

Political Science 110: The Introduction to Canadian Politics

Monday 2:30-5:30 B101

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Objectives: The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the institutions and practices of Canadian politics. In the first half of the course, we shall examine the machinery of responsible parliamentary government. In the second half of the course, we shall examine the evolution of and operation of the Canadian constitution. The debates surrounding constitutional reform will also be analysed. The objective is to illuminate how Canadians have attempted to give constitutional expression to the various identities exhibited by Canadians across the country. **Note:** The instructor reserves the right to correct, change or modify the syllabus as the course progresses. **Please read** the notes about proper academic conduct on page 3 very carefully.

Mid-Term Exam (25%): The mid-term exam will be on **October 26**. It will consist of 50 multiple choice questions based on the textbook, lectures, and current political events in Canada.

Argumentative Essay (25%): Please read the following article: Campbell Sharman, "Political Legitimacy for an Appointed Senate," *IRPP Choices* 14:11 (September 2008). (The article can be downloaded at www.irpp.org). You must provide a critical analysis of this article and answer the following question: Why should Canada have an elected Senate? Your essay should be 5-6 pages, typed, double spaced, with a standard 12 point font and one inch margins. Please read the guidelines for essay writing on pages 4-8 for additional information. You are encouraged to discuss your essay with the professor, and to visit the writing centre for further assistance. Do not use Wikipedia or other on-line resources (except www.irpp.org). The essay is due **November 9**.

Political Journal (25%): December 7. You are expected to read the print-version of a major newspaper – *Globe and Mail* or the *National Post* – throughout the course and come to class prepared to discuss the major news items of the week in Canadian politics. For this assignment, you must select 10 articles that illustrate different themes of the course, and you must write a paragraph (150-200 words) explaining why each article was selected. **You must have at least 3 articles from each month of the course (Sept-Oct-Nov) plus one more for a total of 10; you must have at least 1 editorial; it is helpful to select articles that represent different ideological positions.**

Final Exam (25%): The final exam will be scheduled by the University. The final exam will include 50 multiple choice questions covering material in the textbook and lectures after the midterm exam as well as contemporary political events in Canada.

Bonus: If you have a letter published in the *Globe and Mail* or the *National Post* on a topic related to Canadian politics before the end of the course, you will receive a half-letter grade bonus on your final mark. For example, B would become a B+plus.

Required Text: Robert J. Jackson and Doreen Jackson, *Canadian Government in Transition*, Fifth Edition (Toronto: Pearson Education, 2010).

Lecture Topics and Readings

1. What is Politics? And what are the rules of the game in Canada? (Chapter 1 & 2)
2. Political Parties (Chapter 10)
3. Elections and Voting (Chapter 11)
4. Political Executive (Chapter 6)
5. Parliament (Chapter 7)
6. **Mid-Term Exam February 11/12; Essay Writing Workshop (Anyone who misses the essay workshop will have 5 marks deducted from their mid-term exam).**
7. Federalism (Chapter 4)
8. Patriation of the Constitution (Chapter 3, pp.51-60)
9. Charter of Rights and Freedoms & The Courts (Chapter 3, pp.61-4; Chapter 9)
10. The Failure of Constitutional Reform Since Patriation (Chapter 3, pp.66-71)
11. Political Change and the Future of Politics (Chapter 12)
12. Catch-up and Review

Please Read the Following Notes Very Carefully Before Week 2 of the Course

In past years, one student – let's call him Mr. Bright – copied his essay from www.screw-essays.com, and two other geniuses handed in the same essay! Another student wanted to re-schedule the final exam so he could go skiing at Whistler with his cousin, and yet another student wanted to re-do all the assignments after he failed the course because he had been too busy playing basketball. The powers-that-be at UFV told me that I should inform all my students of my classroom policies, so here goes:

- **Electronic Etiquette in the Classroom:** All cell phones are to be turned off at the start of class, except with the permission of the instructor in the event of emergency situations. Please do not text messages or check your voice mail during lectures, and do not listen to portable music players in class. Laptop computers may be used in class for note taking, but please do not surf the internet during lectures without the express permission of the instructor. Do not check your email or instant messaging during lectures. These activities may be conducted during course breaks. Finally, with gratitude, please do not enrol the instructor on Facebook or other social networking sites. Students who fail to abide by these rules will be asked to leave the class.
- Late assignments will be penalized 2.0% per day (including weekends). Essay extensions will be granted only in cases of illness or personal tragedy and not because of academic or employment conflicts or workload. All extensions will require a note from a doctor or another authority who can vouch for your circumstances. Extensions will **NOT** be given in the event of a computer snafu.
- Students will be excused from exams only in the instance of illness or a grave family emergency. In such cases, make up exams will be scheduled, as long as a doctor's note is provided. Absences from exams will not be permitted for any other reason, including work conflicts.
- You must be available to write the final exam in the allotted slot at the end of term. Do not make any other commitments until the university has announced the final exam schedule. Conflicts with other exams must be brought to the attention of the instructor by the last class. Please note that final exams may be scheduled on Saturdays.
- All cases of cheating will be reported to the Director of Student Services and a grade of zero will be awarded for the assignment. Please consult the University policy on cheating.
- You must be fully prepared to give your best performance on the day that tests and assignments are scheduled. There will be no second chances on tests or assignments.
- Test and assignment grades may be appealed, but the grading process will start anew. It is possible that the revised grade will be lower than the original; the second grade will be final.
- Any changes to your status in the course after final withdraw dates must be made through the Office of Student Services. Please be aware of official course withdraw dates.
- Please be advised that I will not discuss the course or your performance in the course with your parents or any other advocates.
- Please do not give me any reason to add items to this list of rules:)

Guidelines for an Argumentative Review Essay

For your major term paper, you are expected to write an argumentative review essay. As opposed to a simple review essay, which merely describes or reports the contents of an article or book, an *argumentative* or *critical* review essay goes further and attempts to *evaluate* the article or book. A critical review essay should provide an *insightful analysis* of the meaning or significance of the article or book under review. The critical review essay is an exercise in *interpretation* and or *explanation*. As such, the critical review essay must advance a well justified position – in other words, it must posit an *argument* about the work under review.

An argument is a mode of formal reasoning. An argument advances a conclusion based on a premise or a set of premises. An argument may be empirical or normative. In the empirical sense, an argument presents a logical pattern of relationships between distinct phenomena – in other words, it demonstrates *cause* and *effect* (e. g. Jean Chretien won the 2000 election because he was the most charismatic and experienced leader, the Liberal Party was the best financed and organized party, and the opposition was fragmented). Alternatively, an argument may present a controvertible opinion supported by solid justifications (e.g. As the right to life is the cornerstone of a civilized society, the death penalty is an unacceptable form of punishment in liberal democracies).

In all cases, *an argument answers a question*. Why did Jean Chretien win the last election? Why is the death penalty an unacceptable form of punishment? The strength of an argument depends on the merits of the question, and how persuasively the premise or premises justify the conclusion.

Arguments may be formulated about any manner of subjects. Why is hockey the greatest game in the world? Why is *Citizen Kane* such a great movie? Why are Van Gogh's paintings so disturbing? Why is Salman Rushdie such a controversial writer? Why do I think the ideas in this political science article are really stupid? Why do I find the ideas in this other political science article persuasive? The answers to these questions may be *negative*. "Hockey is *not* the greatest game in the world, because it is brutish and excessively violent." This too is an argument.

Imagine an article that suggests that the process for selecting judges to the Supreme Court of Canada needs to be reformed. The author is a well respected professor of political science. She is a very knowledgeable person and knows much more about the subject than you do, so how can you respond to what she says? First, you will have to read the article carefully a number of times until you have fully grasped the elements of her argument. What is her main conclusion? What are her premises? In other words, what reasons does she advance to justify her conclusion? What do I *think* about her argument? Does her argument hang together? Do her premises warrant the conclusion? Why is her conclusion sound or unsound? As you think about her argument and as you reason through it, you should arrive at your own conclusions about what you have read. If you can provide solid reasons to support your conclusion, you will have developed an argument. When you write your paper, you must present your argument in the introduction in the form of a **thesis statement**, which is a one sentence encapsulation of your argument.

