

POLI 521 – Honours Seminar in Canadian Politics

Topic: Nationalism and Federalism in Canada

Professor: Éric Bélanger
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Tuesdays
8:35-11:25 AM
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30-3:00 PM, or by appointment

Description

This seminar will explore a salient issue in contemporary Canadian Politics, that of the relevance of federalism as an institution aiming to accommodate and manage cultural (or ethnic) diversity within the country. The course will mainly focus on the correlates and consequences of Quebec nationalism, but we will also look at the presence of other cultural groups in Canada, namely the peripheral regions of the Atlantic and the West as well as Indigenous peoples. We will discuss the substantive and empirical meanings of these various “nationalisms.” In doing so, we will address the larger debate about whether federalism is a cause of, or a solution to, these cultural tensions.

Structure

There will be no lectures, as students are expected to participate actively in the seminar. That means that students must be prepared before class to discuss the readings, to read, think and discuss critically the readings, and to take seriously the views presented by the other students in the class. Weeks 11-14 will give way to presentations of each student’s work-in-progress on their research paper (15 minutes each, up to five students per week depending on total enrollment). If there is sufficient interest, we may visit the McCord museum’s permanent exhibit on Week 8.

Evaluation

Participation: 25%.

Critical essay: 15%. In a short paper (maximum of 1,500 words), students will critically review the readings of a single week and submit the essay on MyCourses before the start of that day’s meeting. Late papers will not be accepted.

Presentation: 10%. On your assignment’s work-in-progress.

Final assignment: 50%. Due on December 5 before midnight, to be submitted on MyCourses. Must be no more than 4,500 words in length (or equivalent). Students must individually consult with the professor before finalizing their choice of assignment, which can take the form of a literature review, a data analysis paper, or an artwork (e.g., painting, poem, play, short story, podcast, video documentary, etc.). A penalty of 2 marks off per 24-hour period late applies.

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 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 [McGill's Guide to Academic Honesty](#) for more information).

Extraordinary Circumstances

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

Required Readings

All the readings are journal articles or book chapters that can be found online, either via the links embedded in this syllabus or as downloadable documents on MyCourses.

Course Outline

Week 1: **Introduction and Organization** (September 5)

Week 2: **Federalism in Canada** (September 12)

Smith, "[Federalism and Democracy](#)," in *Federalism* (2004)

Breton, "[Social History of French-English Relations in Canada](#)," in *Ethnic Relations in Canada* (2005)

McRoberts, "[Canada and the Multinational State](#)," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 34:4 (2001)

Simeon, "Federalism, Language, and Regional Conflict," in *Federalism and Territorial Cleavages* (2004)

Breton, Jacques and Parkin, "[Resentment in the Canadian Federation](#)," *IRPP Bulletin* (2022)

- Week 3: Understanding Quebec Nationalism** (September 19)
- Taylor, "[Why Do Nations Have to Become States?](#)," in *Reconciling the Solitudes* (1993)
- Béland and Lecours, "[Sub-State Nationalism and the Welfare State: Québec and Canadian Federalism](#)," *Nations and Nationalism* 12:1 (2006)
- Rocher, "[Transformations in Contemporary Quebec Nationalism](#)," *Nations and Nationalism* 29:1 (2023)
- Salée, "[The New Face of Quebec Nationalism](#)," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 52:2 (2022)
- Week 4: Shared and Divergent Values** (September 26)
- Trudeau, "The Values of a Just Society," in *Towards a Just Society* (1990)
- Taylor, "[Shared and Divergent Values](#)," in *Reconciling the Solitudes* (1993)
- Mendelsohn, "[Measuring National Identity and Patterns of Attachment in Quebec](#)," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 8:3 (2002)
- Turgeon, Bilodeau, White and Henderson, "[A Tale of Two Liberalisms? Attitudes Toward Minority Religious Symbols in Quebec and Canada](#)," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 52:2 (2019)
- Week 5: Assessing Current Quebec-Canada Relations** (October 3)
- Iacovino, "[Affirmation without Recognition](#)," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 50:3 (2020)
- McGrane and Dufour, "[La divergence entre principes et politiques](#)," *Politique et Sociétés* 39:3 (2020)
- Woods, "[Beyond Multination Federalism](#)," *Ethnicities* 12:3 (2012)
- Lluch, "[Autonomism and Federalism](#)," *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 42:1 (2012)
- Week 6: Study break**
- Week 7: Regional Political Cultures** (October 17)
- Banack, "[Ethnography and Political Opinion: Identity, Alienation and Anti-Establishmentarianism in Rural Alberta](#)," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 54:1 (2021)
- Carbert, "[From Prairie Firewalls to Atlantic Seawalls](#)," in *Open Federalism Revisited* (2021)
- Collier, "[Ontario's New Identity?](#)," in *Open Federalism Revisited* (2021)
- Blanchard, "[Reassessing Provincial Political Cultures: Evidence from Five Decades of Canadian Public Opinion Surveys \(1974-2019\)](#)," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 56:2 (2023)

- Week 8:** **Indigenous Peoples** (October 24)
- Alfred, “Reconceptualizing Nationalism” and “The Rise of Native Nationalism,” in *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors* (1995)
- Coulthard, “[Place Against Empire](#),” in *Recognition versus Self-Determination* (2014)
- Sabin, “[Contested Colonialism: Responsible Government and Political Development in Yukon](#),” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 47:2 (2014)
- Lightfoot, “[Decolonizing Self-Determination: Haudenosaunee Passports and Negotiated Sovereignty](#),” *European Journal of International Relations* 29:4 (2021)
- Week 9:** *[No class on October 31]*
- Week 10:** **What To Do (or Not) ?** (November 7)
- Tanguay, “[Parties, Elections, and Canadian Federalism in the Twenty-First Century](#),” in *Canadian Federalism and Its Future* (2020)
- Sayers, McMahon and Koop, “[The Electoral Politics of Alberta’s Sovereignty Act](#),” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 56:1 (2023)
- Abu-Laban, “[Two Canadas as a Story without an End](#),” in *Canadian Federalism and Its Future* (2020)
- Savoie, “[Everything Canadian Is Regional, Except National Political Institutions](#),” in *Democracy in Canada* (2019)
- Week 11:** **Presentations** (November 14)
- Week 12:** **Presentations** (November 21)
- Week 13:** **Presentations** (November 28)
- Week 14:** **Presentations** (December 5)