COMPARATIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT:
Seeing like a State vs Seeing Like a Citizen

Focus and Scope of the Course (REVISED AND UPDATED AUGUST 2020)

The course is designed to introduce you to the study of comparative local government by focusing on cities as laboratories of civilization, as complex forms of collective action and as mixture of good and bad life, including the practice of everyday democracy and its enemies.

The course is comparative and interdisciplinary in method and content and builds on three themes:

1. Do political forms make differences in the conduct of local governance? To answer this question we compare and contrast local government in unitary and federal systems. France exemplifies unitary or monocentric states, the United States represents federal or polycentric systems.
2. Canada has a complex mix of federal and unitary features. Hence, we want to know why, how and when different types of local government (gargantua, amalgamation, region, and polycentricity) work or do not work across provinces and territories, including Indigenous communities.
3. Democracy of everyday life and its enemies in different time, place and regimes: when and why the biblical injunction (“love thy neighbor as thyself”) works and does not work? How do we understand the production of public services like peace and security? It is possible to do away with current police practices in the USA and Canada, what exactly “defund the police” mean in political science studies? Can we learn from policing in Japan? What are the challenges of being good neighbors in good and bad times? In the course of answering these questions, we will also focus on environmental issues and visual arts.

We start the course with the challenge of how to 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 Covid 19 has, unfortunately, made this abundantly clear. Most citizens experience “the state” and government policies through their encounter with street-level bureaucrats like the police and health care operators. At the same time, the course tries to show that ordinary citizens can and often are makers of the world in which they live, they can and do act as co-creators of the world in which they live: the piazza as commons is not unique to Italy.
The course cannot cover everything in comparative local government across the world. But it is hoped that, by the end of the term, you will have gained a better understanding and appreciation of core issues like organized complexity, institutional creativity and human resilience in governance. Keep in mind, we explore what difference varied forms of governance and practice make for community life: just consider, what happens when we filter local reality through the eyes of ordinary people and not just state officials or the police?

Digital books and documents on Order in the Bookstore and may also be available electronically in the library:

Digital copies of the readings are available as the course pack, and individually through the library.

Remote Delivery
This course has been redesigned for remote delivery. Minor adjustments can be expected. Please note that in the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the instructor’s or the university’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Lectures will recorded and posted on MyCourses.
Conferences, which start on Week 3 (Sept 14-18), will be take place via Zoom. These will be held in a “fixed” format, meaning that each conference section will have a block of time to meet each week. All students in the class need to sign up for a conference and “attend” that conference. Moreover, the participation component for conferences can be fulfilled by participating in the zoom sessions and by participating in the MyCourses Discussion Boards.

**Course Requirements**

- Conference Participation 10%
- Discussion Questions throughout the term 15%
- Two short essays 40% (20% each)
- Take-home Final Exam (during finals week) 35%

Breakdown of Grade Components
- Conference Participation (10%) and Discussion Questions (15 %): Attendance and participation in conferences is required and students are expected to keep up with the readings and lectures. While speaking up is important, please keep in mind that it is not just quantity that matters, but also quality. Conferences will be set up once the semester
begins.
The discussion questions count for 15%; these cover the readings and are spread throughout the term. Each assigned question (out of least 2) can be answered in a short paragraph.
The assessment of participation will happen on a weekly basis, on weeks where there are conferences. A rubric for participation will be made available through MyCourses.

- Two Short Essays (20% each): Throughout the semester you will be assigned to write two short essays (max. 750 words). These essays will have to respond to a set of questions that ask you to connect the lectures and readings assigned for the class. There will be four short essays assigned, and you have to write essays on two of them. The questions for each essay will be made available one week before the essay due date.

The general topics and due dates for the essays are the following: remember, you choose two out of four from the following:
- choose one from either 1) Types of goods and services. Due Sept. 22.
  OR 2) Unitary vs federal systems of local governance. Due Oct 20.
Cases 3 and 4 may involve the evaluation of police services and self-governing efforts, and the visual book on the piazza.