So, in regard to our imaginary article, you might write: “As Hiebert has presented no evidence that the justices of the Supreme Court of Canada have ever abused their powers, her proposals for reforming the selection of judges are unwarranted and possibly irresponsible.” In this case, you will be challenging the author’s argument. As you proceed through your essay, you will demonstrate that her premises do not justify the conclusion she is advocating.

It is entirely possible, however, that after reflection you will agree with the author. When students agree with an author, they often find it more challenging to write a critical and argumentative essay, but with a little imagination it is not too difficult. Upon reflection, you might write: “As the decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada may profoundly transform the Canadian political system, Hiebert’s proposals for reforming the selection of judges warrant critical scrutiny.” In this case, as you proceed through your essay, you will demonstrate that her premises do indeed justify her conclusions, but in the process you will subject her proposals for reforming the judicial system to careful scrutiny, perhaps quibbling with her here and there or pointing out some of the difficulties or consequences that may not have occurred to the author. Your essays will be graded on the basis of a good argument, conveyed clearly and persuasively.

This means first you must have an *argument* and, second, your essay must be exceptionally well organized and written perfectly. To have a solid organizational structure, your essay should have a well-defined introduction, body, and conclusion.

The introduction should be a single paragraph and no longer than half a page. A standard introduction should *funnel* from a general opening statement that introduces the topic through to your thesis statement, which comes at the end of the paragraph. Each sentence of the introduction should narrow the focus of the essay until you get to your thesis statement. The reader should know exactly what is to follow in the essay after reading your introduction. The introduction is the most important paragraph in your essay and you should spend a lot of time working on it – you will probably have to rewrite your introduction a number of times. You may wish to (re)write your introduction *after* completing your essay.

The details of your argument follow in the body of your essay. Here it is important that you lay out the facts to support your argument in a logical manner. Like a good courtroom lawyer, you want to lead your reader to believe that your “charge” – your thesis statement – is correct. To convince the reader, you must distil all the information you have collected to a number of important points. It will help the reader follow your argument if you segment the body of your essay into distinct sections.

The body of your essay may be structured in any number of ways. For example, you could summarize the argument of the article in three or four paragraphs (about 1.5 to 2 pages). The remainder of your essay should be devoted to supporting your thesis statement by critically analysing the main arguments in the article. This section should be 2-3 pages.

In your conclusion, you should first rearticulate your thesis statement. Make sure the thesis statement in your conclusion matches the thesis statement in your introduction. Next, review

precisely how you have proved your thesis to be true. Once you have completed that task, you may wish to close with a few profound observations about the subject at hand. In other words, your conclusion is the opposite of your introduction – it is a *reverse funnel* that moves from specific – your thesis statement – to general observations. It is important to end your essay with some profound comments or questions – the goal is to hold the reader’s attention after the reader has finished reading your essay. Your conclusion should be about the same length as your introduction, approximately half a page.

Be sure to give your essay an interesting title, something that grabs the reader’s attention. You should choose a title for your essay that reflects the argument you are making in the paper. Sometimes having a title in mind before you write your paper helps you focus your argument, but frequently the title will come to you only after you have written the paper. You may assume that the reader is familiar with the selected articles. For referencing, you may use MLA or APA.

Academic writing is a formal mode of communication – you must thus adopt formal language and tone. Never use abbreviations, slang, or colloquial phrases. Don’t personalize your argument. The key to a first class essay is *critical but dispassionate analysis*. The word *critical* here means *insightful*, not necessarily negative. Dispassionate analysis requires you to sound professional and scholarly at all times; you may challenge an author’s ideas vigorously, but you must always be respectful of the author and not engage in personal criticisms or use inappropriate language. It is thus very, very important to adopt a professional tone throughout your essay.

