

# POL 191H: Political Homes

Michael J. Donnelly\*

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This course is designed to expose first year undergraduates to some of the conceptual and empirical tools political scientists use to understand the social world. It does so through a close examination of how homes — both as abstract ideas and as concrete, wood, brick, and steel — shape and are shaped by politics. We will study both how where you live can determine your politics and how different polities (countries, provinces, municipalities) decide what kinds of housing gets built.

Along the way, we will practice a series of skills that you will need for the next three years (and beyond) of your education. We will use different reading styles for different purposes, consider different ways of making persuasive arguments, and debate and discuss ideas in a critical but professional manner.

At the end of the course, you will be able to

1. Apply prominent political science theories to specific empirical settings
2. Theorize how environments shape political identity and behaviour
3. Theorize how different institutions can produce different housing systems
4. Communicate those theories and related evidence clearly and concisely

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\*Note the “J” here and in my email address. There is another (retired) UT political scientist named Michael Donnelly. If you email him, I will not respond.

# 1 Contact Information

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URL: <http://www.MichaelJDonnelly.net>

# 2 Logistics

- Seminars: Wednesday 9-11, UC 67.
- Michael's Office hours: TBD. Appointments by email are also available.
- Email policy: I endeavor to respond to all emails within **two working days**. If I have not gotten back to you by then, feel free to send a reminder. If you email me about an assignment fewer than two working days before it is due, I cannot guarantee that I will respond in time for you to use my comments.

# 3 Course Requirements

Your final grade is based on participation, in-class exercises, two types of assignments, and a final project.

- **Participation** (total of 15%): Attendance and participation in class discussions is **required**. In general, we will participate with no phones, tablets, or computers out. Each week, we will discuss a set of political science questions, drawing on readings and our own experiences to make testable hypotheses about how the political world works. Some of these discussions will be in small groups. Others will be with the whole class. Over the course of 2 hours, all students should have an opportunity to weigh in on the questions at hand multiple times.
- **In-class reading responses** (20%): Most weeks, we will read a short article or chapter in class, then take a few minutes to respond to a question about it. Then we will use those responses to kick-start our discussions. These will be lightly graded, with completion earning most of the 2 points available per week. I will drop the lowest 2 marks.
- **Neighbourhood Behaviour Analysis** (10%): In Week 4 you will submit a two page analysis of political behaviour in your current neighborhood, whether you live with your parents, on your own off campus, or on campus. You will identify aspects of that neighbourhood that make it (1) more or less likely that residents there will vote, (2) more or less likely that they will vote for each of the main political parties, (3) more or less likely that they will support increased taxes, and (4) more or less likely that they will support increased immigration.
- **Presentation** (15%): In the second hour of the class most weeks, we will have a discussion led by a small group of students. These discussions will draw on some of the optional readings, and students will be expected to summarize and critique those readings in a way that helps their classmates understand the key issues. I will assign presentation days in Week 2.

- **Op-ed (10%):** In Week 11 you will submit an 800 word opinion column on an issue related to housing policy. This should build on the content of the course.
- **Final project (30%):** There are two options for this project. Data collection for both can be done in small groups, but the reports must be written individually. **These require physical travel, so do not wait until the last week of class to start them.**
  1. **Neighbourhood Comparison:** You will go to four neighbourhoods in Toronto (defined either as neighbourhoods [here](#) or as wards [here](#)), two of which must be outside of Old Toronto. In each neighbourhood, you will look for symbols of neighbourhood identity. These can include street or lawn signs, banners, businesses or institutions that share the neighbourhood's name, or other symbols. Keep a log of the symbols, including a complete count and representative photos. Then produce a report comparing the four neighbourhoods' identity expressions. It should start with descriptions of the neighbourhoods, including basic demographics, structural characteristics, your impressions, and the level of symbolic expression. Make an argument that explains the variation in identity expression (either in level or type), drawing on readings from the course and other sources. The descriptions should be 2-4 paragraphs per neighbourhood. The argument should be another 2-3 pages.

