

# TOPICS IN CANADIAN POLITICS: THE ROLE OF IDEAS IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Fall 2020

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**Lecture:** Mondays 7PM-10PM  
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## **Course Description**

This course explores historical and contemporary periods of uncertainty to probe the role that *ideas* have played in shaping Canadian politics and society. Periods of radical uncertainty – such as financial crises, civil unrest, war, and (yes) global pandemics – draw renewed attention to societal gaps, destabilize interest groups, and undermine institutions. During such periods, we can better explore the causal impact of ideas on policy outcomes. How and when do ideas have impact? What happens when ideas interact with existing interests and institutions? How do ideas get transformed, taken up, and embedded? And what makes an idea “good”?

We will explore what ideas predominate and shape contemporary Canadian politics. We will explore these questions in the context of the development of the Canadian welfare state, child care policy, Indigenous self-determination, alongside other historical and contemporary political and policy issues in Canada.

## **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Understand contemporary political and policy issues in Canada
- Appreciate the interplay between ideas, institutions, and interests
- Assess political problems, frames, ideas, and narratives
- Improve their skills leading groups and participating in discussions
- Design and implement research projects independently

## **Required Materials and Texts**

There is no required textbook for the course. All required course readings and supplementary materials (videos/podcasts, etc.) will be posted on the course website. Students will read the assigned materials and are encouraged to search for and use additional relevant material.

## **Class Format**

The course will broadly follow a seminar format in which students are expected to participate actively and lead discussions based on the assigned readings.

Due to the virtual nature of this course – the course will take on a mixed synchronous / asynchronous delivery model for course content and participation. The synchronous portion of the course will take place weekly on Monday evenings from 7:00PM – 8:45PM.

The weekly schedule will be as follows:

- Mondays 9:00AM: Prof. Davidson will post a 10-15 minute pre-recorded video that will address the main concepts from the week's readings. Each video will end with four questions that will guide the discussion in the synchronous part of the course.
- Mondays 7-8:45PM: Synchronous virtual classroom.
- Monday 9:00PM: Online discussion board opens for the week. Assigned posts must be online by Tuesday at 11:59AM; discussion board closes Friday at 11:59PM.

### **Course Evaluation – Overview**

- Assignment 1: What's the Big Idea? (15%), due October 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Assignment 2: Research Paper
  - Paper proposal (15%), due October 23<sup>rd</sup>
  - Final research paper (35%), due December 4<sup>th</sup>
- Seminar Discussion (15%), ongoing
- Discussion Board Posts (2 x 5%)
- Discussion Board Participation (10%)

### **Course Evaluation – Details**

#### **Assignment 1: What's the Big Idea? (15%), due October 2<sup>nd</sup>**

From September 23-25, the Socrates Project is hosting several leading thinkers, artists, entrepreneurs, and Indigenous leaders in the Shift Festival. Talks will be hosted online.

For this assignment, you will attend one of these talks, and produce a short, 500-word essay on the **ideas** presented in the talk you attend. Choose a topic that interests you. Choose a session that you can attend for the full duration.

Address the following questions in your short essay:

1. What ideas are being presented as needed / revolutionary / future-thinking?
2. What are the dominant ideas being challenged by the speaker? What competing ideas shape the broader debate?
3. What are the institutions or interests that these ideas are working to disrupt?
4. What challenges do you see that may hamper the uptake of these ideas?
5. What opportunities are there to put these ideas into practice?

You do not need to do any outside research for this essay, but you may contextualize your response in current events. This is an *analytical* assignment.

## **Assignment 2: Paper Proposal (15%), due October 23<sup>rd</sup>**

The proposal for the research paper should be approximately three (3) pages in length. It must also have an additional page that includes a bibliography of sources of information you plan to use in your paper.

The paper proposal must include:

1. The research question you are planning to answer
2. Your proposed thesis statement
3. A short list of definitions and concepts. This list should include key terms that relate directly to your research question and arguments
4. An outline of the two or three main arguments you plan to use in your paper. This should include:
  - a. The evidence you plan to use to support your argument
  - b. A short description of the main ideas
  - c. Questions you still need to answer, research, or are still thinking about and exploring

This assignment is designed to get you started on putting your research onto paper, organizing your thoughts, and developing a clear and structured argument.

