

**POL 490F/2102F: Topics in Canadian Politics:  
The Politics of Electoral Reform: Canada in Comparative Perspective**

For a number of years there has been an active debate in Canada on the issue of electoral reform at both the federal and provincial levels. Following the 2015 federal election, the Trudeau government began a new initiative and a special parliamentary committee was appointed to study the issue and make recommendations. The committee tabled its report in the House of Commons in December 2016 and the government announced shortly thereafter that it would not act on the committee's recommendations. In this course, we will consider the questions of representation and democratic accountability in Canada that led to this protracted debate as well as the structure of past reform attempts in several provinces and the related issue of Senate reform. We will also examine the characteristics of alternative electoral systems and the merits of various unicameral and bicameral institutional models.

INSTRUCTOR: Professor Lawrence LeDuc, 109 Carr Hall  
tel: 416-9261300, x3232 email: leduc@chass.utoronto.ca

TEXTS: David Farrell, *Electoral Systems: a Comparative Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)

Dennis Pilon, *The Politics of Voting: Reforming Canada's Electoral System* (Toronto, Emond Montgomery, 2007)

*Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook* (Stockholm, International IDEA, 2008)

*Voting Counts: Electoral Reform in Canada*. Report of the Law Commission (Ottawa, 2004)

*Strengthening Democracy in Canada: Principles, Process and Public Engagement for Electoral Reform*. Report of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform (House of Commons, Ottawa, 2016). See also other documents, reports, briefs, etc. available on the Parliamentary web site:

A selection of articles which will be posted on Blackboard

POL2102F: Students in POL2102F will also be responsible for selected readings from the following three books and some additional articles. Print copies of these books are on reserve at Robarts Library. The Cox and Norris books are also available through the Library from electronic on-line sources

Gary Cox, *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems* (Cambridge University Press, 1997)

Pippa Norris, *Electoral Engineering: Electoral Rules and Voting Behavior* (Cambridge University Press, 2004)

G. Bingham Powell, *Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and Proportional Visions* (Yale University Press, 2000)

The Special Committee and Law Commission Reports and the IDEA Handbook are located in .pdf format on Blackboard. The Farrell and Pilon books are available for purchase in the U-T bookstore.

There is a vast theoretical and empirical literature on electoral systems. The Farrell text contains an extensive bibliography. The following books and web sites are recommended as additional reference sources that may be particularly useful for this course. In addition to the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, perhaps the best journals for our purposes are *Electoral Studies*, *Party Politics*, *Parliamentary Affairs*, *Representation*, *Government and Opposition* and *West European Politics*. The electoral reform issue in Canada has also been addressed on a number of occasions in *Policy Options*.

Michael Gallagher & Paul Mitchell, *The Politics of Electoral Systems*

Arend Lijphart & Bernard Grofman, *Choosing an Electoral System*

Josep Colomer, *Handbook of Electoral System Choice*

Henry Milner, *Steps Toward Making Every Vote Count: Electoral System Reform in Canada and its Provinces*

Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G. Niemi & Pippa Norris, *Comparing Democracies 4: Elections and Voting in a Changing World*

Douglas Rae, *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws*

Matthew Shugart & Martin Wattenberg, *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: the Best of Both Worlds?*

International IDEA <http://www.idea.int>

International Foundation for Electoral Systems <http://www.ifes.org>

Inter-Parliamentary Union <http://www.ipu.org>

Ontario Citizens' Assembly <http://www.citizensassembly.gov.on.ca>

Special Committee on Electoral Reform <http://www.ourcommons.ca/Committees/en/ERRE/StudyActivity?studyActivityId=9013025>

