

Course outline: CANS 420: Shaping Public Affairs in Canada

General information

Winter 2023

Tuesdays, 8:35am–11:25am, Ferrier Building, Room 105

Number of credits: 3

Instructor information

Dr. Jodey Nurse

E-mail: jodey.nurse@mcgill.ca

Office hours and location: Wednesdays, 10am–12pm, Ferrier Building 102F

Communication plan: If you have any questions about the course, please email me or visit me during my office hours. If you contact me via email, I will do my best to respond within 48 hours during the regular work week. Please check the course website regularly for course updates and information.

Land Acknowledgement

McGill University sits on land that has long been a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee confederacy and the Anishinaabe nations. In this course, some of the topics we will explore are intertwined with conversations about on-going colonialism and its effects in the world around us today and in the past. I recognize and respect the diverse Indigenous peoples whose presence marks this territory on which we now gather, and I understand that colonialism is an ongoing process and hope this course helps build our mindfulness of our present participation.

Course description

This course explores key aspects of public affairs in Canada. Public affairs combines community-stakeholder-public engagement with policy analysis, and through this course you will be introduced to various stakeholders and organizations and learn about how they forge relationships with the public and work to influence, analyze, or communicate governmental and nongovernmental actions and decisions. As Canadian society has shifted, so too has public affairs practice, and therefore you will also learn about how public affairs as a field has evolved over time. This is a seminar course that encourages collaborative exchanges and a shared learning environment. Numerous guest lecturers have been invited to speak to the class about their experiences in public affairs in Canada or about their related research. This course offers a remarkable opportunity for you to engage with these professionals and researchers to better understand how public affairs practitioners engage stakeholders, explain policies, and assist policy makers.

Learning outcomes

Upon completion of this course, you will have:

- Identified and analyzed key aspects of public affairs theory and practice
- Understood how various stakeholders, organizations, and institutions operate in this field
- Improved your critical thinking and communications skills through classroom participation and course assignments
- Confidently engaged in group discussions, provided a clear and coherent expression of your thoughts, and been open and considerate of others' ideas
- Built community with your peers by sharing your research and ideas

Instructional methods

This is a seminar course that requires you to attend regularly scheduled in-person classes. As noted at the beginning of this course outline, you will receive three credits upon completion of this course, and therefore you will be expected to spend a total of about 135 hours attending class and completing course assignments and preparing for other course activities. All classes will be held in person this semester, but please note that instructional methods are subject to change based on public health protocols and university policy.

The course website, found through the myCourses portal, will provide all the information you need to complete the course, including copies of the syllabus, assignment instructions, general information, drop boxes for submitting assignments, posted grades, discussion boards, links to course readings, and more. Important announcements are also made on myCourses' announcement board, so please review the course website regularly for course updates and information. You are also encouraged to review McGill's [Learning Resources](#) website and download the myCourses [Pulse mobile app](#) to stay connected and on track.

Expectations for student participation

You are expected to participate in course activities and complete course assignments as outlined in the course syllabus and on the course website and related documents. If after reading the course syllabus and assignment instructions you have any questions, please contact me for clarification.

Please note that you must be courteous in all your course interactions and communications with the instructor, guest lecturers, and fellow classmates. It is important that teaching and learning spaces are respectful and inclusive. To this end, offensive, violent, or harmful language arising in course contexts may be cause for disciplinary action.

Class recordings and Intellectual Property

The seminar discussions and lectures for this course will not be recorded, therefore, in-person attendance is necessary. Recording seminar lectures or discussions is strictly forbidden unless you have prior consent from me.

In addition, to protect intellectual property, please ensure that all the associated course materials are not reproduced or placed in the public domain. While everyone enrolled in the course can use course

materials for their own purposes, they cannot allow others to use it by posting it online or giving it or selling it to others who may copy it and make it available. Instructor-generated course materials are protected by law and copyright infringements can be subject to follow-up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. Your cooperation in this matter is greatly appreciated.

Required course materials

The course content and readings are freely available through the course website and the McGill Library website for students enrolled in this course. Please see the course website for course readings and other material.

