

Grande Prairie Regional College

PO 1030 (Section A2 & TC) Modern Political Issues

Course Dates/Times: Wednesday; 6:00 – 8:50 pm
Term: Fall 2009

Instructor: Dawn Moffat McMaster
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Office hours: Tues., 1:30 – 3:30 pm
Wed., 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

I am also available outside these hours by appointment.

Course Credit: 3 credits
Student Contact Hours: 45 hours
Transferability: UA, UC, UL, AU, CU, CUC, KUC
Delivery Mode: Lecture – live & via videoconference
Prerequisites: None

College Calendar Course Description:

This is an introduction to contemporary political issues and events. Topics vary but include matters of contemporary national and international concern such as the Quebec Question, Rights and Environmentalism. It is not intended for students majoring in political science. Not open to students who have or are taking PO 1000. [There are no prerequisites.]

Course Description Fall 2009:

Is a greater role for the private sector the solution to problems facing Canada's health care system? What should be done to prevent catastrophic consequences of global warming? When should Canada withdraw troops from Afghanistan? What role do Western sellers and consumers of cotton, coffee, and chocolate play in producing poverty elsewhere? How is the political personal? These are some of the political issues which we will examine in this course.

In addition, we will also consider some key political concepts and themes which remain important as issues change. These include basic ideologies, individual liberty, rights, and democracy. My objective is:

- To provide you with a basic political vocabulary of concepts and ideas which will enable an understanding of contemporary issues facing local, national, and global societies.
- To examine different political issues carefully, by looking at the nature of the issues and opposing points of view.

Required Texts:

1. Political Studies 1030 course package.
2. Readings to be accessed through library databases and the internet, as listed in the syllabus.

Course Evaluation Requirements:

You can choose to do either 3 position papers, or 2 papers and a midterm. A vote will be held at the beginning class on Sept. 9 to determine which of the evaluation structures will be followed. The entire class will follow whichever structure is chosen.

<i>Evaluation Structure I</i>		<i>Evaluation Structure II</i>	
Participation	10%	Participation	10%
Political Values Paper.....	10%	Political Values Paper.....	10%
2 Position Papers	15% x 2	3 Position Papers	15% x 2
Midterm	20%	Final exam.....	35%
Final exam	30%		

Participation: You will be required to complete 5 in-class quizzes/assignments at random throughout the semester. Each assignment will be worth 2% the participation grade.

Political Values Paper:

This assignment is designed to get students acquainted with their inner-political values. Some of you may have thought about where you stand on the political spectrum. You may think of yourself as left-wing or right-wing, or identify with the political party that most closely approximates where you stand. Others may be much less acquainted with where they stand politically and this assignment may help shed some light for these students.

This assignment is designed to help you determine where you stand on the political spectrum.

1. Write a 1 – 2 page summary of what your political values are.
2. Complete the political values test at found at www.politicalcompass.org, and print off the chart offered at the end
3. Write brief 1 – 2 page reflection on the assignment and whether your position on the political spectrum was where you thought it would be.

This assignment is **due on Wed., Sept. 16** in class.

Position Papers: You will write a minimum of two papers focusing on a debate theme that you have selected. These should be approximately 6 – 8 pages in length, but remember the key is to have made a good argument, not hit a certain length. I suggest using a theme which we have discussed in class, but others are acceptable as long as they are cleared with me.

This paper will require you to summarize the issues under discussion, explicate the various positions on these issues, and offer your own perspective and recommendations. While we may have discussed these issues in class, this is NOT a summary of class discussions – I expect you to examine the issues in greater depth, and look at sources beyond those used in class. I will be distributing a handout with more information on this paper in class.

Midterm & Final Exam: My exams generally have short and long answer questions, as well as some multiple choice or matching questions. The mid-term will obviously deal with

material covered to date. The final exam will be cumulative, although emphasis will be on the second half of the semester.

Marks will be given in percentages before being converted to a letter grade.

Conversion table:

A+	90 – 100%	B+	76 – 79%	C+	67 – 69%	D+	55 – 59%
A	85 – 89%	B	73 – 75%	C	64 – 66%	D	50 – 54%
A-	80 – 84%	B-	70 – 72%	C-	60 – 63%	F	0 – 49%

For conversion to the 4-point grading scale, please see the Academic Regulations and Grading section of the GPRC Calendar, available online at

<http://www.gprc.ab.ca/programs/calendar/>.

Course Policies:

Full participation in class will require:

- Demonstration that you have completed the assigned readings.
- An active role in group work and class discussions.
- Completion of all course requirements on time.
 - You are expected to reference sources fully and properly for your papers. My preferred style is MLA (a guide is available at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>), but any proper citation style (i.e. Chicago, APA) will be accepted.
 - Assignments will be submitted on paper in class, and electronically by 5 p.m. on the due date. Paper copies are easier for me to read, and allow me to provide you with notes on specific elements of your assignment. Electronic copies provide me with the option of submission to an online plagiarism detection service in the case that plagiarism is suspected. PLEASE ENSURE THAT THE COPY WHICH IS SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY MATCHES THE PAPER COPY RECEIVED IN CLASS.
 - Late assignments will be docked 3% for each day they are late. If extenuating circumstances necessitate an extension on an assignment, you are required to speak with me AHEAD OF TIME, and appropriate paperwork (i.e. a medical note) may be required. Also, please note that you are required to write the final exam on the date scheduled by the College. You should take this into account when making any travel plans.