## **Assignment 3: Final Research Paper (35%), due December 4<sup>th</sup>**

The research paper should examine an important political idea in Canadian politics, and explore the factors that have either (1) facilitated its successful uptake; or (2) frustrated its ability to make significant political change. The paper should be approximately 15 pages in length and must be presented in proper academic format.

### **Participation (35%)**

#### **In-Class Participation (15%)**

The in-class participation component of your grade is based on the quality of your contributions to the seminar discussions. Contributing to seminar does not mean talking all the time. It means: a) reading the required readings and coming to class prepared; b) making thoughtful and relevant comments; c) being courteous to your fellow students and respectful of opposing points of view; and d) not sitting quietly or monopolizing the discussion. Seminars will include both break-out sessions and discussions with the full class.

#### **Online Discussion Posts (2 x 5%)**

To generate online discussion after class, each student will sign up for two weeks of discussion boards where they will take the “lead” on posting questions and topics for more discussion. Each discussion post will be approximately 200-250 words; the intent is to highlight an interesting idea, theme, problem, or question from the readings and our virtual classroom and pose it to the class to generate discussion.

The online discussion boards will open immediately following the Monday class, and the “leads” for the week must post by noon on Tuesday. Discussion leads will be expected to participate in the weekly discussions as well.

**Online Discussion Board Participation (10%)**

Each student will be expected to participate in the weekly online discussion – responding to the “lead” posts for the week, identifying and drawing in relevant news stories, experiences, perspectives and ideas in their responses. Participation in the discussion forum should be focused on moving the conversation forward, thinking through the topic of the week, and exploring the main concepts. The discussion boards are designed to supplement the discussion from the virtual classroom, and explore issues in greater depth.

## **Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings**

### **Part I: Introducing Ideas and Uncertainty in Canadian Politics**

#### **Week 1 (September 14)**

##### **September 14 – Introduction to Ideas**

Simon Lewsen. 2020. "[The Spanish Flu Rewrote History. Will this Pandemic Do the Same?](#)" *The Walrus*.

Jal Mehta. 2010. "The Varied Role of Ideas in Politics: From "Whether" to "How"?" in D. Beland and R.H. Cox (eds.) *Ideas and Politics in Social Science Research*, New York: Oxford University Press.

#### **Week 2 (September 21)**

##### **September 21 – Introduction to Uncertainty**

Mark Blyth. 2002. "Karl Polyani and Institutional Change" (Ch. 1) and "A Theory of Institutional Change" (Ch. 2) in *Great Transformations*.

Alan Jacobs, and Scott Matthews. 2012. "Why Do Citizens Discount the Future? Public Opinion and the Timing of Policy Consequences," *British Journal of Political Science* 42(4): 903-935.

John Naughton. 2012. "[Thomas Kuhn: the man who changed the way the world looked at science](#)," *The Guardian*.

#### **Week 3 (September 28)**

##### **September 28 – Institutions and Interests**

Daniel Beland. 2009. "Ideas, Institutions and Policy Change," *Journal of European Public Policy* 16(5): 701-718.

Randall Hansen and Desmond S. King. 2013. "Coerced Sterilization: Outcomes, Theories, Methods," in *Sterilized by the State: Eugenics, Race, and Population Scare in Twentieth Century North America*. Cambridge University Press.

Kathryn Harrison. 2010. "The Struggle of Ideas and Self-Interest in Canadian Climate Policy," in K. Harrison and L. McIntosh (eds.) *Global Commons, Domestic Decisions: The Comparative Politics of Climate Change*. MIT Press.

**Notes:** Assignment 1 Due – Friday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> @ 11:59PM. Please submit to the assignment dropbox on Avenue to Learn.

## Part II: Ideas, Uncertainty, and the Canadian Welfare State

### Week 4 (October 5)

#### October 5 - Redefining Canada after the War

Jane Jenson. 2013. "Historical Transformations of Canada's Social Architecture," in Keith Banting and John Myles, eds., *Inequality and the Fading of Redistributive Politics: Inequality and the Politics of Social Policy*. UBC Press: pp. 256-281.

Antonia Maioni. 2004. "New Century, New Risks: The Marsh Report and the Post-War Welfare State in Canada," *Policy Options*.

Peter Hall. 1993. "Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain," *Comparative Politics*: 275-296.