You should attach the logs, including photos of a representative sample of them and photos of you in the neighbourhoods.
  2. **Community Consultations:** You will go to an in-person [Development Review Community Consultation](#) and report on the discussion.<sup>1</sup> You will also visit (one of the) site(s) under consideration of the hearing. After this, you will write a report on (1) what happened and on whether the committee should have allowed the adjustment from the standpoints of (2) the appellant, (3) the immediate neighbors, (4) residents of the ward, (5) residents of Toronto, and (6) residents of Ontario. The report should include 2-3 paragraphs on each of those questions. Your argument should draw on (and properly cite) readings from the course and other sources.

You should attach (1) a photo of you at the committee hearing, (2) a photo of you at the site under consideration, and (3) the application details from the hearing's agenda.

## 4 General rules for assignments

**Submission** All assignments are due by 9am on the day of class.

**Plagiarism & cheating** Plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity will not be tolerated. See the university policies<sup>2</sup> for more details.

**Late assignments** Late assignments will receive deductions of 5% per day. When submitting to Quercus, recognize that it can be slow, and that can sometimes push your submission past the deadline. Similarly, it is sometimes down for maintenance. I will not grant extensions for normal

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<sup>1</sup>Note that there are two different types of meetings on that site. Choose one that has an address in the title.

<sup>2</sup><http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity>

Quercus delays, so make sure to leave yourself a time cushion. **I suggest submitting your final project a few days in advance.**

Grade appeals must be made within two weeks of receiving the grade. They must include a 100-200 word written statement of why the assignment deserves to be re-graded. The grade will change only in cases where the second grading is more than 10 points different from the first (i.e. a 60 will not be changed unless the second grading produces a score of 70+ or 50-). Grades can go up or down on the second grading.

**Lost assignments** Keep a backup of everything. Have you backed up your computer to the cloud or to an external hard drive this week? No? Go do that now and then come back and finish reading this.

**Missed reading responses** The in-class reading responses cannot be made up.

## 5 Readings

Each week, there is a set of required and optional readings. These are drawn from a wide range of sources, including scholarly articles, policy reports, and news media. You are expected to come to class having done the required readings in full. That does not mean having read a summary or having skimmed them, but having read them using the techniques we will discuss in Week 1.

The first half of the course is devoted to understanding how homes shape our political opinions. In the discipline, we would say that these are works in “political behaviour” or “political socialization.” They are about explaining why people think or vote the way they do.

The second half of the course has some political behaviour work, but it is more focused on the politics of why and where we build (or don’t) housing. In the discipline, some of these works would be called “public policy” and others in “political economy.” We’ll spend some time discussing these terms and why authors choose different approaches in different contexts.

## 6 Course Outline

Required readings marked with a ●, suggested readings with \*.

### 1. Parents

January 7

- Alan Cooperman. *Most U.S. Parents Pass along Their Religion and Politics to Their Children*. May 2023. URL: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/05/10/most-us-parents-pass-along-their-religion-and-politics-to-their-children/>
- Alex B. Rivard, Jean-François Godbout, and Marc André Bodet. “Political Dynasties in Canada”. In: *Government and Opposition* 60.2 (Apr. 2025), pp. 456–476. ISSN: 0017-257X, 1477-7053. DOI: [10.1017/gov.2024.11](https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2024.11). URL: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/government-and-opposition/article/political-dynasties-in-canada/757D42F86E4A0661A27BBF7BCC7CEB51>

- \* Elisabeth Gidengil, Hanna Wass, and Maria Valaste. “Political Socialization and Voting: The Parent–Child Link in Turnout”. In: *Political Research Quarterly* 69.2 (June 2016), pp. 373–383. ISSN: 1065-9129. DOI: [10.1177/1065912916640900](https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912916640900). URL: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912916640900>

## 2. Siblings

January 14

- Robin Urbatsch. “Sibling Ideological Influence: A Natural Experiment”. In: *British Journal of Political Science* 41.4 (Oct. 2011), pp. 693–712. ISSN: 0007-1234, 1469-2112. DOI: [10.1017/S0007123411000093](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123411000093). URL: [https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/identifier/S0007123411000093/type/journal\\_article](https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/identifier/S0007123411000093/type/journal_article)
- Rich Morin. *Why Boys with Sisters Are More Likely to Be Republicans*. June 2013. URL: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2013/06/27/why-boys-with-sisters-are-more-likely-to-be-republicans/>
- \* Andrew Healy and Neil Malhotra. “Childhood Socialization and Political Attitudes: Evidence from a Natural Experiment”. In: *The Journal of Politics* 75.4 (Oct. 2013), pp. 1023–1037. ISSN: 0022-3816. DOI: [10.1017/S0022381613000996](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381613000996). URL: <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1017/S0022381613000996>

