POLI 631 Comparative Federalism  
CRN 16231  
Course Syllabus Winter 2017

Professor: Christa Scholtz  
Class Time: Mondays 8:35 am to 11:25 pm.  
Class Location: 422 Ferrier  
Office: 424 Ferrier  
Tel: (514) 398-6144  
Email: christa.scholtz@mcgill.ca. Please note I often do not check email when I am out of the office. Please adjust your expectations accordingly.

Seminar Description: This graduate seminar explores the theoretical underpinnings and empirical challenges of federal states from a comparative perspective. The course focuses largely on industrialized countries, with Canadian federalism providing an important example.

Plagiarism: 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 http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity).

Seminar Requirements and Evaluation:

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. (approved by Senate on 21 January 2009)

Class participation: This is a graduate seminar, so there’s lots of reading, and students will be called upon to discuss the readings with their peers. Walk in the room having done the following preparation: 1) read the articles or books with a view to understand their argument, what they are arguing against, and what kinds of contribution they are making to the field (empirical? theoretical? methodological?); 2) what links some readings together, or keep some apart? 3) what can I use from this reading to further my own research?; 4) is there something about the reading that struck you as particularly noteworthy – did it address something in a way you did not expect? Did it make you think about something differently? Did it inspire or disappoint? Did it frustrate you like no other reading in graduate school ever has? Will you vow never to foist this reading on any of your future students? Why? You may not reach an understanding prior to the seminar why you may have a reaction to a particular reading, but the seminar should be a place where students can bring these reactions forward and then through interaction with
others come to understand the reaction, and the reading, better. Part of your training is not just how to read a text and analyze it, but to listen to others and learn to contribute to a dialogue in real time.

**Short papers** (1000 words maximum each): You are expected to write one short paper on the readings for a given week, for a total of three weeks. The goal is to make a point about the literature. The short paper should not be a compendium of all the interesting thoughts and insights that swirled about in your head as you read all the readings. Rather, a successful paper will identify a theme, or a question, that the literature generally addresses, and then put forth an argument about how and how well the literature does so. A paper might examine critical differences between authors on an issue, and might make an argument about which author’s work is more compelling for what reasons. A paper might put forth an argument about how the readings reinforce each other. Not every reading for the week needs to be addressed in the paper, but at least three should.

Short papers are due at Saturday, by noon, prior to the class on Monday. I strongly suggest completing a paper in January. This is a suggestion; you are responsible for managing your course load. Papers which are not submitted by the deadline will not be accepted.

**Discussion Questions:** Those writing a short paper for a particular week are expected to provide some discussion questions to the group when they submit their short papers.

**Research Paper:** You are responsible for producing a longer research paper (roughly 20-25 pages) on the topic of your choice. The paper should engage the theoretical and empirical literature. Those of you who are completing the course to meet a Canadian program requirement will complete a paper where Canada figures largely. Everyone will be required to submit a one page initial paper proposal on February 3, by noon. The proposals will be read by every participant, and will be the subject of the class scheduled for February 6. Each seminar participant will be expected to read the proposals, and provide initial feedback. The proposals should identify a question, either empirical or theoretical, that the student wishes to engage further, with a preliminary idea as to how go about it. A final proposal is due on March 6, by noon. The final proposal will be worth 5% of your overall grade. A solid first draft of the paper is due to the seminar participants on April 6, by noon, and will be the subject of the seminar on April 10. The final paper is due on April 14, by noon. Research papers will be penalized 5% for each day late, and no longer accepted after April 17, noon.

**Summary of Evaluation:**

- Short papers: 10% each for 30% overall
- Research proposal: 5%
- Research paper and presentation: 45%
- Class participation: 15%
- Final conference discussant: 5%
Summary of Important Dates:

Note: Short papers and discussion questions due on the Saturday before class, noon
Feb 3, noon: Proposal sketch due
March 6, noon: Revised research proposal due
April 6, noon: First draft of research paper due to all seminar participants
April 10: Research paper presentations with discussants
April 14, noon: Final research paper due to professor.

Course Readings:

Articles and book chapters are available digitally on mycourses. Books are available on
course reserve at the library and the following are also available for purchase at the
University bookstore:

Filippov, M., Peter Ordeshook, and Olga Shvetsova. 2004. Designing Federalism: A
Theory of Self-Sustainable Federal Institutions. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University
Press.


Ziblatt, Daniel. 2006. Structuring the State: The Formation of Italy and Germany and the

Mahoney, James and D. Rueschemeyer (eds) 2003. Comparative Historical Analysis in
the Social Sciences. New York: Cambridge University Press

Morgan, Kimberly and Andrea Campbell. 2011. The Delegated Welfare State: Medicare,

Maioni, Antonia. 1998. Parting at the Crossroads: The Emergence of Health Insurance

Course Schedule

January 9: Introduction (no readings)

January 16: Comparative Federalism

Giovanni Sartori, “Concept Misinformation in Comparative Politics,” American Political

Cambridge University Press. Chapter 3 (Concepts: General Criteria) 35-64.


January 23: The Founding: Federalism as normative and/or strategic design of choice?


The Federalist Papers, no.2, 9, 10.


January 30: Federal Design – Engineering stability?


February 6: Discussion of Research Paper Proposals

February 13: Federalism and democratic transitions


February 20: Federalism and Accountability: Citizen monitoring


March 6: No class. Revised research paper proposals due by noon

March 13: Federal Evolution: Courts and dual vs cooperative federalism
Kathleen Thelen, “How Institutions Evolve: Insights from Comparative Historical Analysis”, in Mahoney and Rueschmeyer (eds). pp.208-240


March 20: Fiscal Federalism

Class activity: simulation!!!


March 27: Federalism and Policy Research: The Laboratory literature


Amenta, Edwin. 2003. “What We Know about the Development of Social Policy”, in Mahoney and Rueschmeyer (eds), 91-130


**April 10: Student Conference**