



## **POL382H1F: Topics in Canadian Politics: Elections and Voting**

Fall 2023: Mondays, 9AM-11PM, Claude T. Bissell Building (BI)

Instructor: Prof. Semra Sevi

Office: Department of Political Science, Sidney Smith 3119

Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:30-1:30 or by appointment

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### **Overview and Objectives**

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This course explores questions of elections and voting behaviour. During the course we will examine topics such as what role do political parties, campaigns, issues, information and institutions have on the electoral process.

This course aims to provide students with an introduction to the study of elections and political behaviour. Topics in this course will survey some of the vast number of issues surrounding elections and voting that are significant for the study of politics in any country, such as electoral systems, political participation, theories of vote choice, and party identification. The works discussed draw primarily on research conducted in North America.

By the end of this course, students are expected to:

- Demonstrate a thorough understanding of how elections are conducted.
- Apply research about electoral behaviour to understand vote outcomes.
- Recognize the influence of institutions on the behaviour of voters.

### **Course Format**

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Attendance and active participation in all classes is required. Your attendance at in-person lectures is mandatory. You will be regularly asked pop quizzes that require a response via Quercus in lecture. There will be group activities that reinforce the material covered. Participation in these activities will be graded.

### **Required Texts and Materials**

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**Readings available through the library or electronically.** As listed below in the detailed syllabus, required readings for the course are usually available through the library. It is your

responsibility to download all readings from the appropriate location. Students must complete all required readings before the lecture.

Some of the readings make use of quantitative statistical methods. For an introduction, you can read [“A guide to interpreting regression tables”](#) by Semra Sevi.

**Course webpage.** This course will use Quercus to disseminate all course-related information and assignments. It is your responsibility to log on to Quercus regularly and obtain relevant information. All written assignments must be submitted through Quercus

### **Grading and Assessed Coursework**

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Assignment	Due Date	Percentage of Overall Grade
Weekly Discussion Questions	All lectures	10%
Pop Quizzes	Any lecture	20%
Participation and group activities	All lectures	20%
Analysis Assignment	October 30 by 9AM	20%
Learn by teaching letter	November 20 by 9AM	10%
Final in-class test	December 4	20%

### **Weekly Discussion Questions (10%)**

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Every week students are required to submit 2 discussion questions about the week’s readings. These questions are meant to show that students read the material and should indicate any commentary or questions that student has about the material for the week. The questions must be submitted through Quercus by **12 noon on Sunday (the day before class)**. Late submissions will not be accepted. Beginning from week 2, there are 9 question assignments due but only 8 will count for your grade; therefore, you are allowed to miss a week’s submission without penalty. There is no question assignment due on December 4.

### **Pop Quizzes (20%)**

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You will be asked to periodically complete very short, closed-book quizzes that will gauge your understanding of key concepts from readings and class discussion. The quizzes will usually include a few multiple-choice questions. These quizzes will be on Quercus in-class. Students must take quizzes independently and are not allowed to work together. There will be a total of 5 quizzes, but only 4 will count for your grade.

### **Class Participation and group activities (20%)**

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Participation will be awarded for both attending class (1% per class) and participating in class discussions (1.5% per class). Excellent participation is not simply about the quantity of your engagement, but the quality of that engagement. In most classes, there will be time dedicated

to practical exercises, for which you will be working with your peers in small groups. You will be asked to discuss specific questions with your group and share your answers with the class. Beginning on week 2, I will take attendance. You get one free absence (no questions asked/ no justification!).

### **Analysis Assignment (20%)**

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The purpose of this assignment is to give you the opportunity to apply the academic work on campaigns, elections and voting behaviour to other situations.

Read *The Best Laid Plans* by Terry Fallis. Alternatively, you can watch the CBC mini-series or listen to the podcast available online.

Write a 6-8 page (double-spaced) reflection paper that analyzes the events that take place in the book in light of the readings we cover in class. While not an argumentative essay, it is expected that you will develop an argument about how the fictional account of an election compares to the research you have learned. The assignment will be graded on the way that you analyze the material in light of the academic information discussed in class. Grammar and spelling are important and may affect your grade.

Papers are to be submitted electronically through Quercus by **October 30**.

