

Introduction to Canadian Government POLS 2070

Course Syllabus

Contacting your instructor

For information on contacting your instructor as well as other important information from your instructor see the Instructor Letter link in your course website.

Course description

The *Undergraduate Calendar* of the University of Manitoba describes POLS 2070 as follows:

A survey of the Canadian political institutions and processes including contemporary Canadian federalism, the parliamentary system, political parties and interest groups. Students may not hold credit for POLS 2070 (or 019.207) and any of: POLS 2071 (or 019.207) or the former 019.156.

The comprehensive list of topics to be covered is intended to increase your understanding of Canadian government and politics, as well as of the nature of democratic politics in general. As a country Canada has its unique attributes, but the democratic basis of our government and politics is something we share with a number of other countries.

Course objectives

This course introduces you to four areas of Canadian politics: Canada's people, its governmental and political institutions, processes, and outputs. The main governmental institutions (both federal and provincial) will be discussed, along with the characteristics of the policy process. And, since no political system can be understood in isolation from its historical development, you will also be encouraged to refresh your knowledge of Canadian history as one of the means of understanding the institutions, policies, and people in this country.

The formal goals of this course are to:

- help you understand the structure, processes, and operation of the Canadian system of government and politics;
- place Canada in context as a member of the “democratic family”; and
- help you understand the roots and origins of current issues.

Course materials

Required

Bookstore

The following required materials are available for purchase from the [University of Manitoba Bookstore](#). Please order your materials immediately, if you have not already done so. See your [Distance and Online Education Student Handbook](#) for instructions on how to order your materials.

Textbooks

Jackson, Robert, and Doreen Jackson. *Politics in Canada: Culture, Institutions, Behaviour and Public Policy*. 7th ed. Prentice Hall, Pearson Education in Canada, 2009.

Whittington, Michael, and Glen Williams, eds. *Canadian Politics in the 21st Century*. 7th ed. Nelson Thomson Learning, 2008.

Recommended

If you wish to pursue a particular topic that interests you, the following books may be consulted. The course textbook also includes extensive bibliographies at the end of every chapter.

Textbooks

Bickerton, James, and Alain Gagnon. *Canadian Politics*. 4th ed., Broadview Press.

Campbell, Colin, and William Christian. *Parties, Leaders, and Ideologies in Canada*. McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1996.

Dyck, Rand. *Canadian Politics: Critical Approaches*, 6th ed., Nelson, 2011.

Everitt, Joanne, and Brenda O'Neill. *Citizen Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2001.

Guy, John J. *How We Are Governed*, 5th ed. Harcourt Brace, 2001.

Whittington, Michael S., and Richard Van Loon. *Canadian Government and Politics*. McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1995.

Course overview

The following brief description covers the various units of study:

Unit 1 The Historical Context of Contemporary Canadian Government Politics

The major aspects of Canadian history that have contributed to the development of the country.

Unit 2 Canadian Political Culture

The principal ways in which political scientists and others have studied the phenomenon, and the dominant attitudes that Canadians as a group have towards the political institutions, processes, and values of the country.

Unit 3 Political Socialization

The process by which people (adults as well as children) learn their underlying attitudes about politics and the political/governmental system.

Unit 4 The Canadian Constitution

Selected issues involved in an examination of this vital aspect of the governmental framework; democratic government, the Constitution, its repatriation, the Governor General, and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Unit 5 Federalism in Canada

The drift of authority away from the original conception of a strong national government, the Constitutional framework, and the context of federalism within democratic theory.

Unit 6 The Executive: Prime Minister and Cabinet

Two of the key institutions of Canadian government and politics and how they function within the increasing scope of government power and responsibility.

Unit 7 The Legislature: Parliament

How this institution of popular control performs its lawmaking function and provides checks on the possible abuse of power by the executive branch of the government, Parliamentary committees, parties, the Senate, etc.

Unit 8 The Electoral Process and Voting Behaviour

The major elements of the electoral process, the voting system, voter eligibility, constituencies, candidates, and voting decisions.

Unit 9 Political Parties

The functions of parties, typologies and dimensions of parties, and their organizational structures.

Unit 10 Interest Groups

How these vehicles of public participation function in the political process.

Unit 11 The Public Service and Policymaking

How the administration of public policy works through government departments; as well as a discussion of different models of public policy.

Unit organization

In general, each unit is organized as follows:

Introduction: Opening comments designed to prepare you for your textbook readings, along with the highlights and dominant themes of the instructional content.

Learning objectives: a complex statement of what you are expected to accomplish or be able to demonstrate upon completion of the unit.

Assigned reading: the relevant textbook and other readings.

Reflection questions: additional issues beyond those raised in the learning objectives. Some of these are simply factual questions, others are intellectual exercises requiring some independent thought.

