Course description: In the past three decades welfare states in the rich industrialized democracies have come under significant pressure for retrenchment and restructuring. This is especially so since the economic crisis that began in 2007-08, which put most government budgets into deep deficit. How societies should respond to these intense fiscal pressures depends on how we evaluate the welfare state. Those who see the welfare state as inefficient, unjust, and dependency-creating argue that we must cut spending sharply and curtail the functions or services provided by the welfare state. On the other side, those who see welfare states as effective, economically efficient, and indispensable for social equity argue that we need to raise taxes to cover budget shortfalls and to expand service provision to address growing inequalities. This course provides students with an overview of welfare state evolution and variation in order to allow students to intelligently debate different features of welfare state policy and make informed decisions about which route they want Canadian society to follow in the future.

Format: The first part of the course consists of lectures on the broad topic of welfare state variation and development. These lectures set up the second part of the course which consists of a review of the big debates surrounding welfare states today. Finally, the third section consists of organized debates between teams of students on specific policy areas in the Canadian welfare state debate: pensions; health care; unemployment benefits; and child care. Throughout the course a comparative perspective is emphasized.

Readings: Each class there are about three required readings, except during the debate weeks when there will only be two introductory/survey articles. Some weeks near the start may be somewhat more demanding in terms of reading, but this will be balanced out by the lighter load near the end of term.

Evaluation:

- Short Essay: 30 percent
- Team Presentation: 30 percent
- Final Exam: 40 percent
Assignments:

**Short Essay**: Students will write one short essay on the required readings from the course’s first section. This short essay (5-6 pages, 1250-1500 words) will ask students to present, synthesize and evaluate the readings from a two week period in the first or second section. The essay will be due in class in Lecture 9. Late papers will be penalized 5 percent on the first day, and 2 percent per weekday thereafter.

**Team Presentation**: In small groups students will represent one position in a particular Canadian policy debate. They will debate another group of students representing the opposing view. They will be required to set out their case/evidence and then respond to criticisms from the other side, as in a ‘debate club’ format. An emphasis is placed in these debates on using strong empirical evidence to support one’s position.

**Final**: A two hour final will ask students to answer two broad questions in relation to the course.

First Section:

Lecture 1: Introduction

Lecture 2: Is the Welfare State Justifiable? Basic Moral Debates

Readings:

Lecture 3: Emergence of the Welfare State

Readings:

Lecture 4: Theories and Typologies of the Welfare State: Power Resource Theory

Readings:


**Lecture 5: Theories and Typologies of the Welfare State: VOC, Insider-Outsider Theory, and Modifications to Power Resource Theory**

Readings:


**Second Section:**

**Lecture 6: Globalization and Pressures for Retrenchment: Neoliberal Convergence?**

Readings:


**Lecture 7: Do Welfare States Harm Economic Growth? Taxation, Incentives and Budgets**


**Lecture 8: Do welfare states cause high unemployment? The Debate Over Labor Market Policy**


**Lecture 9: Welfare states, Social mobility and Poverty**

Readings:

**Third Section:**

**Class 10: Debate on Pensions: Should Public Pensions Be Expanded in Canada?**

Readings:
Class 11: Debate on Health Care: Should Canada Introduce More Private Provision of Medical Care?

Readings:

Class 12: Debate on Unemployment Benefits: Should Canada Expand the Generosity and Coverage of EI?

Readings:

Or:

**Debate on Child Care: Should Canada Introduce a Public Child Care Program?**

Readings: