Objectives

This course has two main objectives. First, it seeks to familiarize students with the scholarly literature and debates surrounding core institutions of the Canadian State, to the extent that they can present the major positions and take a nuanced position with respect to them. Second, it aims to problematize the a-sociological and ahistorical analysis of some strands of Canadian institutional research, by foregrounding questions of the origins of institutions, and of the manner in which institutions favour certain political actors and outcomes over others. Without eclipsing the question of how the institutions could or should change, the emphasis is on understanding why our institutions are as they are, and what effects they have.

Evaluation

Class Participation: 25%
Paper draft commentary: 15% (due March 26, draft to reviewer March 19)
Paper Outline: 10% (due by 4pm, February 16)
Final Paper: 50% (due in class, April 9)

Class Participation

Students are expected to come having done all the required readings each week. They should arrive in class with the ability to summarize the main arguments and points of each reading, and with questions about the strength of the arguments and their relations to other arguments. While the instructor will lead the seminar discussion, that “leadership” will entail calling on class participants to discuss the readings and raise points for discussion. Participation will therefore be graded on the extent to which a student consistently contributes thoughtful reflection and analysis drawing on course readings.

Paper draft commentary
Students will prepare a five double-spaced commentary on the paper draft of a classmate. They must submit the commentary to the professor to be graded, and to the paper writer, to be considered when revising the final paper.

Students must therefore provide a copy of their paper to their discussant and the instructor on or before March 19.

The commentary should briefly describe the paper in one or two pages. What is it arguing? How is it placed in the literature? What sort of evidence is used? It should then underline the main strengths of the paper, as well as indicate places where the argument might be strengthened. Are there convergent or competing arguments or pieces of evidence that could be included?

**Final Paper**

Students are expected to produce a 20 page paper on a Canadian political institution. The institution can be a highly visible one (e.g. the Senate, federalism), a narrower or more specific one (e.g. the franchise, the Council of the Federation, the Health Council of Canada, the Ontario Human Rights Commission), or a very specific one (e.g. Federal/Provincial/Territorial Advisory Committee on Governance and Accountability). The paper provides an opportunity for students to apply the themes and framework of the course to their own areas of interest. The paper should analyze the politics of the creation (or subsequent reform) of the institution in question OR analyze how the institution serves to favour certain actors and outcomes over others. Depending on the topic chosen, papers will have different dosages of critical literature review and primary research, as different institutions have different amounts of existing research and debate devoted to them.

**Paper Outline**

As preparation for the final paper, students should submit a 1000-1500 word outline. The outline should set out the institution in question and the paper’s argument, placing these within the context of existing research and arguments about that institution. It should include a bibliography that separates sources into those cited in the outline, and those sources that likely will be used for the final paper, but have not yet been consulted.

**Student Responsibilities and University Policies**

**Academic Integrity**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials earned are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour 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 the students’ responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty, please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at
http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

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.

Course Modification Policy
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 the 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.

Privacy Protection
In accordance with regulations set out by the Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act, the University will not allow return of graded materials by placing them in boxes in departmental offices or classrooms so that students may retrieve their papers themselves; tests and assignments must be returned directly to the student. Similarly, grades for assignments for courses may only be posted using the last 5 digits of the student number as the identifying data. The following possibilities exist for return of graded materials:

1. Direct return of materials to students in class;
2. Return of materials to students during office hours;
3. Students attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with assignments for return by mail;
4. Submit/grade/return papers electronically.

Arrangements for the return of assignments from the options above will be finalized during the first class.

Accommodations for 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. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities. http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf

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.

Email Forwarding in MUGSI: http://www.mcmaster.ca/uts/support/email/emailforward.html
*Forwarding will take effect 24-hours after students complete the process at the above link.

**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.

**Schedule of Topics and Readings**

Please note, students can substitute an additional reading for a required reading by consulting with the professor in advance of the class.

One copy of readings that are not available electronically through the library will be left in the photocopy room in advance of the class or otherwise be circulated.

We will be reading most of David Schneiderman, *Red, White, and Kind of Blue? The Conservatives and the Americanization of Canadian Constitutional Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), a number of copies of which should be available at the McMaster Campus Store.

**Week 1:** January 8  
**Topic:** Introduction to the course

**Week 2:** January 15  
**Topic:** Different Ways of Thinking about Institutions


Additional Readings:


Week 3 January 22
Topic: Confederation


And one of:


Philip Resnick, The Masks of Proteus: Canadian Reflections on the State (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), ch. 4


Additional readings:

Ian McKay, “Canada as a Long Liberal Revolution: On Writing the History of Actually Existing Canadian Liberalisms, 1840s-1940s” in Jean-François Constant and Michel Ducharme, Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 347-452.


**Week 4**: January 29

**Topic**: Parliament and Senate

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


Additional readings:


Philip Resnick, *The Masks of Proteus*, ch. 5.


Peter H. Russell and Lorne Sossin (eds) *Parliamentary Democracy in Crisis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), chapters by Jean Leclair & Jean-François Goudreau-Desbiens (105-120), Peter Russell (136-149), and Graham White (150-60).


Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, 2008 Working Paper Series on Senate Reform, [http://www.queensu.ca/iigr/working/papers.html](http://www.queensu.ca/iigr/working/papers.html)

**Week 5**: February 5  
**Topic:** Cabinet and Executive


Additional readings:


Graham White, Cabinets and First Ministers (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005).


Week 6: February 12
Topic: Bureaucratic institutions


One of:


Additional readings:


**Week 7: February 19   ***No Class / Mid-term Recess***

**Week 8: February 26**

**Topic: Federalism**


Additional readings:


Janet Ajzenstat etc. (ed.) *Canada’s Founding Debates*, ch. 9.


**Week 9: March 5**

**Topic:** Courts and Charter


Three of:


Additional readings:


**Week 10: March 12**

**Topic:** The New Constitution

Alan Cairns, Reconfigurations (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995), ch. 4.


John Borrows, Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), ch. 3.

Additional Readings:


**Week 11:** March 19  
**Topic:** Electoral Institutions and Political Parties


Additional readings:


**Week 12: March 26**

**Topic:** The Crown


Additional readings:


**Week 13: April 2**  
**Topic:** Aboriginal Peoples and Colonial Institutions; Course conclusions


Michael Asch, On Being Here to Stay (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), ch. 2


**Additional readings:**


**Week 13:** April 9
**Topic:** Conclusions and Informal Presentations of Papers