Geography 316: Political Geography

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

Teaching Assistants (TAs): Christopher Erl & Nik Parent

Fall 2019
Lecture: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:35 - 3:55 p.m.
306 Burnside Hall

Office: 308A Burnside Hall
Office Hours: Thursdays 12:30 - 1:30 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.

Notes: 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.

I will not respect Law 62 or Law 21 in my classroom and will do my utmost to prevent anyone else from enforcing them. All who have come to learn and teach are welcome.

Requirements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Date Due</th>
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<tbody>
<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 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Activities</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>October 3 &amp; 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Examination</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>October 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Game of Votes</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>November 26</td>
</tr>
<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/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity).

**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 3**
   - **Introduction**

2. **September 5**
   - **Territories and Identity in Political Geography**
     


3. **September 10**
   - **States, Governance, and Collective Action**


4. September 12  The State in Political Geography


5. September 17  The State: Territoriality and Spatial Ordering

Add/Drop deadline


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

6. September 19  Nations and Nations-States


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


7. September 24  Mini-midterm examination

Includes material through Lecture 6

8. September 26  Forms of Nationalism


9. October 1  From Nation to State?

Video: The Referendum: A Nation in Question


10. October 3

**Activity 1: Quebec is a … ?**

*House of Commons Hansard*, November 27, 2006. Pages 5350-5361; and 5375-5412

*N.B. The French version of these pages is available on myCourses.*

11. October 8

**National Revolutions of 1989**

Video: *Cold War Series*: “The Wall Comes Down 1989”


12. October 10

**State Fragmentation and Federalism**


13. October 15

**Activity 2: Canada 2.0**

*In-class discussion activity*


14. October 17

**Introduction: Game of Votes**
15. October 22  
**Midterm Examination**  
*Includes material through lecture 13.*

**Part III: Political Representation: Power within the State**

16. October 24  
**Political Representation and Electoral Systems**  


17. October 29  
**Political Representation in Canada I**  


18. October 31  
**Political Representation in Canada II**  


19. November 5  
**Political Representation in the US: 1800-1965**  
20. November 7  
**The Voting Rights Act of 1965**

Video: *Eyes on the Prize series: Bridge to Freedom*


21. November 12  
**Political Representation in the US: 1990s**


22. November 14  
**Political Representation in the US: 2000s and Beyond**


*And then, short, friendly debate:*


23. November 19  
**Minority Representation in Canada and the US**


24. November 21  
**Local Democracy: Representation at the Municipal Level**

Guest Lecture: Chris Erl


Podcast: “A not so simple majority” (September 12, 2014)  
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>25. November 26</td>
<td><strong>Game of Votes Presentations and Discussion</strong>&lt;br&gt;<em>Winner is coming...</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>26. November 28</td>
<td><strong>Wrap-up and flex lecture</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S. Thanksgiving</td>
<td>Game of Votes reports due</td>
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