### **Learn by teaching letter (10%)**

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Write a 2-page letter (double-spaced) to a friend who did not take this class. Pick a concept that you have learned in class this semester. Your goal is to teach your friend who did not take this class about the concept that you choose. You will be graded on demonstrating a thorough understanding of the concept or idea, articulating why the concept is important, and using language that is accessible to a broad public.

Letters are to be submitted electronically through Quercus by **November 20**.

### **Final in-class test (20%)**

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There is a final in-class test. This test will cover all the material covered in the lectures, activities, and readings. The final test will include multiple choice, and short answer questions.

## Course Schedule and Readings

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Note: You are expected to have read all the readings before class to prepare for in-class discussions. I may make and communicate small revisions to the selection readings over the course of the semester.

### September 11: Introduction

- Read the syllabus!

### September 18: Electoral Institutions

- Cairns, Alan C. "The electoral system and the party system in Canada, 1921–1965." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 1.1 (1968): 55-80.
- Massicotte, Louis. "Electoral reform in Canada." *To keep or to change first past the post* (2008): 112-39.

### Videos to watch:

- First past the post vs. proportional representation:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2ljLsg9UFk>
- Single transferable vote:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8XOZJkozfl>

### September 25: Models of Voting Behaviour

- Anderson, Cameron D., and Laura B. Stephenson, eds. *Voting behaviour in Canada*. UBC Press, 2011. Chapter 1.
- Dassonneville, Ruth, and Michael S. Lewis-Beck. "Rules, institutions and the economic vote: clarifying clarity of responsibility." *Electoral Rules and Electoral Behaviour*. Routledge, 2018. 32-57.
- Clarke, Harold D. et al. 2016. "It's Spring Again! Voting in the 2015 Federal Election" In Pammett, Jon H., and Christopher Dornan. *The Canadian federal election of 2015*. Dundurn, 2016. Chapter 13.

### October 2: Candidates and Leaders

- Sevi, Semra, Marco Mendoza Aviña, and André Blais. "Reassessing Local Candidate Effects." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 55.2 (2022): 480-485.
- Bird, Karen, Samantha D. Jackson, Michael McGregor, Aaron A. Moore and Laura Stephenson. "Sex (and ethnicity) in the city: Affinity voting in the 2014 Toronto mayoral election." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 49.2 (2016): 359-383.
- Cutler, Fred. "The simplest shortcut of all: Sociodemographic characteristics and electoral choice." *Journal of Politics* 64.2 (2002): 466-490.

- Bittner, Amanda. "Leaders always mattered: The persistence of personality in Canadian elections." *Electoral Studies* 54 (2018): 297-302.

#### October 9: Thanksgiving

#### October 16: Political Campaigns

- Carty, R. Kenneth, and Lisa Young. "The Local Underpinnings of Electoral Competition in Canada, 1979-2008." *Canadian Political Science Review* 6.2-3 (2013): 227-236.
- Kam, Cindy D., and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister. "Name recognition and candidate support." *American Journal of Political Science* 57.4 (2013): 971-986.
- Pruyers, Scott, and William Cross. "Negative" personalization: party leaders and party strategy." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 49.3 (2016): 539-558.

#### October 23: Turnout and Participation

- Blais, André, Ruth Dassonneville, and Filip Kostelka, 'Political Equality and Turnout', in Robert Rohrschneider, and Jacques Thomassen (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Representation in Liberal Democracies*, Oxford Handbooks (2020; online edn, Oxford Academic, 6 Aug. 2020),
- Gidengil, Elisabeth, André Blais, Neil Nevitte and Richard Nadeau. "How much do Canadians Participate in Politics?" *Citizens*. UBC Press, 2004. Chapter 5.
- Johnston, Richard, J. Scott Matthews, and Amanda Bittner. "Turnout and the party system in Canada, 1988–2004." *Electoral Studies* 26.4 (2007): 735-745.
- Coffé, Hilde, and Catherine Bolzendahl. "Same game, different rules? Gender differences in political participation." *Sex roles* 62 (2010): 318-333.