Please note that this is not an opportunity for you to spout off about the topic at hand. Let me be blunt: the individuals you are reading are well respected professional political scientists; they have earned the right to comment publicly on important issues. In this exercise, you have not done the research to offer a counter opinion on the subject being discussed. So keep your eye on the task at hand: focus on the arguments in the article you are reviewing, not the subject matter being discussed.

In other words, avoid the **bait and switch**. What’s the bait and switch? If I ask you about the Canuck’s game last night, I would like to know what happened in the game; I don’t want to hear a rant that hockey is a terrible and violent sport with overpaid millionaires. Hockey maybe all of those things, but this is not the time or place to air those views. By the same token, for this assignment, I want your *scholarly* opinion on the *article* you have read, not the general subject matter being discussed.

Above all else have fun with your essay. Use your imagination. Be creative. Essays are works of art. Like all works of art, essays require great care and skill to produce, and like an artist you should feel a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction when you create a work that is a pleasure to read.

The Writing Process: Drafting

Writing is a time consuming, labourious and frustrating exercise. No one can produce good work right off the bat. You need to think about your project and take it through various stages if you want to write a good paper. The articles you have been asked to review have been written by professional political scientists for other professional political scientists. You will probably have to read the article many, many times in order to start understanding it.

1. **Reading and thinking stage:** I would suggest that you read the article through once from start to finish without making any notes or highlights to get a sense of what the article is about. I would then read it again, and highlight some passages and making some margin notes. I would then read it again and make some working notes on a separate piece of paper, or index cards or straight into your computer. At this stage, you may wish to discuss the article with classmates or with your professor. After you have made some consultations, you will probably want to read the article again to see if you have any further questions or clarifications before you start writing.

2. Write your **working argument** on a piece of paper and tape it on your computer monitor so that you can see it while you write. Be sure to identify both your *premise* and your *conclusion* on the piece of paper. You may chose to change your argument later in the writing process, but it is important to have an objective while you write.

3. After you have established your working argument, you need to prepare an **outline** for the paper. It is important to keep your outline beside you while you write. The outline will serve as your roadmap for the paper. You should state your working argument under the heading introduction; list the main points you wish to make in the body of your essay; and rephrase your argument in the concluding section. The writing process is much easier if you have a well-defined outline.

4. You are now ready to write the **rough draft** of your paper. It may be necessary to write a few rough drafts. After the first rough draft you must ensure that you are satisfied with your argument. You may discover that your thinking has changed after you have worked through all the material. In fact, it is a good signal if you find that your thinking has changed at this point. At this stage, it is important to settle on your argument and ensure that your thesis statements in the introduction and conclusion match.

5. Once you have a solid rough draft, you may move to the **revising stage**. In this stage, you work to improve the structure and organization of your essay. Make sure your evidence unfolds logically. It may be necessary to reorganize the main sections in the body of your essay. Ensure that each paragraph introduces an idea, substantiates it, and prepares a transition to the next idea. If your paragraphs are too short, combine them. If your paragraphs are too long, divide them.

6. After the revising stage, the structure of your paper should be set; you are now ready to move to the **editing stage**. The editing stage is the time to fine-tune your essay. Ensure that your sentence construction is good; polish the transitions between paragraphs. Improve the *tone* of your essay.

7. Once your essay has been fine-tuned, it is time to **proofread**: check spelling, grammar – use the spell and grammar checkers on your word processor.

8. **Second Reader**: have a second person read your paper to check for errors and clarity. At this stage, you get so close to your work that it becomes difficult to catch even the most obvious errors. Remember, even the best writers in the world – Margaret Atwood, John Irving, everyone – have an editor to check their work. Don't sell yourself short: get someone, anyone, to read your paper before you submit your work.

9. **Final Draft**: make sure formatting is good and print a final copy for submission – **read the final copy to make sure that there are no errors in the writing or formatting.**

10. The key to writing a good essay is **TIME**. **TIME** to read the article, **TIME** re-read the article, and **TIME** to re-read it again. **TIME** to think about the article, **TIME** to think about it some more, and **TIME** to think about it yet again. **TIME** to write the essay, **TIME** re-write it, and **TIME** rewrite it again, **TIME** to re-write it yet again, and **TIME** to re-write it as many times as it takes to sound good. So start your essay earlier!!!!

