

Instructor: Mohammad Ehsan
Class Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:35-9:55 am
Class Room: LSC-Common Area C240
Office: Room 365, Henry Hicks Building
E-mail: mehsan@dal.ca
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:00-11:00 am, or by appointment

1. Prerequisites

An introductory Political Science course, or instructor approval.

2. Course and Learning Objectives

Course Synopsis:

This class provides an introduction to the institutions and actors at work in Canadian parliamentary politics and governance, and analyzes the dynamics between them. Though it is designed to meet the needs of students in the Political Science Department, students from related programs who seek greater understanding of parliamentary government in Canada are also welcome. The class introduces participants to various aspects of Canadian parliamentary government as well as to those relevant issues that affect the day to day functioning of the system. Topics range from ‘responsible government’ to ‘the Canadian public service’ to ‘the electoral system.’

This course focuses on many intriguing questions that we, as students of political science, need to explore for better understanding of the Canadian parliamentary government. For instance, Canadian government is dominated by prime ministers and premiers. Why is this concentration of power at both the federal and provincial levels of government? Are Members of Parliament who are not in the Cabinet really ‘nobodies’ as one recent Prime Minister characterized them? Are Cabinets themselves becoming no more than “focus groups?” Do unelected partisan aides and public service advisors have more influence than the vast majority of elected representatives? Are political parties irrelevant as vehicles for citizen engagement? Are interest groups or social movements any more relevant? Do elections matter? Are the media merely the political instruments of the business elites? These are among the issues that are examined in this class in an attempt to understand the most critical factors that shape the structuring of power in contemporary Canadian government.

Learning Objectives:

It is expected that participants of POLI 2220 will:

- Understand and be able to identify the key institutions and actors involved in the governance of the Canadian parliamentary democracy;
- Comprehend the critical challenges and appreciate the alternative reforms that are fundamental to the improvement of the system;

- Be able to integrate and apply these concepts to specific situations for increased understanding through explanation and analysis.

3. Textbook

The text assigned for this course is a custom made one especially produced for POLI 2220 from the University of Toronto Press Custom Publishing. It is available at DAL Bookstore.

Other required readings are outlined in the “Session-wise Required Readings.” Some of the readings are available online, in library as well as in BbL course site. Going through the optional readings would also help. Two readings per student group presentation are also mandatory for all but would be provided separately before the presentation schedule. The instructor may suggest extra readings if necessary.

4. Method of Evaluation and Grading Thresholds

The requirements of this course are an in-class midterm test, a critical review paper, student group presentation, and the final examination during the formal exam period. Attending the classes and actively participating in it are also expected.

Midterm Class Test

This in-class midterm test will cover all the course materials covered until the study break period including in-class student presentation. Make-up examination is not possible.

Critical Review Paper

The nature of this assignment is a critical review of a journal article. From a list of articles, which will be provided on the first week, each participant is going to choose an article. The expected length of the paper is 8-10 pages. It is expected that the submission will consult other articles, cite sources used and include bibliography. The submissions must be in proper grammatical form, double-spaced with 12-point font. There is no prescribed format for the review. However, no more than one-fourth of your paper should be the summarization of the article’s main assertions. Devote the remainder of the review essay to critical analysis. Consult the ‘Guide to Writing Papers’ available in BLS course site. Submit your paper electronically to ‘safe-assign’ on BLS course site before midnight February 11. Do not forget to hand in hard copies of your paper on February 11 class. Late submissions will be subject to a 3% penalty per day, including Saturdays and Sundays.

Group Presentation

Depending on the final number of students registered in the course, students are going to be divided into groups for in-class presentation on a topic. The list of topics will be provided in the first week of class.

Final Exam

The final exam will be scheduled during the formal examination period to evaluate your grasp of the course materials. It will cover all the materials included in the course.

