Geography 316: Political Geography

Instructor: Prof. Benjamin Forest
benjamin.forest@mcgill.ca

Teaching Assistants (TAs): Christopher Erl & TBD

Fall 2017
Lecture: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:05 p.m. - 11:25 p.m.
306 Burnside Hall

Office: 308A Burnside Hall
Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and by appointment

Course Description: Political geography is fundamentally concerned with the geographic expression of power. The discipline has traditionally focused on boundaries and borders (territoriality), but more recent approaches address other types of spatial relationships as well, particularly in terms of surveillance, cartographic representation, and spatial ordering. This course explores both approaches through examination of nationalism, the state, urban and global governance, federalism (particularly in multi-ethnic contexts), and political representation (particularly electoral redistricting). The class uses case studies drawn principally from Canada and the United States, but includes some material from other areas of the world. In exploring such topics, the class addresses questions of power, identity, and democratic theory, as well as the relationship between the individual and the state.

Note: In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control (e.g., a flu pandemic, major political crisis in the republic to the south), the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

You are responsible for reviewing the information on university and department policies concerning student assessment at: www.mcgill.ca/geography/studentassessment.

Requirements:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Date Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly reading responses</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Weekly – submitted via myCourses (as announced in class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mini-Midterm</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>September 26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Activities</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>October 5 &amp; 17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Examination</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>October 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Game of Votes Activity</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>November 30 &amp; December 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>TBA – during finals period</td>
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Weekly responses. Most weeks, you are required to submit questions posted on myCourses based on the readings for the previous week. The questions should demonstrate your knowledge of and engagement with the readings, and should be short-answer type: the kind one might find on an examination that one can answer in two to three paragraphs (300-600 words). For the first few weeks, you will need to submit responses to questions I post about the readings. There are further instructions on myCourses and in class. Your responses will be graded as full credit (100); half credit (50); or zero (0). In addition, your responses may form the basis of the midterm and final exam, so it is to your advantage to devote time and effort to them.

Midterm Examinations. The mini-midterm will cover material through Lecture 6. The primary purpose of the mini-midterm is to familiarize students with the style of questions and grading standards before the main examinations. It is worth one million dollars. The regular midterm will cover material through Lecture 14, but will not repeat questions from the mini-midterm.

Discussion Activities. You will be assigned full or zero credit based on attendance, participation, and submission of written material.

Game of Votes. The final class sessions will be devoted to a simulation requiring groups to design an electoral system for a hypothetical state. Instructions are on myCourses and will be discussed during the semester.

Expectations: Assignments, including the set reading, should be completed in a timely fashion. Generally speaking, you will not receive credit for late assignments unless you have good reasons and have made prior arrangements with me. I also expect active participation from students during the discussions, presentations, and lectures.

Deferrals and Medical Notes: Students will only be allowed to take a deferred examination if they provide a signed note from a doctor attesting specifically that the student was too ill to take the exam on the scheduled day. Similarly, other requests to delay or defer submitting an assignment must state that the student was too ill on that particular day. All such notes will be verified by the instructor, and therefore must include the physician’s correct phone number. Students who miss a test must notify me by email or phone within 24 hours of the exam (preferably before the exam begins), but do not need to provide the medical note until the date of the deferred exam.

Non-medical reasons, such as a death or serious illness in the family, will be handled on a case-by-case basis, but all cases must include satisfactory documentation.

Other Policies: The following statements are required by University policy:

Language Policy: In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Academic Integrity: McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).
L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/integrity).

**Re)assessment Policy:** Information on university and department policies concerning student assessment can be found at www.mcgill.ca/geography/studentassessment.

**Grading:** Grading will use the standard McGill grading grid (A=100 to 85; A- = 80 to 84.9; etc.) Depending on the distribution of scores, I may elect to curve the final letter grades upwards (e.g., A=100 to 83; A- = 78 to 82.9; etc.) However, I will not make this determination until I have graded all assignments, including the final exam.

**Readings:** All required readings are available through myCourses (in compliance with copyright regulations).

**Schedule of Classes**

*Read the assigned material BEFORE class and in the order listed below:*

**Part I: History and Basic Concepts**

1. September 5  **Introduction**

2. September 7  **Traditional Approaches in Political Geography**


3. September 12  **States, Governance, and Collective Action**


4. September 14  
**The State in Political Geography**


5. September 19  
**The State: Territoriality and Spatial Ordering**

Add/Drop deadline  

Part II: Organizing the State: Nationalism, Federalism, and Beyond

6. September 21  
**Nations and Nations-States**


Note: Mayer (2004) discusses the use of rape as a weapon of war.  

7. September 26  
**Mini-midterm examination**  
*Includes material through Lecture 6*

8. September 28  
**Forms of Nationalism**


9. October 3  
**From Nation to State?**

Video: *The Referendum: A Nation in Question*


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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>References</th>
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<tr>
<td>10. October 5</td>
<td><strong>Activity 1: Quebec is a … ?</strong></td>
<td><em>House of Commons Hansard</em>, November 27, 2006. Pages 5350-5361; and 5375-5412.</td>
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<td><em>N.B. The French version of these pages is available on myCourses.</em></td>
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<td>14. October 19</td>
<td><strong>Introduction: Game of Votes</strong></td>
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<td>15. October 24</td>
<td><strong>Midterm Examination</strong></td>
<td><em>Includes material through lecture 13.</em></td>
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Part III: Political Representation: Power within the State

16. October 26  Political Representation and Electoral Systems


17. October 31  Political Representation in Canada I


18. November 2  Political Representation in Canada II


20. November 9  The Voting Rights Act of 1965
Video: Eyes on the Prize series: Bridge to Freedom


21. November 14  Political Representation in the US: 1990s


22. November 16  Political Representation in the US: 2000s and Beyond


And then, short, friendly debate:


23. November 21  Minority Representation in Canada and the US


24. November 23  Local Democracy: Representation at the Municipal Level
Guest Lecture: Chris Erl

U.S. Thanksgiving


Podcast: “A not so simple majority” (September 12, 2014) www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/534/a-not-so-simple-majority
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>25. November 28</td>
<td><strong>Game of Votes: Group work</strong> (no lecture)</td>
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| 26. November 30 | **Game of Votes: Season 1**  
                 | *Winner is coming . . .*          |
| 27. December 5   | **Game of Votes: Season 2**  
                 | *Winner is coming . . .*          |