Political Science 4T06: Topics in Canadian Politics

Fall-Winter 2016-2017
Tuesday 11:30-2:20, TSH-512
Instructor: Peter Graefe
Office Hour: Tuesday, 10:15-11:15, KTH-512, or by appointment
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Topic for 2016-2017: Happy 150th! Taking Stock of Canada at the End of Neoliberalism

Short course description:
For the occasion of Canada's 150th birthday, this course will consider how core questions from the time of Confederation, such as around development, representative government and the diverse nature of the political community, are translated and contested in the context of "late neoliberal" statecraft.

Longer course description:
A political economy approach to Canadian politics starts from the premise that the manner in which a society organizes its economic and social productive activity has a significant impact on how actors engage in politics and on the power resources they can mobilize. Popular and academic understandings of Canadian politics instead tend to emphasize national, regional and cultural diversity and conflict as the key axes for understanding and explanation.

This course allows us to take a “sounding” of these competing explanations at two points in time. On the one hand, we can return to Confederation and consider the manner in which these questions were posed. On the other, we can consider how these questions are addressed in the present moment, at the “end of neoliberalism.”

Objectives:
This course has three content objectives. First, as a capstone course in Canadian politics, it seeks to deepen the participants’ understanding of enduring debates about the nature of the Canadian project. Second, it hopes to impart a deeper appreciation of the strengths and limitations of political economy as a means of analyzing and understanding societies.

The course has two process objectives. First, it seeks to provide an introduction to the form of the advanced seminar. Second, through the process of review and critique, it seeks to improve essay-writing skills.

Evaluation:
1. Participation: 20%
2. Presentation/Discussion Leader: 15%
4. Outline of the Paper Topic (November 15): 10%
3. Final Paper (April 11): 35%
5. Paper Presentation (Weeks 22-25): 10%
6. Reviewer Presentation (Weeks 22-25): 10%

1. Participation (20%)
Making a seminar work is a collective effort. If people arrive unprepared, or refuse
to share their insights, or act in a disrespectful manner to others, the seminar is
likely to fail. The point of a seminar is to work with others, through questions,
discussion, debate and disagreement, in order to gain a better understanding of
what is being studied. You are allowed to be wrong. You are allowed, and indeed
encouraged, to admit that you do not understand particular claims and arguments.
But you are required to come having spent time preparing with the course
materials, with an open mind, and with a willingness to try to understand and
engage with arguments that you disagree with.

The course outline lists two or three discussion questions for each week of the
course. Each student is required to post a brief response, based on the template
provided on Avenue to Learn, by 10am on Monday. The response should include a
preliminary answer to at least one question. In addition, it should indicate any
concepts or ideas that need to be clarified in class, or any broader questions for
discussion in seminar.

Participation will be assessed based on the expectation that students will contribute
regularly in class, in a manner that improves our collective understanding of course
materials. It will also be assessed based on the extent to which posted responses
demonstrate a thoughtful engagement with the course readings.

Attendance at every class is required. Please email the instructor in advance of the
class if you need to miss the class due to illness or another, important conflicting
commitment.

2. Presentation/Discussion Leader (15%)
Each student will be responsible for leading one week’s discussion, starting Week 3.
The student leading the discussion should prepare a brief presentation (7-10
minutes) discussing the major themes and points of discussion found in the
readings, and draw on one or two of the additional sources in the syllabus to present
new and relevant information for understanding these themes or points. This
presentation should lead into a set of questions related to such themes or points,
and can draw on the questions posed in the syllabus and those raised by students in
their responses, as appropriate.

Each student is required to meet with the professor at least one week in advance of
their presentation in order to discuss the direction of their presentation and
additional sources. Failure to meet with the professor will negatively influence the
grade.
3. Final Papers (35%)

Papers in this course can take one of two forms. In either form they should be twenty double-spaced pages in length (5000-6000 words). They must include a bibliography and be properly referenced, using a standard referencing format. The paper should use at least fifteen sources.

i. “Neoliberal” Research Paper. A standard research paper will choose a relevant topic in Canadian politics. Part of the paper should at least briefly consider how, if at all, neoliberalism affects what is being studied.

ii. Canada 150 Papers. A Canada 150 Paper will be somewhat more historiographical. It will choose a topic, and provide a discussion of how that question manifested itself in politics or was assessed by experts at three points in time, namely before the Second World War, in the late 1960s or early 1970s, and at the present time. In the course of developing these three snapshots, the paper should also provide a story of what changes or stays the same across the time periods, and, where relevant, suggest what might explain the observed pattern. Possible topics include but are not limited to: the place of particular provinces or regions in Confederation; the Indian Act; health care; Cabinet government; immigration; women’s rights; industrial citizenship; racism; the monarchy; English-French dualism; and social welfare. These papers will require work with period sources.

4. Paper Outline (10%)

This 3-4 page description will outline the topic and the provisional argument of the paper, as well as a preliminary bibliography of the resources to be consulted for the final paper.

