

POL214H1 S - Canadian Government

Winter 2026

Course Website: <https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/426235>

Instructor: Dr. Patricia Mockler

Office Hours: By appointment at:
<https://calendly.com/p-mockler-utoronto>

Teaching Team

Head Teaching Assistant:

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Land Acknowledgement

I wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

Course Overview

Prerequisites: 4.0 credits, or 1.0 credit in POL/JPA/JPF/JPI/JPR/JPS/JRA courses

Corequisites: None

Exclusions:

POL214Y1/POL214Y5/POL215H5/POL216H5/POL224H1/POL224Y1/POLB50Y

Course Description

This course introduces students to core concepts in the study of Canadian politics, including Canada's historical foundations, its current institutional context, and key political actors. We will explore the constitutional foundations of Confederation and Canada's governing institutions including cabinet, parliament, and the judiciary. The course will explore salient cleavages in Canadian society and how these shape governance and politics in Canada. Over the course of the term we will consider key debates in Canadian political science including reconciliation and decolonization, the

role of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), constitutional recognition of Québec, and the judicialization of Canadian politics, and multiculturalism.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to

- Understand the historical and institutional foundations of Canadian politics and how they shape current political debates.
- Understand the mechanics of Canada's governing institutions and the principles underpinning Canada's political regime
- Identify the key actors in Canadian politics and critically assess their significance to governance in Canada
- Demonstrate skills in policy-focused research and analysis including synthesis of a variety of sources
- Communicate understanding and critical analysis of core concepts orally through tutorial discussion

Course Format

This course will consist of weekly lectures and seven tutorial meetings throughout the semester. Please see the course schedule below for tutorial weeks and topics. Your attendance at lectures and tutorials is mandatory and will be counted toward your final grade.

In this class I will use the following online tools:

- Mentimeter
 - Create and share lecture content
- Quercus
 - Post announcements
 - Post lecture slides
 - Provide access to non-textbook readings

Required Materials

Textbooks:

James Bickerton and Alain-G. Gagnon (eds.) *Canadian Politics, Seventh Edition*. University of Toronto Press, 2020.

Patrick Malcomson, Richard Myers, Gerald Baier and Tom Bateman. *The Canadian Regime: an Introduction to Parliamentary Government in Canada, Seventh Edition*. University of Toronto Press, 2021.

Additional Readings: As noted in the course schedule below, additional readings are required. These can be found on Quercus.

Course Webpage: There is a course webpage on Quercus. I will use this page to post lecture slides, readings, additional assessment details, and announcements. You are required to regularly check Quercus for updates.

Grading and Assessments

Assessment	Percent	Due Date
Tutorial Participation	10%	Ongoing
Syllabus Quiz	5%	January 16 th , 11 PM
Term Test	20%	February 11 th 9 AM – 11 AM
Reading Reflections	30% (2 @15% each)	To be completed in tutorial in week 4 and week 10
In-Person Final Exam	35%	TBA, April exam period

Tutorial Participation (10%)

Students will attend all tutorial meetings and are expected to engage with the course readings and demonstrate an understanding of (or at least an attempt to understand) the course content through class discussion. Attendance alone is not sufficient to earn tutorial participation grades. Teaching assistants are responsible for tracking tutorial participation and assigning these grades. Students are encouraged to check in with their teaching assistants mid-semester regarding their tutorial participation grades.

Syllabus Quiz (5%)

Students will complete an online, open-book quiz on the contents of this document. The quiz will be available on Quercus from January 12 to January 16 at 11 PM. Students are encouraged to consult the syllabus document while completing this quiz.

Term Test (20%)

Students will write a mid-term test that will cover lecture, readings, and tutorial content from weeks 1 to 6. The test will take place in-person and will include multiple choice and short answer questions. Students must bring a pencil, eraser, pen, and their TCard to write the term test.

Reading Reflections 30% (2 @ 15% each)

Students will complete two reading reflections in-person, during tutorial hours as indicated in the schedule below. Students will be asked to select an article from an assigned list (to be provided on Quercus) and answer the following questions in the time allotted (40 minutes):

1. In your own words, what is the main argument presented in this article? (This should be no more 3 sentences).
2. How compelling is this main argument? Do you agree or disagree with the assertions provided? Why or why not?
3. What are the limitations of the article? What considerations are missing from this piece?

Final Exam (35%)

The final exam will cover all material covered in lectures, readings, and tutorial content from the course. The exam will be multiple choice format. The date and time of the final exam are to be set by the Registrar and will be released later in the term. Students must bring a pencil, eraser, pen, and their TCard to write the final exam.