Course Schedule and Content

Week	Date	Description	Course materials	Assignments due
1	The semester begins on Wednesday, January 4th. The first in-person class will be held on Tuesday, January 10th (Week 2).			
2	Jan. 10	Introduction to the course and overview	No readings assigned.	Complete the Stuff I Want to Know About You form and submit online.
3	Jan. 17	Understanding Government Guest Lecturer: Siegfried Peters	–Parliament of Canada, Understanding Parliament, https://learn.parl.ca/understanding-comprendre/en [explore the three topics and related articles: How Parliament Works, People in Parliament, Canada’s System of Government] –Assemblée Nationale du Québec, The ABC of the National Assembly, https://www.assnat.qc.ca/en/abc-assemblee/index.html [explore the eight sections and related materials]	
4	Jan. 24	Making Public Policy: The evolution of legislation on medically assisted death in Québec Guest Lecturers: Véronique Hivon and David Birnbaum	–Emmanuelle Bélanger and Pierre Deschamps, “Medical assistance in dying in Québec and Canada: legislative context and implementation issues,” <i>Gaceta Sanitaria</i> 32, no. 4 (2018): 321–23. –Jocelyn Downie, “Who is actually eligible for medical assistance in dying in Quebec?” <i>Policy Options</i> , July 25, 2022, https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/july-2022/assisted-dying-confusion-quebec/	

5	Jan. 31	<p>The Legislative Context: Shaping a consensus for legislative protection of access to health and social services in English in Québec</p> <p>Guest Lecturers: Sara Saber-Freedman and David Birnbaum</p>	<p>–Jack Jedwab and Hugh Maynard, “Chapter 8: Politics of Community: The Evolving Challenge of Representing English-Speaking Quebecers,” in Richard Y. Bourhis, ed., <i>Decline and Prospects of the English-Speaking Communities of Quebec</i> (Ottawa: Canadian Heritage, 2012), 277–312.</p>	
6	Feb. 7	<p>News Media in Canada: The Future of News</p> <p>Guest Lecturer: Christopher Curtis</p>	<p>–Public Policy Forum, <i>The Shattered Mirror: News, Democracy and Trust in the Digital Age</i> (Ottawa: Public Policy Forum, 2017).</p> <p>–Christopher Curtis, “Why I’m quitting Postmedia to test a new model of journalism,” <i>ricochet</i>, September 8, 2020, https://ricochet.media/en/3272/christopher-curtis-why-im-quitting-postmedia-to-test-a-new-model-of-journalism</p>	<p>Research Proposal due to the designated drop box by 11:59pm on Friday, February 10, 2023.</p>
7	Feb. 14	<p>From Truth and Reconciliation to Action</p> <p>Guest Lecturer: Senator Michèle Audette</p>	<p>–Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, <i>Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action</i> (2015)</p> <p>–Chad Walker et al., “Are the pens working for justice? News media coverage of renewable energy involving Indigenous Peoples in Canada,” <i>Energy Research & Social Science</i> 57 (2019), 1–14.</p>	

8	Feb. 21	Communicating Coherently on Public Policy and Writing an Op-Ed Guest Lecturers: L. Ian MacDonald and David Birnbaum	–Bob Sommer and John R. Maycroft, “Influencing Public Policy: An Analysis of Published Op-Eds by Academics,” <i>Politics & Policy</i> 36, no. 4 (2008): 586–613. –Philip Savage and Sarah Marinelli, “Sticking to their knitting?” A content analysis of gender in Canadian newspaper op-eds,” <i>Journal of Professional Communication</i> 1, no. 1 (2011): 169–83.	
9	Feb. 28	Reading Break – Classes Cancelled		
10	Mar. 7	Building Support for Issues of Equity and Access for LGBTQ+ Communities Bruce Cameron and David Cassidy	–Miriam Smith, “Social Movements and Judicial Empowerment: Courts, Public Policy, and Lesbian and Gay Organizing in Canada,” <i>Politics & Society</i> 33, no. 2 (2005): 327–53. –Nick J. Mulé, “State Involvement in LGBTQ+ Health and Social Support Issues in Canada,” <i>International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health</i> 17 (2020): 1–12.	Op-Ed Assignment due to the designated drop box by 11:59pm on Friday, March 10, 2023.
11	Mar. 14	Public Opinion Polling Guest Lecturer: Philippe Fournier	–Christopher Adams, “Canada’s Early Developments in the Public Opinion Research Industry,” <i>Journal of Canadian Studies</i> 53, no. 1 (Winter 2019): 48–69. –André Turcotte and Éric Grenier, “Chapter 6: Pollsters,” in Thierry Giasson and Alex Marland, eds., <i>Inside the Campaign: Managing Elections in Canada</i> (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2020), 99–108.	