#### Background:

- Brigitte Kitchen. 1986. "The Marsh Report Revisited," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 21(2): 38-48.

**\*\*Week 4 Check-In: plan for an additional 15 minutes of class to discuss how the course has been running thus far, ideas for improvement / adjustment\*\***

### Week 5 (October 12 – No Class; Fall Reading Break)

#### Reading Week

### Week 6 (October 19)

#### October 19 – The Welfare State

Elisabeth Wallace. 1950. "The Origin of the Social Welfare State in Canada, 1867-1900," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 16(3): 383-393.

Katherine Boothe. 2015. "Radical Reform or Incrementalism" (Ch. 3) in *Ideas and the Pace of Change: National Pharmaceutical Insurance in Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom*.

Kristina Babich, and Daniel Beland. 2009. "Policy Change and the Politics of Ideas: The Emergence of the Canada/Quebec Pension Plans," *Canadian Review of Sociology* 46(3): 253-271.

**Notes:** Assignment 2 – Research Proposal – Due Friday, October 23<sup>rd</sup> @ 11:59PM. Please submit to the assignment dropbox on Avenue to Learn.

## **Week 7 (October 26)**

### **October 26 - Quebec Separatism & the Social Revolution**

Pierre Fournier. 1983. "Canada – the Crisis of National Unity; The Future of Quebec Nationalism," *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 21(1): 3-21.

Daniel Beland and Andre Lecours. 2006. "Substate Nationalism and the Welfare State: Quebec and Canadian Federalism," *Nations and Nationalism* 12(1): 77-96.

Alain Noël. 2013. "Quebec's New Politics of Redistribution" in Keith Banting and John Myles, eds., *Inequality and the Fading of Redistributive Politics: Inequality and the Politics of Social Policy*. Vancouver. UBC Press, 2013, pp. 256-281.

## **Week 8 (November 2)**

### **November 2 – Austerity, Inequality, and Redistributive Politics in Canada**

Mark Blyth. 2013. "A Primer on Debt, Austerity, and Morality Plays," *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea*.

Mary Janigan. 1996. "[The Harris Revolution](#)," *Macleans*'

Pierre-Marc Daigneault. 2015. "Ideas and Welfare Reform in Saskatchewan: Entitlement, Workfare or Activation?" *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 48(1): 147-171.

Keith Banting and John Myles. 2015. "Framing the New Inequality: The Politics of Income Redistribution in Canada," in *Income Inequality: The Canadian Story*, IRPP: Montreal; 509-540.

## **Part III: Narratives and Norms in Canadian Politics - Remaking Canada in the 21st Century**

### **Week 9 (November 9)**

#### **November 19 – Narratives, Identity and Belonging in Canadian Politics**

Aude-Claire Fourot, Mireille Paquet, and Nora Nagels. 2018. "Citizenship as a Regime," in *Citizenship as a Regime: Canadian and International Perspectives*

Nisha Nath. 2011. "Defining Narratives of Identity in Canadian Political Science: Accounting for the Absence of Race," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 44(1): 161-193.

Mark Cronlund Anderson and Carmen L. Robertson. 2011. *Seeing Red. A History of Natives in Canadian Newspapers*, University of Manitoba Press, Introduction (pp. 1-18).

## **Week 10 (November 16)**

### **November 16 – Gendered Politics in Canada**

A. Schneider, and Helen Ingram. 1993. "Social construction of target populations: Implications for politics and policy," *American Political Science Review*, 87(2), 334–347.

Alexandra Dobrowolsky, and Jane Jenson. 2004. "Shifting Representations of Citizenship: Canadian Politics of "Women" and "Children"," *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 11(2): 154-180.

Linda White. 2017. "Constructing Early Childhood Education and Care Policy Shifts in Canada," in *Constructing Policy Change: Early Childhood Education and Care in Liberal Welfare States*; University of Toronto Press: Toronto: 201-224.

## **Week 11 (November 23)**

### **November 23 – Uncertainty & Indigenous Politics in Canada**

Christa Scholtz. 2006. "Negotiation: Of Recognition and Delegation" (Ch. 2) and "Indigenous Land Rights and Cabinet Decision-Making in Canada (1945-1973)" (Ch. 3) in *Negotiating Claims: The Emergence of Negotiation Policies in Canada, the United States, and Australia*

Kiera L. Ladner. 2015. "An Indigenous Constitutional Paradox: Both Monumental Achievement and Monumental Defeat," in Lois Harder and Steven Patten (eds.), *Patriation and Its Consequences. Constitution Making in Canada*, UBC Press; pp. 267-289.