Course Schedule

Week 1 Jan 7	Course Introduction/Historical Foundations of the Canadian State <i>Canadian Politics:</i> Chapter 1 Understanding Canada's Origins: Federalism, Multiculturalism and the Will to Live Together, Samuel L. Laselva <i>The Canadian Regime:</i> Chapter 1 Canada's Regime Principles No tutorial meetings
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<p>Week 2 Jan 14</p>	<p>The Constitution and Federalism <i>Canadian Politics:</i> Chapter 8 The Practices of Federalism, Jennifer Wallner <i>The Canadian Regime:</i> Chapter 2 The Constitution Chapter 8 Federalism Tutorial topic: <i>Does Canadian federalism exacerbate or mitigate regional conflict?</i></p>
<p>Week 3 Jan 21</p>	<p>The Judiciary/The Charter and the Courts <i>Canadian Politics:</i> Chapter 9 Politics and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Raymond Bazowski <i>The Canadian Regime:</i> Chapter 9 The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms Chapter 10 The Judiciary Tutorial Topic: <i>Has the Charter given the courts too much power in policy-making?</i></p>
<p>Week 4 Jan 28</p>	<p>The Executive <i>Canadian Politics:</i> Chapter 3 The Centre Rules: Executive Dominance, Donald Savoie <i>The Canadian Regime:</i> Chapter 3 Responsible Government Chapter 4 The Crown and its Servants Tutorial Activity: Reading Reflection # 1</p>

<p>Week 5 Feb 4</p>	<p>Canada's Parliamentary System <i>Canadian Politics:</i> Chapter 4 The House of Commons and Responsible Government, Lori Turnbull Chapter 5 The Senate: A Late-Blooming Chameleon, Andrew Heard <i>The Canadian Regime:</i> Chapter 5 Parliament Tutorial Topic: <i>Are Canadians represented in parliament?</i></p>
<p>Week 6 Feb 11</p>	<p>Term Test 9 AM–11 AM Location by student last name A–W: EX 200 X–Z: ES 4000 No lecture or tutorial meetings</p>
<p>Week 7 Feb 18</p>	<p>Reading Week No assigned readings No lecture or tutorial meetings</p>
<p>Week 8 Feb 25</p>	<p>Indigenous Politics in Canada <i>Canadian Politics:</i> Chapter 20 The Relationship between Canada and Indigenous Peoples: Where are We?, Naomi Malqwan Metallic Available on Quercus: Taiaiake Alfred, “Reconciliation as Recolonization” in T. Alfred and A. Rogers, eds., <i>It’s All about the Land: Collected Talks and Interviews on Indigenous Resurgence</i> (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2024): 145–165. Tutorial Topic: <i>Is Canada living up to its obligations to Indigenous people?</i></p>

<p>Week 9 Mar 4</p>	<p>Gender, Multiculturalism, and Diversity <i>Canadian Politics:</i> Chapter 17 Diversity in Canadian Politics, Yasmine Abu-Laban Available on Quercus: Keith Banting and Debra Thompson 2021, “The Puzzling Persistence of Racial Inequality in Canada” <i>Canadian Journal of Political Science</i> 54 (4): 870–891. No tutorial meetings</p>
<p>Week 10 Mar 11</p>	<p>Elections and Voters <i>Canadian Politics:</i> Chapter 12 Public Opinion and Political Cleavages in Canada, Allison Harrell, Laura Stephenson, and Lyne Deschatelêts <i>The Canadian Regime:</i> Chapter 6 Elections Tutorial Activity: Reading Reflection #2</p>
<p>Week 11 Mar 18</p>	<p>Political Parties <i>Canadian Politics:</i> Chapter 12 Parties and Elections: An End to Canadian Exceptionalism? James Bickerton <i>The Canadian Regime:</i> Chapter 7 Political Parties Tutorial Topic: <i>What is the appropriate role for political parties in Canada’s democracy?</i></p>
<p>Week 12 Mar 25</p>	<p>Flex Week No assigned readings No tutorial meetings</p>
<p>Week 13 April 1</p>	<p>Exam Review No assigned readings No tutorial meetings</p>

Policies & Statements

Communications Policy

Your teaching assistant is your first point of contact for course-related matters. We strongly recommend asking substantive questions about course content and requirements in their scheduled office hours. Email should be reserved strictly for time sensitive questions or quick points of clarification.

I can be reached via the message function on Quercus. You can expect a response from me within 4 business days. Please note that I do not respond to messages after 5 PM Monday–Friday, or on weekends. I strongly encourage you to plan your time with this information in mind and ask questions well in advance of assignment deadlines so that I can provide as much guidance as possible. Please note that I do not answer emails with questions that can be answered with a thorough reading of the syllabus or the course webpage.