How to proceed: recommendations on how you could work through the unit.

Instructional content: an extended commentary on the topic under consideration, with themes to watch for in the readings.

Before proceeding you should devise a comprehensive plan for your course of study. Survey the whole course content quickly, noting the placement and due dates of the assignments. Then turn to the assigned readings and instructional content for each unit.

Evaluation and grading

You should acquaint yourself with the University's policy on plagiarism, cheating, and examination impersonation as detailed in the General Academic Regulations and Policy section of the *University of Manitoba Undergraduate Calendar*. Note: These policies are also located in your *Distance and Online Education Student Handbook* or you may refer to Student Affairs at <http://www.umanitoba.ca/student>.

General guidelines

To meet the course requirements you must complete the following:

- Four assignments, spaced to follow units 3, 5, 8, and 11. Assignment topics and instructions are provided in a separate assignment package, which is located on the course website. Your four assignments are worth 60% of your final grade.
- A three-hour final examination that will cover the whole course, held, depending on your section, in either April or July. A sample final exam is provided in the course website. The final exam is worth 40% of your final grade.

A word of caution about the assignments and the final examination

Some students find that they do very well on the assignments, but they do not do nearly as well on the final examination. While your grades on the assignments will give you some idea of how well you are mastering the material, they may not indicate how well you will do on the examination, because the examination is written under very different circumstances. Because the assignments are open book, they do not require the amount of memorization that a closed-book examination requires nor are they limited to a specific time period. Some students have told us that, based on the high marks they received on the assignments, they were overconfident and underestimated the time and effort needed to prepare for the final examination.

Please keep all this in mind as you prepare for the examination. If your course has a sample exam or practice questions, use them to practice for the examination by setting a time limit and not having any books available. Pay careful attention to the description of the type of questions that will be on your final

examination. Preparing for multiple choice questions involves a different type of studying than preparing for essay questions. Don't underestimate the stress involved in writing a time-limited examination.

Note: An Essay Guide is found in the course website.

Distribution of marks

Assignment	Percent
1	15%
2	15%
3	15%
4	15%
Final examination	<u>40%</u>
Total	100%

Assignment due dates

Assignment	Sept.-April	Jan.-July
1	October 24	February 24
2	November 30	March 31
3	February 7	May 7
4	March 15	June 15

Note: If the assignment due date falls during the Mid-term Break in February, it will be due on the Monday following the Mid-term Break. If you are unable to submit an assignment on time, contact your instructor well in advance of the due date, for we cannot guarantee that the instructor will accept late assignments.

Review the guidelines on assignment due dates in the *Student Handbook*.

Grading scale

Letter grade	Percentage range	Description
A+	90 – 100	Exceptional
A	80 – 89	Excellent
B+	75 – 79	Very good
B	70 – 74	Good
C+	65 – 69	Satisfactory
C	60 – 64	Adequate
D	50 – 59	Marginal
F	less than 50	Failure

Examination

The final exam will be written at the University of Manitoba (UM), Fort Garry campus or at an approved off-campus location. **Students needing to write at an off-campus location must declare a location by the specified deadline date** (see off-campus declaration and policy under Student Resources on course homepage). **Students writing at the UM Fort Garry campus do not need to declare an exam location.**

The Registrar's Office is responsible for the [final exam schedules](#) which is available approximately one month after the start of the course.

Plagiarism, cheating, and examination impersonation

You should acquaint yourself with the University's policy on plagiarism, cheating, and examination impersonation as detailed in the General Academic Regulations and Policy section of the University of Manitoba *Undergraduate Calendar*.

Sample

Distance and Online Education (DE) Student Resources

In your course website there are links for the following:

- Contact Distance and Online Education Staff
- Distance and Online Student Handbook
- Distance and Online Education Website

Acknowledgments

Content specialist:

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Dr. Geoff Lambert was born in England in 1945. He went to school there and graduated with a B.A. Honours degree in Economics and Political Science at Manchester University. In 1966 he went to the United States, intending to “look around for a couple of years.” Actually, he stayed for four years, getting an M.A. and Ph.D. in Political Science at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis.

In 1970 he moved to Canada, where he first taught at the University of New Brunswick. He came to Manitoba in 1971. Apart from a year in Hong Kong and one in Toronto, he has been at the University of Manitoba ever since.

He says, “I did not teach Canadian Government at first. It was a field I wandered into out of fascination and because it is important. Then I got hooked. This is a remarkable country with a remarkable political system. I still have a sense of wonder about it. I hope that students in this course will come to share some of my excitement about that ‘world of wonders’ as they journey through the course.”

Dr. Lambert has won two awards for excellence in teaching, as well as awards for community service. He has published numerous articles and has served on a number of government boards and commissions. His biography has appeared in *Canadian Who's Who* since 1992.

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