For information on key dates and other important matters, please refer to the GPRC Calendar.

Academic Dishonesty:

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences (i.e. a grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: A Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty) and/or suspension or expulsion from the College).

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Rights & Responsibilities section of the GPRC Calendar, available online at www.gprc.ab.ca/programs/calendar/.

If I suspect plagiarism on assignments, I reserve the right to submit these to an online plagiarism detection service, as specified on p. 49 of the GPRC Calendar.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a physical, sensory or learning disability, please let me know. We can contact the designated advisor in Student Services to arrange and facilitate a variety of accommodations, on an individual case basis, to make this class work for you. For more information, please visit www.gprc.ab.ca/students/disabilities/.

Classroom Conduct:

GPRC has committed to promote an environment free of harassment or discrimination where respect will be given to ethnic, cultural, religious, and lifestyle diversity, and expects individuals will conduct themselves with respect for one another. This means your behavior should exhibit respect for yourselves, each other, the instructor, and the course material. As such:

- Students are expected to arrive to class on time and prepared.
- Laptops and cellphones are permitted in class, with a few caveats.
 - Cellphones should be on silent or vibrate mode, and I expect you wait to check calls or messages until after class. If an emergency requires otherwise, I expect you to advise me at the beginning of class.
 - Laptops are to be used for class work ONLY. Students carrying out other activities will be asked to leave their laptops at home.
- Working on assignments for other courses is not permitted. Students doing so will be asked to leave the class.
- Expressing criticism or annoyance with a view expressed by another person, either through a comment, audible noise, facial expression or body language, unless you are prepared to debate your position openly in class.
- Regular attendance. If you know you are going to be absent from class, I expect you to contact me prior to class with a reason. Students who miss an excessive number of classes may be denied the opportunity to write the final exam, as stated in the Calendar on p. 45.

Schedule of Lectures & Readings (subject to alteration, upon consent of instructor and students)	
Sept. 3 – 4	No Class
Sept. 7 – 11 *Mon., Sept. 7 – Labour Day (Week 1)	<p>Course Introduction: <i>What do we mean by ‘politics’?</i></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP. Mark Dickerson, Thomas Flanagan and Brenda O’Neill. "Chapter 1: Society, Government & Politics." In <u>An Introduction to Government and Politics</u>. P. 3 – 13. • Canadian Nurses Association, "Nursing Is A Political Act – The Bigger Picture," Nursing Now, May 2000. 4 pages available online at http://www.cna-aiic.ca/CNA/documents/pdf/publications/Nursing_Political_Act_May_2000_e.pdf
Sept. 14 – 18 (Week 2)	<p>Ideologies: <i>What do we want in a ‘good society’? What is the left – right spectrum in modern politics?</i></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP. Thomas W. Joseph. "Ch. 4: Political Ideologies." In <u>Essentials of Canadian Politics and Government</u>. P. 87 – 120. • CP. Dickerson, Mark, Thomas Flanagan and Brenda O’Neill. "Ch. 9: Ideology." In <u>An Introduction to Government and Politics: A Conceptual Approach</u>. P. 113 – 125. <p>POLITICAL VALUES ASSIGN. DUE (Both ES I & II)</p>
Sept. 21 – 25 (Week 3)	<p>Democracy: <i>What does democracy need to function? Elements of citizenship.</i></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP. Eric Mintz, David Close & Osvaldo Croci, "The Democratic Ideal." In <u>Politics, Power and the Common Good: An Introduction to Political Science</u>. P. 78 – 83, 85. • CP. Paul Johnston & Tom Pocklington, "Democracy and Representative Government." In Tom Pocklington, editor, <u>Representative Government: An Introduction to Politics and Government</u>. P. 2 – 15. <p>CP. Christina Gabriel. "Ch. 12: Citizens & Citizenship." Frm. <u>Critical Concepts: an introduction to politics</u>. Eds. Janine Brodie & Sandra Rein. P. 157 – 169.</p>
Sept. 28 – Oct. 2 (Week 4)	<p>POSITION PAPER #1 DUE (Both ES I & II)</p> <p>The Canadian Context: <i>Elements of Canada’s political culture. How do we define ourselves?</i></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP. Rand Dyck. "The Canadian Political Culture." In <u>Canadian Politics: Critical Approaches</u>. P. 239 – 268. <p>CP. Will Ferguson., Excerpt from "Ch. 2 - Project Megapole: Québec is a Joke, Canada is the Punchline." (p. 24-30), and "Ch. 11: America is Sexy", "Ch. 12: Our Home on Native Land," and "Ch 13: A Few Choice Words." From <u>Why I Hate Canadians</u>.</p>

