of work receiving a particular grade.

A+

An answer that fulfills all of the criteria for 'A' (see below) and in addition shows an exceptional degree of insight and independent thought, together with flair in tackling issues, and is outstanding in terms of scholarship and originality.

A

An authoritative answer that provides a fully effective response to the question. It should show a command of the literature and an ability to integrate that literature and go beyond it. The analysis should achieve a high level of quality early on and sustain it through to the conclusion. Sources should be used accurately and concisely to inform the answer but not dominate it. There should be a sense of a critical and committed argument, mindful of other interpretations but not afraid to question them. Presentation and the use of English should be commensurate with the quality of the content.

A-

A sharply-focused answer of high intellectual quality, which adopts a comprehensive approach to the question and maintains a sophisticated level of analysis throughout. It should show a willingness to engage critically with the literature and move beyond it, using the sources creatively to arrive at its own independent conclusions.

B-, B, B+

A very good answer that shows qualities beyond the merely routine or acceptable. The question and the sources should be addressed directly and fully. The work of other authors should be presented critically. Effective use should be made of the whole range of the literature. There should be no significant errors of fact or interpretation.

The answer should proceed coherently to a convincing conclusion. The quality of the writing and presentation (especially referencing) should be without major blemish.

Within this range a particularly strong answer will be graded B+; a more limited answer will be graded B-.

C-, C, C+

A satisfactory answer with elements of the routine and predictable. It should be generally accurate and firmly based in the reading. It may draw upon a restricted range of sources but should not just re-state one particular source. Other authors should be presented accurately, if rather descriptively. The materials included should be relevant, and there should be evidence of basic understanding of the topic in question. Factual errors and misunderstandings of concepts and authors may occasionally be present but should not be a dominant impression. The quality of writing, referencing

and presentation should be acceptable. Within this range a stronger answer will be graded C+; a weaker answer will be graded C-.

D

A passable answer which understands the question, displays some academic learning and refers to relevant literature. The answer should be intelligible and in general factually accurate, but may well have deficiencies such as restricted use of sources or academic argument, over-reliance on lecture notes, poor expression, and irrelevancies to the question asked. The general impression may be of a rather poor effort, with weaknesses in conception or execution. It might also be the right mark for a short answer that at least referred to the main points of the issue. Within this range a stronger answer will be graded D+; a bare pass will be graded D-.

F

An answer with evident weaknesses of understanding but conveying the sense that with a fuller argument or factual basis it might have achieved a pass. It might also be a short and fragmentary answer with merit in what is presented but containing serious gaps.

Serious Failures

30-40 An answer showing seriously inadequate knowledge of the subject, with little awareness of the relevant issues or literature, major omissions or inaccuracies, and pedestrian use of inadequate sources.

20-30 An answer that falls far short of a passable level by some combination of short length, irrelevance, lack of intelligibility, factual inaccuracy and lack of acquaintance with reading or academic concepts.

0-20 An answer without any academic merit which usually conveys little sense that the course has been followed or of the basic skills of essay-writing.

Student:	
Essay Question:	
Mark:	

Criteria	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Addresses question?					
Shows wide ranging basic knowledge and grasp of contents?					
Develops a logical and effective pattern of argument?					
Supports argument with evidence where relevant?					
Is well and correctly referenced?					
Is clear and well-written?					
Effectively addressed instructor feedback?					

Penalty for being late or over-long?