## 3. Neighbourhoods

January 21

- Ryan D. Enos. “What the Demolition of Public Housing Teaches Us about the Impact of Racial Threat on Political Behavior”. In: *American Journal of Political Science* 60.1 (Jan. 2016), pp. 123–142. ISSN: 0092-5853, 1540-5907. DOI: [10.1111/ajps.12156](https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12156). URL: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajps.12156>
- Clifford Stevenson et al. “Neighborhood Identity Helps Residents Cope with Residential Diversification: Contact in Increasingly Mixed Neighborhoods of Northern Ireland”. In: *Political Psychology* 40.2 (2019), pp. 277–295. ISSN: 1467-9221. DOI: [10.1111/pops.12510](https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12510). URL: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/pops.12510>
- \* Kenneth Kidd. “The Star Unveils Unique Map of Neighbourhoods”. In: *The Toronto Star* (Mar. 2009). ISSN: 0319-0781. URL: [https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/the-star-unveils-unique-map-of-neighbourhoods/article\\_72d40898-85c3-5fb9-b236-edae88535150.html](https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/the-star-unveils-unique-map-of-neighbourhoods/article_72d40898-85c3-5fb9-b236-edae88535150.html)

## 4. Friends

January 28

- Joan Ricart-Huguet and Elizabeth Levy Paluck. “When the Sorting Hat Sorts Randomly: A Natural Experiment on Culture”. In: *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 18.1 (Jan. 2023), pp. 39–73. ISSN: 1554-0626, 1554-0634. DOI: [10.1561/100.00020045](https://doi.org/10.1561/100.00020045). URL: <https://www.nowpublishers.com/article/Details/QJPS-20045>
- Meagan Campbell. *When It Comes to Voting, We Listen to Our Friends, Not Our Folks*. Sept. 2015. URL: <https://macleans.ca/politics/ottawa/when-it-comes-to-voting-we-listen-to-our-friends-not-our-folks/>
- \* Elias Dinas. “Why Does the Apple Fall Far from the Tree? How Early Political Socialization Prompts Parent-Child Dissimilarity”. In: *British Journal of Political Science* 44.4 (Oct. 2014), pp. 827–852. ISSN: 0007-1234, 1469-2112. DOI: [10.1017/S0007123414000093](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123414000093)

007123413000033. URL: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/british-journal-of-political-science/article/abs/why-does-the-apple-fall-far-from-the-tree-how-early-political-socialization-prompts-parentchild-dissimilarity/AB191D8C85DD9C046032DA9A4098EE0D>

- **Neighbourhood Analysis due**

## 5. Cities

February 4

- Sophie Borwein and Jack Lucas. “Municipal Identity and City Interests”. In: *Political Behavior* 45.3 (Sept. 2023), pp. 877–896. ISSN: 1573-6687. DOI: [10.1007/s11109-021-09735-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-021-09735-5). URL: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-021-09735-5> (visited on 10/15/2024)
- Martin Horak. *The Power of Local Identity: C4LD and the Anti-Amalgamation Mobilization in Toronto*. Research Paper 195. Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto, Nov. 1998. ISBN: 978-0-7727-1378-0. HDL: [1807/94452](http://hdl.handle.net/1807/94452). URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/1807/94452>
- \* Jeffrey Lyons and Stephen M. Utych. “You’re Not From Here!: The Consequences of Urban and Rural Identities”. In: *Political Behavior* 45.1 (Mar. 2023), pp. 75–101. ISSN: 1573-6687. DOI: [10.1007/s11109-021-09680-3](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-021-09680-3). URL: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-021-09680-3> (visited on 11/20/2025)

## 6. Regions

February 11

- Katherine Cramer Walsh. “Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective”. In: *American Political Science Review* 106.3 (Aug. 2012), pp. 517–532. ISSN: 0003-0554. DOI: [10.1017/S0003055412000305](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055412000305)
- Statistics Canada Government of Canada. *Beyond Urban and Rural: Rethinking the Social Geography of Canada*. Tech. rep. Jan. 2025. URL: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2025002/article/00003-eng.htm>

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No class: Reading Week.