Office Hours Meeting Policy

Students should use the link on the first page of this syllabus to make appointments. Students can cancel or reschedule their appointments using the link provided in their booking confirmation email. “No show” appointments will result in a final grade deduction of 2% per incident. Appointments may be cancelled up to 10 minutes before the schedule meeting start time without penalty. This policy is in place to ensure that students who need to meet with me are given the opportunity to do so.

Changes to the Syllabus

I reserve the right to make adjustments to the course syllabus as needed. The assessment structure will not change, but readings and in-class activities may be adjusted. I will give notice in advance of any changes and amended syllabi will be posted on Quercus.

Missing Class and Late Assignments

Attendance is required at all class sessions due to the intensive nature of this course. Missed examinations will result in a grade of zero except in the event of a documented illness or emergency. Missed tutorial participation grades cannot be made up except in the event of a documented illness or emergency.

Accommodation for Emergency Situations

Students who will miss an in-class reading reflection or exam for a medical or serious personal reason must submit a request using the appropriate link below.

Reading Reflections:

[POL 214 Reading Reflection Extension Request – Fill out form](#)

Midterm Test:

[POL 214 Makeup Midterm Request – Fill out form](#)

Please note that requests sent via email or through Quercus will not receive a response. We will require some documentation in support of your specific 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 severity of the illness while protecting your privacy about the details of your situation. 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.

There may be times when you are unable to complete course work on time due to non-medical reasons. If you have concerns, speak to me or to an advisor in your College Registrar's office; they can help you to decide if you want to request an extension or other forms of academic consideration. They may be able to email your instructors directly to provide a College Registrar's letter of support and connect you with other helpful resources on campus.

Requests for accommodation made on or after an assignment's due date, or after the missed 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. Please back up your work regularly and keep backup copies until marked assignments have been returned.

Other Accommodations

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have an acute or ongoing disability issue or accommodation need, you should register with Accessibility Services (AS) at the beginning of the academic year by visiting <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/accessibility-services/>.

Without registration, you will not be able to verify your situation with your instructors, and instructors will not be advised about your accommodation needs. AS will assess your situation, develop an accommodation plan with you, and support you in requesting accommodation for your course work. Remember that the process of accommodation is private: AS will not share details of your needs or condition with any instructor, and your instructors will not reveal that you are registered with AS.

The University provides accommodation of the needs of students who observe religious holy days other than those already accommodated by statutory holidays. Students have a responsibility to alert members of the teaching team in a timely fashion ahead of

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.

Mental Health and Well-Being

Your mental health is very important. Throughout university life, there are many experiences that can impact your mental health and well-being. As a University of Toronto student, you can access free mental health and wellbeing services at Health & Wellness (<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/health-wellness/>) such as same-day counselling, brief counselling, medical care, skill-building workshops, and drop-in peer support. You can also meet with a Wellness Navigation Advisor who can connect you with other campus and community services and support. Call the mental health clinic at 416-978-8030 ext. 5 to book an appointment or visit <https://uoft.me/mentalhealthcare> to learn about the services available to you.

You can also visit your College Registrar to learn about the resources and supports available: <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/college-registrars-offices>

If you're in distress, you can access immediate support:

<https://uoft.me/feelingdistressed>

Academic Integrity and Responsibility

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019) (<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>). 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, to learn more about how to cite and use source material appropriately and for other writing support, see the U of T writing support website at <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca>. Consult the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters for a complete outline of the University's policy and expectations. For more information, please see [A&S Student Academic Integrity](https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/college-registrars-offices) (<https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/college-registrars-offices>)

[support/student-academic-integrity](#)) and the [University of Toronto Website on Academic Integrity \(https://www.academicintegrity.utoronto.ca\)](https://www.academicintegrity.utoronto.ca).

Use of AI

Students may not use generative artificial intelligence (e.g. ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, etc.) for learning and practicing the concepts in this course. The knowing use of generative AI tools for the completion of or to support the completion of course assignments may be considered an academic offense in this course. This course policy is designed to promote your learning and intellectual development and to help you develop skills in critical reflection, analysis and writing.

Re-marking Policy - Timeline and Protocol

Requests for re-grading should be submitted to the Head TA at the following link:

[POL 214 Regrade Request – Fill out form](#)

Requests for re-grading must include a one page memo that explains the case for considering a re-grade and must **not** be submitted within 48 hours of a grade's release. Re-grade requests will not be accepted more than 10 days following the grade being released. By requesting a re-grade you are accepting that your grade may either go up or down as a result of the requested review.