Focus and Scope of the Course

The course is designed to introduce you to the study of comparative local government by focusing on three main themes:

1. Local government in unitary and federal systems. France exemplifies unitary or monocentric states, while the United States represents federal or polycentric systems.
2. What kind of local governance exists in the Canadian federal system, and how does it work.
3. Democracy of everyday life. How the “state” meets the street (the production of public service like peace and security), what it means to be good neighbors and, more generally, the democracy of everyday life that manifest itself in different time, place and regimes.

The course is comparative and interdisciplinary in method and content.

The starting point is how best we can take hold of the subject matter. A widespread belief is that many of the problems and anxieties that citizens experience are beyond the proper sphere of their local units of government. There is truth in this but it is not the whole truth. For example, most essential public goods and services are produced at the local level, and most citizens experience “the state” and government policies through their encounter with street-level bureaucrats. Ordinary citizens can and are often co-creators of the world in which they live, and so we want to explore what difference seeing like a state and seeing like a citizen make for people to govern themselves. It is hoped that by the end of the semester you should have a better understanding and appreciation of organized complexity, institutional creativity and resilience in governance.

Items on Order in the Bookstore

The following works are available for you to acquire as part of your working library:
Course Pack.
Methods of Work and Requirements

The presentation in the lectures will follow the general sequence of the topical outline. The development of effective work habits for independent scholarship is essential if students are to be able to pursue their scholarly and educational interests on their own. Each person will be responsible for sustaining an active reading program. To facilitate this, I have assigned readings according to the expected time we shall be spending on each topic.

Grading: you are asked to choose one from two grading options, and please let me know which option you prefer no later than a week after your receive the midterm grade:

Option A:
- conference attendance and participation (10%);
- midterm exam (30%);
- final, non cumulative, exam (40%);
- a no-more-than-10 pages paper (double-spaced) (20%): this can take the form of an examination of (1) everyday politics in a place of your choice (from Socialist Hanoi to capitalist New York); (2) what is often labeled “Vancouverism”; or (3) human creativity at work: say, an examination of the challenge of building the new Champlain bridge in Montreal, or flood controls in Holland or Manitoba, or when what happens when “the state” meets the street as in the book by Bernardo Zacha (2017) of the same title, or, if you are a history buff, the building of the dome of the cathedral in Florence (a review of Ross King, Brunelleshi’s Dome would be acceptable).

Option B:
- midterm (40%);
- final, non cumulative, exam (50%),
- conference attendance and participation (10%)

May I also remind you about university regulations about plagiarism and intellectual integrity. Please abide by these rules.

Integrity: McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism, and other academic offenses under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information in English and French).

TOPICAL OUTLINE AND ASSIGNED READINGS

Topic I.
Creativity, Resilience and Organized Complexity

1. Getting hold of the subject matter: contrasting and complimentary perspectives (2 weeks)
Required Readings: Course Pack.

- Sir Peter Hall. (1998). *Cities in Civilization*. N.Y: Pantheon Books, chap.1, 3-23, esp. 5-23: keep in mind the main focus: human creativity in finding solution to collective existence over time and in different ecological niches.

**Topic II.**

**Seeing like a State or Seeing like a Citizen:**

2. Local Governance in Unitary and Federal Systems: France and the United States (3 weeks)

Required Readings: Course Pack

- Diagrams French administrative organization and evolution of ideological political families in French politics. Will make these diagrams available to the class.
Midterm exam covering Topic I and II: October 15. (in class)

**Topic III.**
Local Government in Canada:
A mix of Gargantua and Polycentricity

3. Canadian Local Government (three weeks)

Required Readings:

Course Pack
- Will distribute separately a short paper on changes from aristocracy to democracy in Montreal

**Topic IV.**
Democracy of Everyday Life across the world
Civic Competence and Conflict

4. Good Neighbors and Conflict (1 week)
Required Readings:
- Justin Farrell (2015). *The Battle for Yellowstone* (choose two cases from buffalo crusaders chap. 3, wolf conflict chap. 4, and fracking chap. 5).

5. Peace, Order and Security or when the State meets the street (2 weeks)
Required Readings: Course Pack


6. Creativity and Resilience in Collective Efforts (2 weeks)

Required Readings:


Choose one of the two articles below.


**Conclusions**

7. What We Have Done and What Remains to Be Done in understanding organized complexity