

We cannot safely leave politics to politicians...

Henry George, American economist & reformer 1839-97

**GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL COLLEGE**

Political Science 1030

**Modern Political Issues**

University Transfer

Fall 2003

Instructor: Tom Enders, PhD

Room: E306A

Telephone: 539-2996

Time: Tues. 6-8:50 p.m.

e-mail: enders@gprc.ab.ca

Office: C303

Office hours: Mon. 1-2 p.m.; Thurs. 10-11 a.m.;  
or by appointment

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.

Course description fall 2003:

Are we safer because of gun control? What should be done to prevent catastrophic consequences of global warming? Is a greater role for the private sector the solution to problems facing Canada's health care system? Should marijuana be legalized? Should gays be allowed to marry? Is the criminal justice system too lenient with young offenders, even now? 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 politics, political resources, law, individual liberty, rights, democracy, and federalism.

The course will also present the institutional arrangements of Canadian and American government.

Course objectives:

1. to carefully examine different political issues - by looking at the nature of the issues and opposing points of view
2. to introduce you to some key political concepts, institutional arrangements, and perennial questions, and help you to understand better the world of politics

Course requirements:

First exam .....	30%
Short paper.....	15%
Essay .....	25%
Final exam .....	30%

Marks will be given in percentage figures before conversion to a letter grade.

NOTE: The details of this outline are subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class.

Required texts:

1. Political Studies 1030 course package.
2. Readings to be accessed through the internet or Web CT.

## TOPICS AND DATES

(\*\*\* Subject to revision \*\*\*)

- 9 Sept. I. Introduction. What is politics? Law and Politics.  
Morality and Politics. Political resources.
- 16 Sept. II. Democracy.  
III. Gun Control.
- 23 Sept. III. Gun Control  
IV. Parliamentary vs. Presidential System.
- 30 Sept. IV. Parliamentary vs. Presidential System.  
V. Federalism.
- 7 Oct. VI. Health Care. Private vs. Public Sector approaches.
- 14 Oct. **MIDTERM EXAM**  
VII. Global warming and climate change.
- 21 Oct. VII. Global warming and climate change.  
VIII. Obligations of the rich nations of the North.
- 28 Oct. VIII. Obligations of the rich nations of the North.  
IX. The Global AIDS crisis.
- 4 Nov. X. John Stuart Mill and his arguments for individual  
liberty.  
XI. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- 11 Nov. Remembrance Day - no class
- 18 Nov. XII. Same-sex marriage. Should gays be allowed to marry?
- 25 Nov. XIII. Decriminalization of (Medical) Marijuana and other  
drugs.
- 2 Dec. XIV. Punishment and youth justice. Purposes of  
sentencing. Restorative justice. New legislation.
- 9 Dec. XV. Political Obligation. When and why is there a  
moral obligation to obey the law, if there is one.

# READINGS

(Note: CP = from Course Package. WCT = from Web CT. Also note that the order of readings differs from that of the Course Package.)

## I. Introduction.

- (CP) Mark Dickerson & Thomas Flanagan, "Politics: Gathering Support," in An Introduction to Government & Politics: A Conceptual Approach, 5th edition. Scarborough, Ont.: Nelson, 1998, pp. 16-17.
- (CP) Charles Andrain, "Types of Political Resources..." in Political Life and Social Change, 2nd edition. Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1975, pp. 98-101.

II. **Democracy.** Is it the highest virtue of political institutions?

- (CP) Paul Johnston & Tom Pocklington, "Democracy and Representative Government," from Tom Pocklington, editor, Representative Government: An Introduction to Politics and Government. Toronto: Harcourt Brace Canada, 1994, pp. 2-15.

## III. Gun Control.

- (WCT) Maclean's, "Fighting back: farmers, hunters and firearms enthusiasts are turning the gun-control debate into trench warfare," 5 June, 1995, pp. 14-18.
- (WCT) Coalition for Gun Control, "The Case for Gun Control"
- (WCT) Gary Mauser, "Gun Control is Not Crime Control," posted on the Fraser Institute website.
- (CP) George McKenna & Stanley Feingold, Introduction and Post-script to Taking Sides issue, "Do We Need Tougher Gun Control Laws," pp. 158-9, 178.  
Carl Bogus, "The Strong Case for Gun Control," pp. 160-9.  
John R. Lott, Jr., "More Guns, Less Crime," pp. 170-77.

## IV. Parliamentary vs. Presidential Systems.

- (CP) Mark Dickerson & Thomas Flanagan, "Parliamentary and Presidential Systems," in An Introduction to Government and Politics, 6th edition. Scarborough, Ont.: Nelson, 2002, pp. 327-44, 346-7, 350-6.

## V. Federalism.

- TBA

VI. **Health Care.** Public vs. private sector approaches.

- (CP) C. Richard Tindal, "The Unravelling Social Safety Net," in A Citizen's Guide to Government, 2nd edition. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 2002, pp. 284-92.
- (CP) Kevin Taft, "The Special Case of Health Care," in Shredding the Public Interest: Ralph Klein & 25 Years of One-Party Government. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press & Parkland Institute, 1997, pp. 93-105

- (CP) Dr. David Gratzner, Code Blue: Reviving Canada's Health Care System. Toronto: ECW Press, 1999, pp. 167-87, 192-4.