Participation

Participation is expected in this class and students are encouraged to raise relevant questions. Further to the lectures by the instructor, group presentations would provide the rest of the students to participate in the class. The emphasis on participation should also require little explanation. Students are expected to come to class having read and be prepared to discuss class topics. Sharing your ideas enriches both your learning experience, and that of others who exchange ideas with you. It is expected that every student in the class will make a contribution in class to each of the thematic areas of the course. Respecting others’ views and not interfering and/or dominating the discussion is

also part of the rules of game. Quality of participation is always preferred than quantity. Good ideas and faithful participation will be rewarded, not least when it comes to writing the examination! The distribution of grades will be as follows.

Assignment	Class Attendance - Participation	Group Presentation	Critical Review Paper	Midterm Class Test	Final Exam
Due Date	Throughout	Throughout	Feb 11	Feb 27	Exam Period
Weight (%)	15 (5+10)	10	20	20	35

The final evaluation that the participants receive in this course will be submitted as a letter grade. Dalhousie University employs the following interpretative grading scale:

Grades	Numeric Range	GPA	Norm-Referenced
A+	90-100	4.30	Excellent
A	85-89	4.00	
A-	80-84	3.70	
B+	77-79	3.30	Good
B	73-76	3.00	
B-	70-72	2.70	
C+	65-69	2.30	Satisfactory
C	60-64	2.00	
C-	55-59	1.70	
D	50-54	1.00	Marginal Pass
F	<50	0.00	Inadequate

5. Drop Dates

February 3 (last day to drop without a “W”) and March 10 (last day to drop with a “W”).

6. Ground Rules

A number of simple rules will make POLI 2220 a good learning environment for all. *First*, it’s important to listen while others are talking, and that includes the instructor. Class participants who fail to extend this courtesy can expect to be called out on it. *Second*, laptop use for class purposes will be allowed, but use of laptops for browsing, gaming, messaging and the like during class will not be tolerated. *Third*, portable music devices e.g., iPod, and cell phone use is prohibited. *Fourth*, absence from class will result in decreased participation marks. Absence with permission will have no impact on participation marks.

7. POLI 2220 Sessions

The schedule of sessions is as follows:

Sessions
<i>Introduction</i>
<i>Politics and Government in Canada</i>
<i>Responsible Government</i>
<i>Constitutional Politics</i>
<i>The Dynamics of Canadian Federalism</i>

<i>The Crown</i>
<i>Reforming the Senate</i>
<i>Parliamentary Democracy and the Prime Minister</i>
<i>The Opposition Today</i>
<i>The Judiciary plus the Charter</i>
<i>Public Administration</i>
<i>Few other important topics are covered through student group presentation</i>

8. Session-wise Required Readings

FIRST SESSION:

Introduction, Course Overview and expectations

Eugene A. Forsey (2012), *How Canadians Govern Themselves*, 8th Edition, Ottawa: Library of Parliament.

Munroe Eagles and Sharon A. Manna (2013), “Politics and Government” in Mark Kasoff and Patcik James (eds.), *Canadian Studies in the New Millennium*, 2nd Edition, Toronto: UTP (Custom Text).

SECOND SESSION:

Responsible Government in Canada’s Parliament

Peter Aucoin *et.al.* (2011), “Responsible Government: Theory and Practice” and “Conclusion: Reforming Responsible Government,” in Peter Aucoin *et. al.* (eds.) *Democratizing the Constitution: Reforming Responsible Government*, Toronto: Emond Montgomery Publications. (Available at Killam)

Peter Aucoin, Jennifer Smith and Geoff Dinsdale (2004), *Responsible Government: Clarifying Essentials, Dispelling Myths and Exploring Change*, Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Management Development. (Optional)

THIRD SESSION:

Canadian Constitutional Politics

Roger Gibbins (2009), “Constitutional Politics” in James Bickerton and Alain-G. Gagnon (eds.), *Canadian Politics*, 5th Edition, Toronto: UTP (Custom Text).

Dodek, Adam (2013), “A Short History of the Canadian Constitution,” in *The Canadian Constitution*, Toronto: Dundurn Press. (Optional)

FOURTH SESSION:

Canadian Federalism

Richard Simeon and Ian Robinson (2009), “The Dynamics of Canadian Federalism” in James Bickerton and Alain-G. Gagnon (eds.), *Canadian Politics*, 5th Edition, Toronto: UTP (Custom Text).