Fair Vote Canada <http://www.fairvotecanada.org>

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### POL490F

Essays (2). The first essay (35%) will examine the electoral system of one of the fifty-one countries shown in the table accompanying the essay guidelines. Students should advise the instructor of the topic for this essay as soon as possible so that preliminary work on their chosen case can be included in class discussions. The essay should be approximately 10-12 pages in length and should connect with some of the theoretical issues discussed in the Farrell text and other readings listed on the syllabus. The due date for the first essay is October 24th. Students will be expected to make a brief class presentation based on their work for this essay in one of the class sessions in October. The second essay (25%) will put forward a specific proposal for reform, or an argument against same, directed either towards the federal level (Senate or House of Commons) or the existing institutional arrangements in any province. This paper should be approximately 5-8 pages in length, and should take the form of a recommendation that could be submitted to an official body studying the issue in that jurisdiction (e.g. a Citizens' Assembly, Royal Commission, Parliamentary committee, etc.). The due date for the second essay is November 28<sup>th</sup>. Students will be expected to make a brief class presentation based on their recommendation in this essay in the class session on December 5<sup>th</sup>.

Participation/seminar (20%). Each student will be expected to contribute to and participate in all class discussions, and to make two class presentations as described above.

Final oral exam (20%). An oral exam based on the required readings, class presentations, and written work will be scheduled at a mutually agreeable time during the first or second week of December.

### POL2102F

Students in POL2102F may opt to follow the requirements for POL490F as outlined above or may choose to submit a single larger essay (50%) on a mutually agreeable topic. The topic chosen must be approved well in advance by the instructor. Students who choose this option should also expect to make one presentation in the appropriate class period, and the other two components of the grade will each count an additional 5%. The larger essay, if chosen, should be approximately 25 pages in length (including footnotes, bibliography, etc.), and is due on November 28<sup>th</sup>.

COURSE SYLLABUS \* indicates required readings for all students.. + denotes required reading only for POL2102F students.

### **Introduction (Sept. 12<sup>th</sup>)**

\* Farrell, *Electoral Systems*, ch. 1

\* Pilon, *The Politics of Voting*, ch. 1

+ Norris, *Electoral Engineering*, ch. 1

Nicholas Erskine-Smith, "I'm Deeply Sorry My Party Broke Its Promise On Electoral Reform." *Huffington Post*. February 2, 2017

### **Electoral systems: an overview (Sept. 19<sup>th</sup>)**

\* Michael Gallagher, "Electoral Systems and Representation"

\* Pilon, *The Politics of Voting*, ch. 2

\* *IDEA Handbook*, ch. 1, 2

+ Norris, *Electoral Engineering*, ch. 2, 3

+ Powell, *Elections as Instruments of Democracy*, ch. 1, 2

+ Nils-Christian Golder and Matt Bormann, "Democratic Electoral Systems around the World, 1946–2011." *Electoral Studies* 32: 360-69

### **The electoral reform issue in Canada (Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>)**

\* Farrell, *Electoral Systems*, ch. 2

\* Pilon, *The Politics of Voting*, ch. 3, 9

\* Law Commission, ch. 1

+ Alan Cairns, "The Electoral System and the Party System in Canada: 1921-1965." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 1 (1968), pp. 55-80

+ Cox, *Making Votes Count*, ch. 2, 4

### **Proportional representation (October 3<sup>rd</sup>)**

\* Pilon, *The Politics of Voting*, ch. 4

\* Farrell, *Electoral Systems*, ch. 4

\* *IDEA Handbook*, pp. 57-90

+ Cox, *Making Votes Count*, ch. 3, 5

+ Powell, *Elections as Instruments of Democracy*, ch. 5

Anders Widfeldt, "The Swedish Parliamentary Election of 2010." *Electoral Studies* 30: 584-587

### **Mixed systems (October 10<sup>th</sup>)**

- \* Farrell, *Electoral Systems*, ch. 5
- \* Pilon, *The Politics of Voting*, ch. 7
- \* Mona Lena Krook, “The Political Representation of Women and Minorities”
- \* *IDEA Handbook*, pp. 90-116
- \* Law Commission, ch. 4
- + Norris, *Electoral Engineering*, ch. 8-10
- Thorsten Faas, “The German Federal Election of 2013.” *West European Politics* 38: 238-47