VII. **Global warming and climate change.** The Kyoto Accord. Alternative energy sources. The Alberta government.

- (WCT) Elizabeth May, "From Montreal to Kyoto," Policy Options, Dec. 2002/Jan. 2003, pp. 14-18 (at [www.irpp.org](http://www.irpp.org))
- (WCT) Thomas d'Aquino, "A Business Case for Responsible Climate Change," Policy Options, Dec. 2002/Jan. 2003, pp. 50-52.
- (WCT) "Savings in the energy account," Canada and the World Backgrounder. March 2000, pp. 24-27
- (CP) Ross Gelbspan, "Climate Change is Here. Now," pp. 148-56.
- (CP) Brian Tucker, "Science Friction: The Politics of Global Warming," pp. 157-67.

Both readings are from James Harf and Mark Lombardi, editors, Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Global Issues. Guilford, Connecticut: McGraw-Hill Dushkin, 2001.

VIII. **Obligations of the rich nations of the North.**

- (WCT) Gregg Easterbrook, "Safe deposit: the case for foreign aid," New Republic, 29 July 2002, pp. 16-20.
- (CP) Garrett Hardin, "Living on a Lifeboat," from Thomas Mappes and Jane Zembaty, editors, Social Ethics: Morality and Social Policy, 4th edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992, pp. 413-20.
- (CP) Peter Singer, "Rich and Poor," from John Ramage & John Bean, editors, Writing Arguments: A Rhetoric With Readings. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1995, pp. 504-13.
- (CP) Robert Van Wyk, "Perspectives on World Hunger and the Extent of Our Positive Duties," from Barbara MacKinnon, editor, Ethics: Theory & Contemporary Issues. Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1995, pp. 426-33.

IX. **The Global AIDS crisis.**

- (CP) Edward Drachman, "How Should the World Grapple with the AIDS Pandemic," pp. 259-85.

X. **John Stuart Mill** and his arguments for individual liberty.

- (CP) John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty" (selections) from John Arthur, editor, Morality and Moral Controversies, 5th edition. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1999, pp. 324-31.

XI. **The Charter of Rights.** Decisions and controversies.

- (WCT) The Charter of Rights
- (CP) Globe & Mail, "How the Charter changes justice," from Annual Editions: Canadian Politics, 3rd edition. Mahler, editor. Guilford, Connecticut: Dushkin, 199?, pp. 43-5.
- (CP) Al Strachan, Globe & Mail, "The hidden opposition," and "The 'Court Party' in practice," from Mahler, editor, Annual Editions, Canadian Politics, 3rd edition, pp. 46-7
- (CP) Rand Dyck, Canadian Politics: Concise edition.

Scarborough, Ont.: Nelson, 199?, pp. 211-13, 219-21.

Recommended:

- (WCT) Supreme Court of Canada decisions. (Browse.)  
[www.lexum.umontreal.ca/csc-scc/en/](http://www.lexum.umontreal.ca/csc-scc/en/)

XII. **Same-sex marriage.** Should gays be allowed to marry?

- (CP) "Same-Sex Marriage," pp. 88-98. Introductory remarks by Robert Paul Wolff. William Bennett, "Leave Marriage Alone," Andrew Sullivan, "Let Gays Marry," and E.J. Graff, "What is Marriage"
- (WCT) Andrew Coyne and David Frum, "How far do we take gay rights?" Saturday Night, December 1995, pp. Note that Andrew Coyne is the author of the first pages; the section by David Frum begins: "Why not? That is the question..."

XIII. **Decriminalization of (Medical) Marijuana** and other drugs.

- (CP) David Boaz, "A Drug-Free America - or a Free America?" pp. 188-95 and David Courtwright, "Should We Legalize Drugs? No," pp. 196-204 and "Postscript," p. 205, all from Stephen Satris, editor, Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Moral Issues, 8th edition. Guilford, Connecticut: McGraw-Hill Dushkin, 2002.
- (WCT) Nancy Bellingham, "Is Mary Jane really bad?" Canadian Speeches. July-August 2001, pp 28-36.

Recommended:

- (WCT) Scott Reid, "Should We End Prohibition?" pp. 6-12, and Christopher Manfredi, "Liberal Morality and the Myths of Drug Criminalization," pp. 14-17. Both from Policy Options, October 2001, and available at [www.irpp.org](http://www.irpp.org).

XIV. Punishment and **Youth Justice.** Purposes of sentencing. Restorative justice.

- (WCT) "Bad rap..." Canada and the World Backgrounder. December 2000.

XV. **Obligation to obey the law.**

- (CP) Plato, "Crito," from John Arthur & William Shaw, editors, Social and Political Philosophy. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1992, pp. 1-8.
- (CP) Jan Narveson, "Obeying the Law," ch. 13 of Moral Matters. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, pp. 259-67.
- (WCT) John Kilcullen, "Political Obligation" - approx. 2 pages at [www.humanities.mq.edu.au/Ockham/y67xan3.html](http://www.humanities.mq.edu.au/Ockham/y67xan3.html)