All essays need to be submitted via MyCourses, under the appropriate assignment. Essays must be turned in on Word or pdf. Please follow these guidelines:
- Length: Maximum 750 words (title page, question prompts, bibliographic references do not count towards word limit)
- Format: double spaced, using regular margins.
- Title page: In addition to the essay itself, your essay should have a title page with your name, student ID, and word count (excluding bibliography).

- Take Home Final Exam (35%): During finals week, there will be a take home final exam covering the lectures, readings, essays, and conferences. The exam is cumulative and covers materials from the whole semester (including the topics covered in the short essays you did). Format of the exam will be communicated during the term, but it will include a set of shorter (objective) ID questions, and a set of longer (more analytical questions. Each question will have a strict word limit for the answers you provide. The exact schedule for accessing the final take home exam will depend on Final Exam scheduling. From the date of access, you will have 72 hours to complete it, on your own without any unauthorized help.

The exam needs to be submitted via MyCourses, under the appropriate assignment. Exams need to be turned in on Word or pdf. Please follow these guidelines:
- Length: each question has a maximum length in words, which will be made explicit in each question. Do not go over the word limit, as content that exceeds the word limit will
not be graded.
- Format: double spaced, using regular margins.
- Question: ensure you make clear which question you are answering.
- Title page: In addition to the exam itself, the exam should have a title page with your name and student ID.

Please note, the date of the final take home exam is set by the university. For the moment, please keep in mind that the final take home exam will consist of 3 parts, each of equal weight, consisting of 1000 words each part, for a total of 3000 words. If you answer in French, please also send a copy to my email address.

In fine, you need to observe the word count for each part of the exam. If you find yourself going over the word limit, go back and edit, trying to cut out every single sentence or word that is not absolutely necessary to make your point and to defend your answer/thesis. At each point in the exam, you should honestly be able to answer yes to the question: is this bit here really necessary for the answering the question? You will not be penalized if you go over the word limit only if it is clear that to the reader that the extra length was absolutely crucial to your argument and so warranted. Otherwise, cut.

Each answer will be marked according to the following criteria:

1. analytical rigour (logic precision, clarity of argument, consideration of counterargument etc).
2. originality/creativity
3. essay mechanics (structures of essay clear and logical, clear thesis in addressing and answer essay type question). For the IDs you will be asked to identify, describe and discuss the importance of the (5) items you have chosen out of possibly 8 items.
4. sentence mechanics (quality of prose in either English or French).
5. scholarship (accurate representation of author’s cited).
6. proper citation of sources. And Please note:
7. Academic 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 [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information in English and French).

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Please note: All content of this course, including slides, video recordings, lecture notes, etc. remain the instructor’s intellectual property. As such, you may use these only for your own learning (and research, with proper referencing/citation) ends. You are not permitted to disseminate or share these materials; doing so may violate the instructor’s intellectual property
rights and could be cause for disciplinary action.

TOPICAL OUTLINE AND ASSIGNED READINGS

**Topic I.**
Creativity and Organized Complexity: Theoretically and Historically

1. Getting hold of the subject matter, theoretically: (2 weeks)
   Required Readings: digital Course Pack.

**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.

Topic III.
Local Government in Canada:
Gargantua and Polycentricity

3. Canadian Local Government (three weeks)

Required Readings: Course Pack:
- Elinor Ostrom (1972). Metropolitan Reform: Propositions derived from two traditions.” Social Science Quarterly 53 (December): 474-93. This article is fundamental for a proper understanding of the competing claims about gargantua and polycentricity in local governance and as we will see later, why police forces in metropolitan areas have militarized (more on this later, but read carefully Sancton above).

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

4. Good Neighbors and Conflict (1 week)

Required Readings:

5. Peace, Security and Policing: what happens when the state meets the street (street level
Required Readings: Course Pack

- R.V. Ericson (1982). Reproducing Order: A Study of Police Patrol Work, 3-32. Skim to be able to answer this question: What do police officers do on patrol in Toronto?

6. Creativity and Resilience in Collective Efforts: remaking our collective life (2 weeks)
Required Readings:


OR


AND, visual politics on the piazza as a commons:


And choose one of the two articles below.


Conclusions

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