### **Hybrid systems, bicameralism, STV, AV (October 17<sup>th</sup>)**

- \* Farrell, *Electoral Systems*, ch.3, 6
- \* *IDEA Handbook*, pp. 129-150
- \* Clive Bean, “Australia’s Experience with the Alternative Vote.” *Representation* 34: 103-110
- \* John Curtice, “Politicians, Voters and Democracy: The 2011 UK referendum on the Alternative Vote.” *Electoral Studies* 32: 215-223
- + Bernard Grofman and Shaun Bowler, “STV’s Place in the Family of Electoral Systems.” *Representation* 34: 43-47
- + Campbell Sharman, “The Representation of Small Parties and Independents in the (Australian) Senate. *Australian Journal of Political Science* 34: 353-361
- +Stephen J. Silvia, “Reform Gridlock and the Role of the Bundesrat in German Politics”, *West European Politics* 22: 167-182
- Michael Courtney and Michael Gallagher, “The Parliamentary Election in Ireland, February 2011.” *Electoral Studies* 31: 231-23

### **The electoral reform process (October 24<sup>th</sup>) – first essay due**

- \* Richard Katz, “Electoral Reform is Not as Simple as it Looks”
- \* Farrell, *Electoral Systems*, ch. 8
- \* Pilon, *The Politics of Voting*, ch. 5, 6
- \* Jack Vowles, “The Politics of Electoral Reform in New Zealand.” *International Political Science Review* 16: 95-115
- \* Law Commission, ch. 6
- +Cox, *Making Votes Count*, ch. 10, 11
- Special Committee Report and supplementary documents

### **Electoral systems: Class discussion and presentations (October 31<sup>st</sup>)**

Pippa Norris, "Choosing Electoral Systems: Proportional, Majoritarian and Mixed Systems." *International Political Science Review* 18: 297-312.

+ Cox, *Making Votes Count*, ch. 11-12

+ Carles Boix, "Setting the Rules of the Game: The Choice of Electoral Systems in Advanced Democracies", *American Political Science Review* 93 (1999), pp. 609-24

### **Reading week break (November 7<sup>th</sup>)**

### **Electoral reform proposals in Canada: the House of Commons (November 14<sup>th</sup>)**

\* R. Kenneth Carty, "Doing Democracy Differently" (The J. K. Galbraith lecture, Memorial University)

\* Brian Tanguay, "Electoral Reform in Canada: Addressing the Democratic Deficit"

\* Law Commission, ch. 2, 3

\* Special Committee Report (recommendations)

### **Electoral reform proposals in Canada: the Senate (November 21<sup>st</sup>)**

\* David E. Smith, "Bicameralism: a Concept in Search of a Theory"

\* Nadia Verrelli, "Harper's Senate Reform: An Example of Open Federalism?"

Parliamentary Information and Research Service, *Reforming the Senate: Frequently Asked Questions*

Supreme Court of Canada, *Reference re Senate Reform*

### **Electoral reform proposals in Ontario and other provinces: (November 28<sup>th</sup>) – second essay due**

\* Henry Milner, *First Past the Post?: Progress Report on Electoral Reform Initiatives in Canadian Provinces*

\* Jeannie Lea, "The Prince Edward Island Plebiscite on Electoral Reform." *Canadian Parliamentary Review* 29: 4-8

Fair Vote Canada, "Proportional Representation in British Columbia, New Brunswick, PEI and Quebec: Assessments and Recommendations on Proposed Systems in Four Provinces"

Ontario Citizens' Assembly, *One Ballot, Two Votes: a New Way to Vote in Ontario*

Louis Massicotte, *In Search of a Compensatory Mixed Electoral System for Quebec*

**Electoral reform (or not): Class discussion and presentations (December 5<sup>th</sup>)**

\* G. Bingham Powell, "Why Elections Matter"

\* Pilon, *The Politics of Voting*, ch. 8

\* Law Commission, ch. 5

\* Farrell, *Electoral Systems*, ch. 7

\* Lawrence LeDuc, "The Failure of Electoral Reform Proposals in Canada." *Political Science* 61: 21-40

+ Norris, *Electoral Engineering*, ch. 4, 5, 11

Special Committee Report (government response)