12	Mar. 21	Senior Government Policy Development and Communication Guest Lecturer: Harold Fortin	–Michael Howlett, “Government Communication as a Policy Tool: A Framework for Analysis,” <i>The Canadian Political Science Review</i> 3, no. 2 (2009): 23–37. –Michael Howlett, Jonathan Craft, and Lindsay Zibrik, “Government communication and democratic governance: Electoral and policy-related campaigns in Canada,” <i>Policy and Society</i> 29 (2010): 13–22.	
13	Mar. 28	Social Media, Fake News, and Freedom of Expression	–Jonathan Albright, “Welcome to the Era of Fake News,” <i>Media and Communication</i> 5, no. 2 (2017): 87–89. –Jennifer McGuire and Michel Cormier, “The public broadcaster’s role in the fake news era,” <i>Policy Options</i> , February 9, 2017, https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/february-2017/the-public-broadcasters-role-in-the-fake-news-era/ –Emmett MacFarlane, “Introduction: The Challenge and Controversy of Free Expression,” in Emmett MacFarlane, ed., <i>Dilemmas of Free Expression</i> (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 3–13.	
14	Apr. 4	The Multiple Facets of Public Affairs Leadership Guest Lecturer: Senator Marc Gold	–Aengus Bridgman, “A nonpartisan legislative chamber: The influence of the Canadian Senate,” <i>Party Politics</i> 27, no. 5 (2021): 1009–1016. –Emmett Macfarlane, “Public Policy and Constitutional Rights in Times of Crisis,” <i>Canadian Journal of Political Science</i> 53 (2020): 299–303.	

15	Apr. 11	What's on the Horizon? Guest Lecturer: André Pratte	No readings assigned.	Final Research paper due to the designated drop box by 11:59pm on Thursday, April 13, 2023.
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Evaluation

Name of assignment or exam	Due date	% of final grade
Participation	Ongoing	25
Research Proposal	February 10	15
Op-Ed Assignment	March 10	20
Final Research Paper	April 13	40

Notes Regarding Evaluations:

Policy on Missed Work, Extensions, and Late Penalties:

Assignments are late if they are not posted to the appropriate online course drop box by the date and time specified in the detailed instructions for that assignment. Generally, that time will be 11:59pm on the indicated date. Late assignments are penalized at the rate of 3 percent per day. **No assignments will be accepted after two weeks of the assigned due date or after the last day of classes.** If you think you will be unable to submit your assignment on time, please contact me as soon as possible.

Extensions: Any requests for extensions or other accommodations must be made before the assignment is due, this includes requests made from students registered with Student Accessibility & Achievement. Each request will be considered on an individual basis.

Religious observations: If you cannot meet a course obligation because of a religious commitment, other than final examinations, you are responsible for informing me, with two weeks' notice of each conflict, so that accommodations can be made. When the requested accommodation concerns a final examination, you are responsible for advising your Faculty office as soon as possible and not later than the deadline for reporting conflicts. Additional documentation confirming your religious affiliation may be requested.

Urkund/Ouriginal:

Work submitted for evaluation as part of this course may be checked with text-matching software within myCourses.

Participation

You are expected to prepare for and fully participate during our seminars. We have an impressive group of guest lecturers scheduled this semester and this is your opportunity to interact and ask questions to those who are working in the fields of public policy, public affairs, political management, communications, and more. You are expected to listen carefully and respectfully to the guest lecturers, but also ask questions and stimulate discussion. In addition, you will be assigned readings for each class that will also be discussed during the seminar, and you should display a thorough and thoughtful analysis of the material assigned. When participating, you should always be respectful of the views and opinions of others in the class. For more details about group discussion participation, please see the “Participation” instructions posted on myCourses.

Research Proposal

Before submitting your research paper, you must submit a proposal to ensure the feasibility of your research topic and approach. To start, you must select a topic that relates to one of the topics found in the course syllabus. The topics are very broad, so you will have to narrow your focus further, but this rule is important because it ensures that the selected topic is appropriately focused on some contemporary issue in Canadian public affairs. The feedback you receive on your proposal should be incorporated in your final paper. For complete details, please see the “Research Proposal” instructions posted on myCourses.

Op-Ed Assignment

An op-ed is a very important form of writing in public affairs work. It provides a medium where an opinion (presumably informed) about a certain issue or topic can be expressed in a focused manner to a targeted audience. For this assignment, you must choose some contemporary Canadian politics topic. You can use this assignment to consider some element of your research topic, or you can choose another topic altogether – the choice is yours. Remember, however, that a successful op-ed piece must have a clearly defined topic and theme. For complete details, please see the “Op-Ed Assignment” instructions posted on myCourses.

Final Research Paper

After submitting your proposal, you will focus on your completing your research paper. Your final research paper should be between 3,500-4,000 words (14-16 pages double-spaced) in length. For complete details about what is required, please see the “Final Paper” instructions posted on myCourses.

Note: In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

McGill policy statements

Language of submission

In accord with McGill University's [Charter of Students' Rights](#), students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives (Approved by Senate on 21 January 2009).

Conformément à [la Charte des droits de l'étudiant](#) de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté, sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue (Énoncé approuvé par le Sénat le 21 janvier 2009).

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](#) (Approved by Senate on 29 January 2003) (See [McGill's guide to academic honesty](#) 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 procédures disciplinaires](#) (Énoncé approuvé par le Sénat le 29 janvier 2003) (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le [guide pour l'honnêteté académique de McGill](#)).