Michael Morden. 2016. "Theorizing the Resilience of the Indian Act," *Canadian Public Administration* 59(1): 113-133.

#### Background:

- Chelsea Vowel. 2016. "Got Status? Indian Status in Canada," *Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Issues in Canada*. Winnipeg: Highwater Press; pp. 25-35. Notes: [ie. Assignment due, test, etc.]

## **Week 12 (November 30)**

### **November 30 – Race and Multiculturalism in Canada**

Debra Thompson. 2016. "Introduction" (Ch. 1), and "The Multicultural Moment" (Ch. 5) in *The Schematic State: Race, Transnationalism, and the Politics of the Census*.

T. Triadafilopoulos. 2011. "Normative Contexts, Domestic Institutions, and the Transformation of Immigration Policy Paradigms in Canada and the United States," in Grace Skogstad (ed.) *Policy Paradigms, Transnationalism, and Domestic Politics*.

Charmaine Nelson. 2020. "[The Canadian Narrative About Slavery is Wrong](#)," *The Walrus*.

Heritage Minutes:

- [The Underground Railway](#)
- [Viola Desmond](#)

**Notes:** Assignment 3 – Final Paper – Due Friday, December 4<sup>th</sup> @ 11:59PM. Please submit to the assignment dropbox on Avenue to Learn.

### **Week 13 (December 7)**

#### **December 7 – The Peculiar Politics of Pandemics**

Readings: TBD (Readings will be determined later in the semester, as new research on the pandemic continues apace).

## Course Policies

### Submission of Assignments

Written work must be submitted electronically via Avenue to Learn. Turnitin will be enabled for the course. See the information on Turnitin on Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection (p. 13).

### Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

### Late Assignments

The online discussion posts (2) are an important element of students' participation grade. Because the online discussion board relies on student "leads" to submit discussion questions in a timely fashion, no extensions will be granted; late posts will receive a grade of 0 .

Discussion boards will close Fridays at 11:59PM; late contributions will not be accepted.

For the large assignments, this course employs an **automatic & graduated** grace period. Students who cannot submit their paper in time are automatically allowed 3 extra days to hand-in their work, without penalty (*you do not need to email your professor to get an extension*). Starting on day 4, marks will begin being deducted based on the following schedule:

Days Late	Penalty	Cumulative Deduction
1	0	.
2	0	.
3	0	.
4	2%	2%
5	3%	5%
6	5%	10%
7	10%	20%
8	<i>No Longer Accepted</i>	<i>No Grade</i>

Submissions made on the 8th day or later will not be accepted and a mark of **zero** will be entered. There will be **no extensions**.

This late policy applies **only** to the following assignments: What's the Big Idea?, the Paper Proposal and the Final Research Paper.

### **Policy on Children in Class**

Currently, the university does not have a formal policy on children in the classroom. The policy described here is a reflection of my own beliefs and commitments to student, staff and faculty parents.

- 1) All breastfeeding babies are welcome in class as often as is necessary to support the breastfeeding relationship.
- 2) For older children and babies, I understand that minor illnesses and unforeseen disruptions in childcare often put parents in the position of having to choose between missing class to stay home with a child and leaving him or her with someone you or the child does not feel comfortable with. This will be particularly acute during the ongoing pandemic. While this is not meant to be a long-term childcare solution, occasionally bringing a child to class in order to cover gaps in care is perfectly acceptable.
- 3) I ask that all students work with me to create a welcoming environment that is respectful of all forms of diversity, including diversity in parenting status.
- 4) In all cases where babies and children come to class, I ask that you ensure that you are muted when you are not speaking in the virtual classroom. You may turn off video if you need to address attending to your child(ren).

## **University Policies**

### **Absences, Missed Work, Illness**

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

### **Courses with an On-Line Element**

This course will use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

### **Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection**

This course will use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster’s use of Turnitin.com please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

### **Copyright and Recording**

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

## **Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)**

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

## **Academic Integrity Statement**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

## **Conduct Expectations**

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online.**

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

### **Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

### **Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy**

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

### **Course Modification**

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

### **Extreme Circumstances**

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.