#### October 30: Political Parties

- Cross, William. "The Importance of Local Party Activity in Understanding Canadian Politics: Winning from the Ground Up in the 2015 Federal Election: Presidential Address to the Canadian Political Science Association Calgary, 31 May 2016." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 49.4 (2016): 601-620.
- Cochrane, Christopher. "Left/Right Ideology and Canadian Politics." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 43.4 (2010): 1007-1008.
- Cross, William, and Lisa Young. "Activism among young party members: the case of the Canadian liberal party." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 18.3 (2008): 257-281.

November 6: Reading week

November 13: Partisan Identification

- Klar, Samara. "Partisanship in a social setting." *American journal of political science* 58.3 (2014): 687-704.
- Huddy, Leonie, and Alexa Bankert. "Political partisanship as a social identity." *Oxford research encyclopedia of politics*. 2017.
- Aidt, Toke, and Christopher Rauh. "The Big Five personality traits and partisanship in England." *Electoral Studies* 54 (2018): 1-21.

November 20: Strategic Voting

- Blais, André. "Why is there so little strategic voting in Canadian plurality rule elections?." *Political Studies* 50.3 (2002): 445-454.
- Merolla, Jennifer L., and Laura B. Stephenson. "Strategic voting in Canada: A cross time analysis." *Electoral Studies* 26.2 (2007): 235-246.
- Loewen, Peter John, and André Blais. "Did Bill C-24 affect voter turnout? Evidence from the 2000 and 2004 elections." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 39.4 (2006): 935-943.

November 27: Information and Perception

- Bittner, Amanda. "The effects of information and social cleavages: Explaining issue attitudes and vote choice in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 40.4 (2007): 935-968.
- Gidengil, Elisabeth, Janine Giles, and Melanee Thomas. "The gender gap in self-perceived understanding of politics in Canada and the United States." *Politics & Gender* 4.4 (2008): 535-561.
- Thorson, Emily. "Belief echoes: The persistent effects of corrected misinformation." *Political Communication* 33.3 (2016): 460-480.

December 4: In-class test

## Course Policies

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Please familiarize yourself with the following policies for this course.

### Contacting the Course Instructor

I strongly recommend asking substantive questions about course content and requirements in scheduled office hours or by appointment. Email should be reserved strictly for time sensitive questions or quick points of clarification. I will usually respond to email within 48 hours (excluding weekends). When corresponding by e-mail, please put the course code at the beginning of the subject line, followed by the subject of your e-mail.

### Possible Changes to the Syllabus

I reserve the right to make adjustments to the course syllabus. I will give you notice in the event of any changes, and amended syllabi will be posted on Quercus.

### Re-grading or Appeals

Neither the TA nor the professor will discuss your assignment for at least 48 hours after the assignment is returned to you. If you would like anything re-graded, you must prepare a single-page memo outlining your case for re-grading. The memo needs to be serious and specific. Please be aware that grades may go up, **down** or remain the same.

### Missing Class and Late Assignments

Attendance and participation are required at all class sessions. Late assignments will be penalized 2% per day (including weekends). Missed tests or quizzes will result in a grade of zero except in the event of a documented illness or emergency.

### Accommodation for Emergency Situations

Students who need additional time for an assignment or will miss a lecture or exam for a medical or serious personal reason **must contact me before the due date or exam/lecture date** and as soon as the problem arises. All requests for accommodation must be made to the TA directly via email. Please copy me on these emails.

Some documentation will usually be required to make accommodation. Please note that accommodations will not be made for foreseeable circumstances, such as having multiple papers due in the same week. Accommodations are reserved for unforeseeable events that are outside a student's control (e.g., illness, a death in the family).

Requests for accommodation **made on or after an assignment's due date, or after the missed quiz or lecture will not be considered.** Due date extensions will not usually be

granted for work lost due to computer crashes or the loss of a computer file. There are simple and free ways of regularly and automatically backing up your work. Students are strongly advised to backup copies of their essays and assignments before submitting via Quercus. These backups should be kept until the marked assignments have been returned.

