

**Governing Institutions
School of Policy Studies
Queen's University
Fall 2018/Winter 2019**

Professor: Dr. Lori Turnbull

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Course synopsis

This course offers a critical analysis of the major institutions that shape politics and governance in Canada, including: the House of Commons; the Senate; the electoral system; the Prime Minister and Cabinet; the public service; and the evolving media. Each weekend that we meet, we focus on a particular institution by delving into its inner workings as well as the proposals for its reform. Special attention will be paid to the shifting power dynamics among institutions and actors and the implications of these power relationships for the integrity of democracy.

The course will draw on the current and relevant literature in political science and public administration, and will also incorporate media reports, opinion pieces, and think tank publications. At the end of the course, students should feel able to offer critical commentary on the state of political institutions in Canada and the potential implications of their reform.

Readings

All readings are available online for free.

Assignments

1. Group presentations on readings: 20%

****Groups of 3-4 people present for roughly 15 minutes on the main points of the readings, with attention to points of constructive criticism and discussion questions for the class. Please see schedule below for group presentation dates.**

2. Term papers: 50% (one paper per term, each worth 25%)

Paper 1: Should we pursue electoral reform at the federal level in Canada? Why/not?

Paper 2: How would you explain the relationship between political parties and voters in Canada and its contribution to democracy in Canada? What are their main avenues of communication? How have social media and digital technology affected this relationship?

****Each paper should be 10-12 pages (double spaced), using 12 point font. Please email your paper to lturnbul@dal.ca by 11:59 pm on the due date. Please cite all sources for your papers using a recognized style guide, such as MLA or Chicago.**

3. Final take-home exam: 30% (Date TBD)

Topics and Readings

October 12: Introduction and Organization

October 13: Responsible Government in Canada

- Prime Minister of Canada. 2015. *Open and Accountable Government*. Available at: <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2015/11/27/open-and-accountable-government>
- Asselin, Robert. 2014. "An Agenda for Democratic Reform." Canada 2020. Available at: http://canada2020.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/2014_Canada2020_DemReform_PaperSeries_EN_Issue-03_FINAL.pdf
- Public Policy Forum. 2015. "Time for a Reboot: Nine Ways to Restore Trust in Canada's Public Institutions." Available at: <http://www.ppforum.ca/sites/default/files/Report%20-%20English.pdf>

November 2/3: Is electoral reform dead?

- Institute for Research on Public Policy. 2016. "Electoral Reform." *Policy Options*. Available at: <http://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/june-2016/electoral-reform/> (Read any 5 of the articles).
- Group 1: Anastasia, Sandra, Barb
- Group 2: Kash, Saif, Abdulla, Anes

November 30/December 1: The Senate, reformed?

- Public Policy Forum. 2016. "A House Undivided: Making Senate Independence Work." Available at: http://www.ppforum.ca/sites/default/files/Senate-A-House-Undivided_2.pdf
- Harder, Peter. 2017. "Sober Second Thinking: How the Senate Deliberates and Decides." Available at: http://peterharder.sencanada.ca/en/resources/media/pdf/Sober%20Second%20Thinking%20-%20How%20the%20Senate%20Deliberates%20and%20Decides_2017-03-31_EN_Final.pdf
- Group 1: Jennifer Kutten, Jill, Sarah
- Group 2: Julia, Raphael, Natalie, Carolyn

January 18/19: Campaigns, Brands, and Money

- Delacourt, Susan. 2014. "How marketing came to drive our politics," *National Post*. Available at: <http://nationalpost.com/opinion/susan-delacourt-how-marketing-came-to-drive-our-politics>
- Marland, Alex. 2016. "Brand Command: Canadian Politics and Democracy in the Age of Message Control (book excerpt)," *Policy Options*. Available at: <http://policyoptions.irpp.org/2016/07/13/book-excerpt-brand-command-canadian-politics-and-democracy-in-the-age-of-message-control/>
- Public Policy Forum. 2017. "Transparent and Level: Modernizing Political Finance in Canada." Available at: <https://www.ppforum.ca/publications/transparent-and-level-modernizing-political-financing-in-canada/>
- Group: Ian, Pranab, Kristann, Tanisha

February 8/9: Canada's Public Service

- Aucoin, Peter. 2012. "New Political Governance in Westminster Systems: Impartial Public Administration and Management Performance at Risk" *Governance* 25:2.
- Heintzman, Ralph. 2014. "Renewal of the Federal Public Service: Towards a Charter of Public Service." Available at: http://canada2020.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/2014_Canada2020_Paper-Series_Public_Service_EN_Final.pdf
- Public Policy Forum. 2017. "Building a Dynamic Future: The Next Generation of Public Service Talent." Available at: http://www.ppforum.ca/sites/default/files/PPF_NEXT_GENERATION_REPORT_EN_FINAL.pdf
- Group: Monica, Jennifer Johnson, Sam

March 22/23: The Media, Fake News, and Civic Literacy (Julia and Brendan)

- Public Policy Forum. 2018. "Democracy Divided: Countering Disinformation and Hate in the Digital Public Sphere." Available at: <https://www.ppforum.ca/publications/social-marketing-hate-speech-disinformation-democracy/>
- Group: Tracey, Chris, Jen, Krista, Han, Melani, Angela