February 18

Week 7: Owning or not (I)

February 25

- RE/MAX Canada. *Buying vs Renting a Home: The Real Pros, Cons, and Trade-Offs*. July 2025. URL: <https://blog.remax.ca/buying-vs-renting-a-home-the-real-pros-cons-and-trade-offs/>
- Introduction and Chapter 3 of Alexander Reisenbichler. *Through the Roof: Housing, Capitalism, and the State in America and Germany*. Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics. Cambridge, United Kingdom ; Cambridge University Press, 2025. ISBN: 978-1-009-59660-2
- \* James Gauthier and Carter McCormack. *Housing, Wealth and Debt: How Are Young Canadians Adapting to Current Financial and Housing Pressures?* Mar. 2024. URL: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2024003/article/00004-eng.htm>

## Week 8: Owning or not (II)

March 4

- David Adler and Ben Ansell. “Housing and Populism”. In: *West European Politics* 43.2 (Feb. 2020), pp. 344–365. DOI: [10.1080/01402382.2019.1615322](https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2019.1615322). URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2019.1615322>
- Sinisa Hadziabdic and Sebastian Kohl. “Is the Left Right? The Creeping Embourgeoisement of Social Democracy through Homeownership”. In: *European Journal of Political Research* 61.4 (2022), pp. 930–951. ISSN: 1475-6765. DOI: [10.1111/1475-6765.12479](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1475-6765.12479). URL: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1475-6765.12479>
- \* Ben Ansell. *The UK’s Political Housing Crisis*. Substack Newsletter. Jan. 2023. URL: <https://benansell.substack.com/p/the-uks-political-housing-crisis>

## Week 9: Upzoning or not

March 11

- Chapters 1 and 5 of Katherine Levine Einstein, David M. Glick, and Maxwell Palmer. *Neighborhood Defenders: Participatory Politics and America’s Housing Crisis*. First published. Cambridge New York Melbourne New Delhi Singapore: Cambridge University Press, 2020
- Ansell, *The UK’s Political Housing Crisis*
- \* Meredith Martin, Mike Moffatt, and Sabrina Maddeaux. *How Community Consultation Is Ruining Democracy*. May 2025. URL: <https://www.missingmiddleinitiative.ca/p/how-community-consultation-is-ruining>

## Week 10: Sheltering or not (Guest lecture)

March 18

- Readings to come

## Week 11: Welcoming or not

March 25

- Kugbeme Isumonah. *Canada’s Housing Crisis: A Policy Mismatch Is Widening the Gap*. URL: <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/2025/04/housing-crisis-policy-alignment/>
- Reading to come
- **Op-Ed due**

## Week 12: Commuting or not

April 1

- Nicholas Bloom, Ruobing Han, and James Liang. “Hybrid Working from Home Improves Retention without Damaging Performance”. In: *Nature* 630.8018 (June 2024), pp. 920–925. ISSN: 1476-4687. DOI: [10.1038/s41586-024-07500-2](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-024-07500-2). URL: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-024-07500-2>
- Guy Quenneville. “As Return-to-Office Rumours Swirl, Federal Unions Demand Answers”. In: *CBC News* (Dec. 2025). URL: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/as-return-to-office-rumours-swirl-federal-unions-demand-answers-9.6998846>

- Robert Benzie. “Doug Ford Ordered Ontario Public Servants Back to the Office. Now, Nearly 11,000 Are Asking to Work from Home”. In: *The Toronto Star* (Dec. 2025). ISSN: 0319-0781. URL: [https://www.thestar.com/politics/provincial/doug-ford-ordered-ontario-public-servants-back-to-the-office-now-nearly-11-000-are/article\\_ab83f304-8c93-4b7d-bc28-59cbe221db24.html](https://www.thestar.com/politics/provincial/doug-ford-ordered-ontario-public-servants-back-to-the-office-now-nearly-11-000-are/article_ab83f304-8c93-4b7d-bc28-59cbe221db24.html)

Week 13: **FINAL PROJECTS DUE**

April 6