### **Medical Accommodations**

If you become ill and it affects your ability to do your academic work, consult me right away. Normally, I will ask you for documentation in support of your specific medical circumstances. This documentation can be an Absence Declaration (via ACORN) or the University's Verification of Student Illness or Injury (VOI) form. The VOI indicates the impact and severity of the illness, while protecting your privacy about the details of the nature of the illness. If you cannot submit a VOI due to limits on terms of use, you can submit a different form (like a letter from a doctor), as long as it is an original document, and it contains the same information as the VOI (including dates, academic impact, practitioner's signature, phone and registration number). For more information on the VOI, please see <http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca>. For information on Absence Declaration Tool for A&S students, please see <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/absence>. If you get a concussion, break your hand, or suffer some other acute injury, you should register with Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

### **Other Accommodations**

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible.

The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the University's courses and programs.

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Accessibility Services office.

The University provides reasonable accommodation of the needs of students who observe religious holidays other than those already accommodated by ordinary scheduling and statutory holidays. Students have a responsibility to alert members of the teaching staff in a timely fashion to upcoming religious observances and anticipated absences and instructors will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, examinations or other compulsory activities at these times. Please reach out to me as early as possible to communicate any anticipated absences related to religious observances, and to discuss any possible related implications for course work.



## **Equity and Harassment**

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

## **Academic Integrity and Responsibility**

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor in all relevant courses
- Making up sources or facts
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment

On tests and exams:

- Using or possessing unauthorized aids
- Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test
- Misrepresenting your identity

In academic work:

- Falsifying institutional documents or grades
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, please reach out to me. Note that you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from me or from other institutional resources (for example, the University of Toronto website on Academic Integrity).

## **Plagiarism Detection**

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>)

## **Artificial Intelligence Policy**

The use of generative artificial intelligence tools or apps for assignments in this course, including tools like ChatGPT and other AI writing or coding assistants, is prohibited. Representing as one's own an idea, or expression of an idea, that was AI-generated may be considered an academic offense in this course. Students may not copy or paraphrase from any generative artificial intelligence applications, including ChatGPT and other AI writing and coding assistants, for the purpose of completing assignments in this course. This course policy is designed to promote your learning and intellectual development and to help you reach course learning outcomes.

## **Support**

Students can visit [www.writing.utoronto.ca](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca) for information and advice on all aspects of academic writing. Students are encouraged to make use of the college writing centers for individualized consultations on their written assignments. Interested students should book their appointments with the writing centers early, as they fill up fast. Information about the writing centers is available at <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/arts-andscience>. Students can also take advantage of the Library's free "Writing Plus" academic skills workshop series, described at <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-plus>. International students can find information about the English Language Learning program (ELL), which includes practice opportunities for improving oral communication and critical reading skills, at <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/advising/ell>. Registrar Support: Students are encouraged to contact their registrar promptly if they experience unexpected challenges during the course that may require accommodations.

## **Health and Wellness**

Students can access a wide range of programs and services to support their health and wellbeing. Many of these programs are listed at: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/health-wellness/> 6 Crisis Support: Students in distress can access a range of free crisis lines available from the University of Toronto and the City of Toronto, as listed below: • University of Toronto: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/support-when-you-feel-distressed/> • City of Toronto: <https://www.toronto.ca/311/knowledgebase/kb/docs/articles/311-toronto/information-and-business-development/crisis-lines-suicide-depression-telephonesupport-lines-non-mental-health-services.html> Most of these crisis lines are available 24 hours a day and some

address specific problems that students may be experiencing. Immediate assistance is available as follows: • My SSP for University of Toronto Students: 1-844-451-9700. • Good 2 Talk Student Helpline: 1-866-925-5454 • Gerstein Crisis Centre: 416-929-5200 • Distress Centres of Greater Toronto: 416-408-HELP (4357) • The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH): 250 College Street (walk-in)

### **Links to Resources**

- Need to contact me? Here is a helpful resource on talking to your U of T professors: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/talk-to-your-professors/>
- Need help with writing your final paper? Seek the assistance of one of the writing centers on the St. George campus: <https://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/arts-and-science/>
- Experiencing computer issues? Get IT support here: <https://its.utoronto.ca/contact/>
- Need academic advice and support? Contact your College Registrar's Office (<https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/college-registrars-offices>) or book a one-on-one appointment with a peer mentor (<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/academic-success/>)
- Need support for your mental health? Get counselling and therapy services via the Health and Wellness Office: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/service/mental-health-clinical-services/>
- Are you a student parent or have family care responsibilities? Get support from the Family Care Office: <https://familycare.utoronto.ca/>