1. Course Description

This course uses close readings of leading scholarship to prepare students to assess and carry out research in Canadian political science. By the end of this course, students are expected to understand the leading debates and approaches in the field, and be able to rigorously evaluate their own and other scholars’ research. The course is divided into three sections: (1) Identity and Politics (2) Government and Institutions (3) New Directions in Research.

2. Assessment

The quality of seminars depends on contributions from everybody. The seminar lead for each week will open the class with a 15-minute presentation. All students are expected to have read designated readings carefully, and to be able to provide insightful comments during class discussion. There is a take-home exam each semester. Students will also produce two papers, one in each semester, and present their papers to the class.

Participation 10%
Exams * 2 30%
Papers (15 pages) * 2 30%
Paper Presentations * 2 15%
Seminar Leads * 4 15%

3. Schedule

September 12 – Canadian Political Science: An Overview
Part A: Identity and Politics
September 19 – Identity and Canadian Politics
Porter, J. 1965. The Vertical Mosaic: An analysis of social class and power in Canada (Toronto: UTP) (Ch. 1).
September 26 – Territorial Identities
Schertzer, R. 2016. “Quebec Justices as Quebec Representatives: National Minority Representation and the Supreme Court of Canada’s Federalism Jurisprudence” Publius 46(4)
Cairns, A. Citizens Plus: Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian State (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000) (particularly Ch. 4)

October 3 – The Politics of Recognition
Bannerji, H. 2000. The Dark Side of the Nation (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press) (Ch 4.)

October 10 – Gender, Race, and Intersectionality
Shachar, A. Multicultural Jurisdictions: Cultural Differences and Women’s Rights (New York: CUP) (Ch. 2)

October 17 – Research Break
October 24 – Papers Presentations, and Discussions

Part B: Institutions
October 31 – Institutions (PAPERS DUE)

Schmidt, V. 2010. “Taking Ideas and Discourse Seriously: Explaining change through discursive institutionalism as the fourth ‘new institutionalism’” European Political Science Review 2(1)


Hall, P and Taylor, R. 1996. “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms” Political Studies 44(5)

November 7 – Responsible Government


Savoie, D. 1999. Governing From the Centre: The concentration of power in Canadian politics (Toronto: UTP) (Particularly Introduction and Ch. 3).


November 14 – Parliament


Smith, D. 2003. The Canadian Senate in a Bicameral Perspective (Toronto: UTP)


November 21 – Electoral and Party Systems


November 27 – Voters

December 5 – Exam

** Winter Break **

January 9 – Constitutionalism
Hirschl, R. 2004. Toward Juristocracy: The Origins and Consequences of the New Constitutionalism (Cambridge: HUP) (particularly Ch. 4)
Loughlin, M. 2003. The Idea of Public Law (Oxford: OUP) (Ch. 5)
Ajzenstat, J et. al. (eds.) 2003. Canada’s Founding Debates (Toronto: UTP).

January 16 – Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations
Simeon, R. 2002. Political Science and Federalism: Seven Decades of Scholarly Engagement (Kingston: Queen’s University Institute of Intergovernmental Relations)
Wallner, J. 2014. Learning to School: Federalism and Public Schooling in Canada (Toronto: UTP)

(focus particularly on Intro and conclusion, as well as chapters on Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Halifax)
January 23 – Judicial System
Radmilovic, V. 2010. “Strategic Legitimacy Cultivation at the Supreme Court of Canada: Quebec Secession Reference and Beyond” Canadian Journal of Political Science 43(4)
Schertzer, R. 2016. The Judicial Role in a Diverse Federation: Lessons from the Supreme Court of Canada (Toronto: UTP)
January 30 – The Charter of Rights
February 6 – Research Break
February 13 – Exam
Note: For the applied seminars, the weeks may change to best accommodate the schedules of experts.

February 20 – Applied Gender Politics
Guest TBA
February 22 – Applied Seminar on Experiments
Guest TBA

February 27: Applied Seminar on Computational Analysis of Text
Guest TBA

March 13: Applied Seminar on Big Data
Guest TBA

March 20: Applied Seminar on The Comparative Turn
Guest TBA

March 27 – Research Break

April 3 – Papers, Presentations, Discussions