5. Paper Presentations (10%)

In weeks 22-25, every student is required to present the research and conclusions of their final paper (max. 15 minutes). A polished draft of the essay will be provided to the whole class two weeks in advance of the presentation. It must be uploaded to Avenue to Learn by 11am on the Tuesday two weeks prior to the presentation. Students are required to bring hard copies of their essay for their reviewer and the instructor on that same date (Tuesday two weeks prior to their presentation).

6. Reviewer Presentation (10%)

Every student will review and comment on one other student’s paper, to a maximum of 10 minutes. The review will highlight the strengths of the paper and make constructive suggestions for improvement. In so doing, it should consider linkages to relevant arguments and ideas developed in course materials. A written review of roughly four double-spaced pages based on their comments will be given to the author of the essay and the instructor on the day of their review presentation.
**Course materials:** The required journal articles used in this course are available online through the library catalogue or at the hyperlink provided. The required book chapters will be available through Avenue to Learn or online through the library catalogue. We will be reading most of Stephen McBride and Heather Whiteside’s *Private Affluence, Public Austerity: Economic Crisis and Democratic Malaise in Canada* (Fernwood, 2011), which is available for purchase at the Campus Store.

**Part 1: Setting the Scene**

**Week 1: September 6**

*Introduction to the Course*

One hundred and fifty years after Confederation, what can we say about Canada? What have been the signature accomplishments of this political community? Has it fulfilled the main purposes for which it was created?

This blog post might be of some interest:


http://www.ideas-idees.ca/blog/some-reflections-founding-canada

**Week 2: September 13**

*Methodological and Conceptual Preliminaries*

What are the strengths and dangers of studying “your own country”? What linkages can we draw between how the economy is organized, and how politics works? What does it mean to be at the “end of neoliberalism”?


Additional reading:


Week 3: September 20
Confederation
Confederation in 1867 traced out the institutional framework of the Canadian state that we live in today. What were the projects that this new political entity was designed to achieve? What does it mean to see it as part of a broader liberal project? Are there reasons we might not see it as liberal?


Additional Reading:


Part II: Confederation as a Project of Development

Week 4: September 27
The National Policy Era
How did Canada, an economic laggard compared to the United States in 1867, become one of the richest countries in the world? Can one trace distinct features of Canada’s current economic profile (e.g. weak innovation, lagging productivity, high rates of foreign ownership) to early choices about how to develop Canada?

http://spe.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/spe/article/view/13234/10118

http://spe.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/spe/article/view/13090/9981

Additional readings:


Craig Heron, Lunchbucket Lives: Remaking the Workers’ City. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2015, ch. 2.

Week 5: October 4
The Second and Third National Policies
What politics produced the Keynesian Welfare State and the Neoliberal State in Canada? Can one understand their development and breakdown without reference to the regional and national fissures in the Canadian political community? How do they fit with Canada’s founding as a liberal project?


Additional Reading:


**October 11: Mid-term break, no class**

**Week 6: October 18**

**The Arc of Social Development**

As Barbara Cameron has written, the Fathers of Confederation would have likely been horrified by the prospect of the modern welfare state. What explains its emergence and evolution? How important has liberalism been in shaping its form, compared, say, to conflicts over nationality and territory?


Additional reading:


Craig Heron, Lunchbucket Lives: Remaking the Workers’ City. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2015, ch. 3.


Week 7: October 25
Development in a petro-state
How did the bitumen boom of the past two decades affect the broader course of development in Canada? What were the political ramifications of gearing accumulation in Canada to the development of the oil sands in Alberta?


http://spe.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/spe/article/view/5098/1937


Additional readings:


Week 8: November 1
Canada as a successful imperial state? Or in economic decline?
One hundred and fifty years after Confederation, what can we say about the success and failure of the Canadian experience in capitalist development? If Canada was in part about creating a political form to enable accumulation, what kind of state form is the current capitalism class looking to in order to ensure its future success?


Additional readings:


**Week 9: November 8**

**How Is Development Lived by Canadians?**

In negotiating Confederation, the political leaders sought to encourage development, which they assumed would contribute to higher living standards, although they paid little attention to how the great mass of the people lived, and held many prejudices about them. Canada has become one of the wealthiest countries in the world, but what has development meant for Canadians? What leverage do they have to ensure security? Do communities have tools to sustain their development over time, or are they at the mercy of decisions made by private economic interests? How does this shape politics?


Additional readings:


Craig Heron, *Lunchbucket Lives: Remaking the Workers’ City*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2015, ch. 4-6.


**Part III: Confederation as a Plan to Create Representative Institutions that Might Protect Property**

**Week 10: November 15**

**The Views of the Institutional Designers of 1867**

How did the institutions of the post-1867 Canadian State secure rights? What rights were they trying to secure? Can we say that the Canadian political institutions were created to stymie democracy rather than as the expression of democracy?

Janet Ajzenstat, *The Canadian Founding*, ch. 3.


Additional readings:


**Week 11: November 22**

**Representative Institutions Today: Still Constraints on Democracy?**

How should we understand some of the more recent ways that the Canadian institutional edifice has changed, such as the decline of legislatures and the rise of the courts? Do they represent an evolution or a break with the liberal project of Canada’s founders?