David E. Smith (2010), “Parliamentary Federalism” in *Federalism and the Constitution of Canada*, Toronto: UTP (Custom Text).

FIFTH SESSION:

The Crown/ Governor General’s Power

David E. Smith (2013), “The Monarchical Idea” in *The Invisible Crown: The First Principle of Canadian Government*, Toronto: UTP (Custom Text).

Patrick J. Monahan (2012), “The Constitutional Role of the Governor General,” in Jennifer Smith and D. Michael Jackson (eds.), *The Evolving Canadian Crown*, Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, pp. 73-85. (BbL)

Serge Joyal (2012), “The Crown and Prime Ministerial Government or the Slow Withering of the Monarchical Institution,” in Jennifer Smith and D. Michael Jackson (eds.), *The Evolving Canadian Crown*, Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, pp. 219-237. (BbL)

SIXTH SESSION:

Senate Reform

David E. Smith (2003), “The Canadian Senate: What Is to Be Done?” in *The Canadian Senate in Bicameral Perspective*, Toronto: UTP (Custom Text).

Bruce M. Hicks and Andre Blais (2008), “Restructuring the Canadian Senate through Elections,” *IRPP Choices*, 14:15, November 2008. (BbL)

Jennifer Smith (2013), *Abolishing the Senate: the NDP’s bad idea*, Quebec: The Federal Idea. (BbL)

SEVENTH SESSION:

Parliamentary Democracy and the Prime Minister

David E. Smith (2007), “The State of the Commons” in *The People’s House of Commons: Theories of Democracy in Contention*, Toronto: UTP (Custom Text).

David E. Smith (2007), “Parliamentary Democracy” in *The People’s House of Commons: Theories of Democracy in Contention*, Toronto: UTP (Custom Text).

Donald J. Savoie (2009), “Power at the Apex: Executive Dominance” in James Bickerton and Alain-G. Gagnon (eds.), *Canadian Politics*, 5th Edition, Toronto: UTP (Custom Text).

EIGHTH SESSION:

The Opposition Today

David E. Smith (2013), “Opposition: Somebody has to do it” in *Across the Aisle: Opposition in Canadian Politics*, Toronto: UTP (Custom Text).

David E. Smith (2013), "Opposition, More or Less" in *Across the Aisle: Opposition in Canadian Politics*, Toronto: UTP (Custom Text).

David E. Smith (2013), "The Problem of Parliamentary Opposition Today" in *Across the Aisle: Opposition in Canadian Politics*, Toronto: UTP (Custom Text).

NINTH SESSION:

The Judiciary plus the Charter

Raymond Bazowski (2009), "The Judiciary and the Charter," in James Bickerton and Alain-G. Gagnon (eds.), *Canadian Politics*, 5th Edition, Toronto: UTP (Custom Text).

Emmett Macfarlane (2013), "The Court in Government and Society: Dialogue, Public Opinion, and the Media," and "Conclusion" in *Governing from the Bench: The Supreme Court of Canada and the Judicial Role*, Vancouver: UBC Press. (Optional)

TENTH SESSION:

Public Administration in Canada

David Johnson (2011), "Institutions of Governance" in *Thinking Government: Public Administration and Politics in Canada*, 3rd Edition, Toronto: UTP (Custom Text).

Michael M. Atkinson *et al.* (2013), "Provincial Administrative Institutions" in *Governance and Public Policy in Canada: A View from the Provinces*, Toronto: UTP (Custom Text)

Donald J. Savoie (2011), "Steering from the Centre: The Canadian Way" in Carl Dahlstrom *et al.* (eds.), *Steering From the Centre: Strengthening Political Control in Western Democracies*, Toronto: UTP (Custom Text).

9. Miscellaneous

There are a number of administrative items of which students need to keep themselves apprized, among them the following:

- Plagiarism. The website of the Department of Political Science has an account of the university's policy, as does the website of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Plagiarism is a very serious academic offence.
- The university's policies and procedures on accessibility for students with disabilities and learning disabilities can be found in the academic calendar.