<p>Oct. 5 – 9 (Week 5)</p>	<p>Health Care: <i>Federalism and the provinces. The Klein Revolution. Private vs. Public Sector: A Third Way?</i></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CP. C. Richard Tindal. "The Many Myths of Medicare." In <u>A Citizen's Guide to Government</u>. P. 286 – 298. CP. Kevin Taft. "The Special Case of Health Care." In <u>Shredding the Public Interest: Ralph Klein & 25 Years of One-Party Government</u>. P. 93 – 105. CP. David Gratzter. Excerpt from <u>Code Blue: Reviving Canada's Health Care System</u>. P. 167 – 187, 192 – 4. <p>Health Canada, "Canada's Health Care System at a Glance." 28 Nov. 2002. Handout.</p>
<p>Oct. 12 – 16 *Mon., Oct. 12 – Thanksgiving (Week 6)</p>	<p>MIDTERM - first 80 min. of class (ES I) or 2ND POSITION PAPER DUE (ES II)</p> <p>Media literacy: <i>What's the story behind the news? Do we understand what we're seeing?</i></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CP. Rand Dyck. "Ch 9: The Mass Media and Public Opinion Polls." From <u>Canadian Politics: Critical Approaches</u>. p. 205 – 231. Elizabeth Thoman. "Why I've Stopped Watching the 11 o'Clock News." <u>Centre for Media Literacy website</u>. Available online at http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article289.html <p>Jay Davis "News: Beyond the Myth of Objectivity." <u>Centre for Media Literacy website</u>. Available online at http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article48.html#analyze</p>
<p>Oct 19 – 23 (Week 7)</p>	<p>The International System: <i>How does the International system work? How can Canada influence other Nations?</i></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CP. James John Guy. "Ch. 13: The International System." In <u>People, Politics and Government: A Canadian Perspective</u>. P. 353 – 385. CP. Samuel Huntington & Douglas Allan Ross. "Is the World Fragmenting into Clashing Cultures?" In <u>International Relations</u>. Ed. Mark Charlton. P. 2 – 43.
<p>Oct. 26 – 30 (Week 8)</p>	<p>Obligations of the Global North: <i>Conditions, causes and responses to poverty and other challenges.</i></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anup Shah. "Sustainable Development: Brain Drain of Workers from Poor to Rich Countries," 14 April 2006. About 3 ½ pages available at http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/Development/braindrain/ CP. Garrett Hardin. "Living on a Lifeboat." In <u>Social Ethics: Morality and Social Policy</u>. Eds. Thomas Mappes and Jane Zembaty. P. 413 – 20. CP. Peter Singer. "Rich and Poor," from <u>Writing Arguments: A Rhetoric With Readings</u>. Eds. John Ramage & John Bean. P. 504 – 13. CP. Malinda S. Smith. "Rethinking Poverty in a Global Era." In <u>Critical Concepts: an introduction to politics</u>. Eds. Janine Brodie & Sandra Rein. P. 354 – 373.

<p>Nov. 2 – 6</p> <p>(Week 9)</p>	<p>POSITION PAPER #2 (ES I) or #3 (ES II) DUE</p> <p>Canada in Afghanistan. <i>When should Canadian forces be withdrawn and why?</i></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Why Are We There?” <i>Canada and the World Backgrounder</i>, May 2006. Approx. 6 pages. (available online through library databases – CBCA). • Paris, Roland. “NATO’s Choice in Afghanistan: Go Big or Go Home,” <i>Policy Options</i>, Dec. 2006 – Jan. 2007. P. 35 – 43. (available through library databases) • Readings on the current situation in Afghanistan will be assigned in class in the two weeks prior to covering this subject.
<p>Nov. 9 – 13</p> <p>*Wed., Nov. 11 – Remembrance Day</p>	<p>No Class.</p>
<p>Nov. 16 – 20</p> <p>(Week 10)</p>	<p>Climate change and global warming. <i>Who should do what?</i></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP. Robin Eckersley and Mark Woods. “Should There Be a Right to Intervene to Prevent Acute Environmental Damage?” In <i>International Relations</i>. Ed. Mark Charlton. P. 443 – 477. • Gregg Easterbrook. “Global Warming: Who Loses – and Who Wins?” <i>The Atlantic</i>, April 2007. Available online at http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200704/global-warming • Henry, Cailen. “Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health,” approx. 8 pages of text available online at http://www.climatechangecentral.com/files/attachments/DiscussionPapers/Impacts_CC_on_Human_Health.pdf. • Climate Institute, “Impact of Climate Change on Human Health,” approx. 2 pages at http://www.climate.org/topics/health.html.
<p>Nov. 23 – 27</p> <p>(Week 11)</p>	<p>Human Trafficking: Canada and Beyond. <i>What is human trafficking? Does it happen in Canada? What can we do about it?</i></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trafficking in Persons Report June 2009. United States of America Department of State. Introduction (p. 3-40) and Status Report on Canada (p. 76-77) (page numbers from document, not adobe reader) http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2007/ • CP. Moffat-McMaster, Dawn. “Human Trafficking in Canada: An Overview.” Excerpt frm. “Human Security as a Framework for Human Trafficking: Lessons from the Canadian Context.” p. 31 – 39.
<p>Nov. 30 – Dec. 4</p>	<p>Exam Review</p>