Additional readings:


**Week 12: November 29**

**The Range of Reasoned Debate: Parties of the Left and Right and Pressure Groups**

Janet Ajzenstat gives us a vision of Canadian democracy at the founding centered on the legislature, where all voices can make themselves heard. One hundred and fifty years later, how does modern Canada compare? Are our parties offering us an even narrower set of ideas? Do parties still provide a useful form of representation? How successful have been extraparliamentary vehicles of representation like interest groups?


Week 13: December 6
Are the People Still a Danger to Rights?

At Confederation, the leading politicians were afraid that the arrival of democracy would mean that a mass of working people would abuse the rights of the wealthy minority to enjoy their property. A century and a half later, why has this not happened? Why do the majority of Canadians, often a couple of paychecks away from penury, not make greater use of their democratic power to redistribute power and property? Are new forms of political subjectivity likely to change this relative quiescence of the many to the rule by the few?


Additional Reading:


End of Term 1

Part IV: Confederation as the Project to Create a New Nationality

Week 14: January 10
Canada and Aboriginal Peoples: The first 125 years
In 1867, most Canadian political and civic leaders felt that Canada’s aboriginal people were bound to die away. How did this affect the manner in which the new Canadian state interacted with aboriginal people? What strategies did aboriginal peoples have to adopt to try and transform how the Canadian State related to them?


Additional Reading:


**Week 15: January 17**

**Canada and Aboriginal Peoples: Are there paths to reconciliation in a neoliberal Canada?**

Are there paths to reconciliation in contemporary Canada? What are the main obstacles? Does the extractivist nature of recent development policies make this reconciliation easier or more difficult?


Additional Reading:


**Week 16: January 24**

**Canada and Cultural Diversity: Probationary and Prohibited Members of the Liberal Order**

While contemporary Canadians often use multiculturalism and cultural diversity as a marker of identity, this was not always the case. What was the conception of who belonged to the political community in Canada’s early years? How did it change over the first 100-125 years after Confederation? What factors pushed the change?


***in-class film: *Encounter at Kwacha House*, dir. Rex Tasker (1967)***

Additional Readings:


**Week 17: January 31**

**Canada and Cultural Diversity: Challenges to the Canadian Group Hug**
Multiculturalism is under attack in many countries in recent years, but seems resilient in Canada. Is it that resilient, and if so, why? Does multiculturalism serve to distract attention from other ways that unequal relationships between ethnocultural groups play out within the Canadian space?


Additional readings:

http://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1096&context=olsrps


http://post.queensu.ca/~bantingk/Progressive's_Dilemma.pdf


Week 18: February 7

Canada and Quebec: Confederation to Break the Impasse

One significant goal for the Fathers of Confederation from Canada West was to find a way to overcome what they saw as the obstructionism of the members of Canada East, and the difficulty of building lasting ministries that bridged the two communities. How did French and English Canadians understand the nature of the political community that they were founding? How can we characterize the nature of the relationship between these communities?


Additional Reading:


Week 19: February 14

Canada and Quebec: National Conflict in Remission, Tensions Linger

The half century from Canada’s centennial to today was marked by a sustained challenge to the constitutional order by Quebec nationalism. Despite significant mobilization behind the projects of sovereignty and of constitutional change, what changes came to the constitution were considered defeats by most federalist and sovereignist Quebecers. In light of this, why does Quebec nationalism seem to be at a low ebb? Are there solutions to the internal exile of Quebecers? In the absence of Quebec nationalism, is Canada likely to become a less interesting country?


Additional reading:


No class February 21

Week 20: February 28

Federalism, and Regionalism and Pan-Canadianism

Confederation involved a project of building a new political nationality, with the central directive powers necessary to build a continental economic and political community through the dispossession of the existing inhabitants. Yet, as Cole Harris reminds us, Canadians in 1867 lived in a series of dispersed settlements, with local identities and concerns. This worked with the grain of a federal division of powers to limit the appeal of a strongly centralized sense of Canadian nationhood. How did the conflict between these forces play out in Canada’s first century? How did Canada’s particular form of development affect the push and pull between building national identities and building more local ones?


http://spe.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/spe/article/view/13086

**Additional readings:**


**Week 21: March 7**

**Canada, Federalism and Regionalism**

Is federalism a blockage to the fuller realization of pan-Canadian identity, for instance through new social programmes, or is this overstated? When governments attempt to rework federalism in order to further neoliberalism or to contest it, are they able to do so?


**Additional reading:**


**Part V: Sharing What We Have Learned**

**Week 22: March 14** Class presentations  
**Week 23: March 21**  
**Week 24: March 28**  
**Week 25: April 4**

**McMaster Policy on Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at http://www.mcmaster.ca/senate/academic/ac_integrity.htm

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:  
1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.  
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES E-MAIL COMMUNICATION POLICY**

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

**Electronic Resources**

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

**Course Modification Statement**

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

**Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities:**

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140, ext. 2865 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.