Essay Checklist

- Does my title convey the thesis of the paper?
- Does my introduction grab the readers attention?
- Do I have a well-defined thesis statement?
- Does my introduction explain my argument?
- Do all parts of the essay relate to my thesis statement?
- Do I have enough evidence to support my thesis statement?
- Does my concluding thesis match my opening thesis?
- Have I cited all sources in an acceptable style?
- Is my tone appropriate? Do I sound professional and scholarly?
- Are my paragraphs too long or too short? Are my paragraphs well constructed? Does each paragraph introduce an idea, substantiate it, and set up a transition to the next paragraph?
- Have I varied my sentence structure and vocabulary? Is my essay grammatically sound?
- Be sure to use the spell-checker and grammar-checker before submitting your essay.

Essay Formats

- Essays should be typed, double-spaced, with a standard font, about 5-6 six pages.
- Staple your paper in the top left corner only; **no bindings please.**
- Include a cover page with your name and title and one blank page at the end for comments.
- Include page numbers, with the first page of text numbered page 1.
- For referencing, please follow MLA or APA.

Guidelines for Essay Grading

A+ = 90%+ A = 85-89% A- = 80-84%	EXCELLENT	evidence of original thought, and exceptional writing skills (i.e. superior composition and no grammatical errors or typos)
B+ = 77-79% B = 73-76% B- = 70-72%	GOOD	mastery of material and solid writing skills (i.e. good syntax and no more than one or two typos)
C+ = 67-69% C = 63-66% C- = 60-62%	SATISFACTORY*	clear understanding of material and adequate writing skills (less than five typos, grammatical errors and or awkward sentences)
P = 50-59%	UNSATISFACTORY	limited understanding of material and or deficient writing skills (i.e. awkward syntax and or frequent errors)
_____ F = below 50%	INADEQUATE	misunderstanding of material and or unacceptable writing skills (i.e. terrible syntax and copious errors)

* **NOTE:** The UCFV calender describes grades in the C range as “average.”

The conversion of numeric grades to letter grades at the end of the course will also be made according to this chart.

The UCFV Writing Centre

www.ucfv.ca/writing_centre

University College of the Fraser Valley students who would like to become more effective writers are welcome to visit the Writing Centres located on the Abbotsford, Chilliwack and Mission campuses.

Writing Centre staff can help you understand, and take pleasure in practising, many aspects of academic and professional writing: developing ideas and purposes, understanding audiences, organizing material into appropriate forms, understanding the role and practice of research, understanding conventions of citation, and understanding the processes involved in writing.

Open to All University-College-level Students

Students from all college-level courses and programmes at all levels of writing ability and experience are welcome to use the Centres. Students use the Centres voluntarily, and Centre staff will ask you to let us know how we can help you with your writing.

Staff and Resources

Writing Centre instructors and faculty from a range of disciplines help you develop your strengths as writers and act as constructive, expert readers for your writing. The Centre offers one-on-one consultations, workshops, and small-group sessions. Additional resources include handouts, sample papers, books on writing, and word processors.

Help With Assignments

If you would like help with a specific writing assignment, bring your draft or drafts and your assignment instructions to the Centre; you are welcome to visit the Centre at any point in the writing process: brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising. As the writer, responsibility for the assignment always remains with you. Centre staff will work with you to improve your writing but will neither guarantee you a good mark nor proof read or edit your assignment.

Book an Appointment or Drop In

The Centres are open every weekday in Abbotsford (Library Building, Room G168); Monday to Thursday in Chilliwack (Room A205); and Tuesdays and Thursdays in Mission (Room D226A). In order to guarantee that someone is available to work with you, it is necessary to make an appointment. Appointment schedules are posted on Centre doors. You are also welcome to use the Centres on a drop-in basis, and if staff are available we will be more than happy to work with you. Please remember, though, that drop-in appointments cannot be guaranteed; it is always best to book an appointment in order to avoid disappointment.