

We cannot safely leave politics to politicians...

Henry George, American economist & reformer 1839-97

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL COLLEGE

Political Studies 1030

Modern Political Issues

University transfer, 3 credit course
Fall 2005

Instructor: Tom Enders, PhD

Room: B303

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

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Office hours: Wed. 4-5 p.m.; Thurs. 1:30-3p.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. [There are no prerequisites.]

Course description fall 2005:

Is torture ever justified? When is it acceptable to deport undesirable persons to countries where they may be tortured? Is a greater role for the private sector the solution to problems facing Canada's health care system? Do Canadians have a right to private health care? Should they? What should be done to prevent catastrophic consequences of global warming? How should Canada respond to the world AIDS crisis? Should marijuana be legalized? 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	20%
Second exam	25%
Political resources or positional paper...	30%
Final exam	25%

Please **NOTE:** You are required to write the final exam on the date scheduled by the College. Take this into account when making any December travel plans.

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

Required texts:

1. Political Studies 1030 course package.
2. Readings to be accessed through library databases and the internet.

TOPICS AND DATES

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

- 6 Sept. I. Introduction. What is politics? Law and Politics. Morality and Politics.
- 13 Sept. I. Introduction continued. Political resources and methods. Dirty hands.
II. Democracy.
- 20 Sept. III. Parliamentary vs. Presidential System.
- 27 Sept. III. Parliamentary vs. Presidential System.
IV. Federalism.
- 4 Oct. **FIRST EXAM**
V. Health Care. Private vs. Public Sector. A Third Way?
- 11 Oct. V. Health Care continued.
- 18 Oct. VI. Torture. Morality of torture. Role of the medical profession. Canada, the United States and torture.
- 25 Oct. VII. Global warming and climate change.
- 1 Nov. VIII. Obligations of the rich nations of the North.
- 8 Nov. **SECOND EXAM.**
IX. The Global AIDS crisis.
- 15 Nov. X. John Stuart Mill and individual liberty.
XI. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and related issues including a right to private health care, same-sex marriage, abortion and euthanasia.
- 22 Nov. XII. Decriminalization or legalization of marijuana and other drugs.
- 29 Nov. XIII. Political Obligation. When and why is there a moral obligation to obey the law, if there is one?

6. Dec. Political Obligation. Review.

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

READINGS

(Note: CP = from Course Package. Also, articles from Policy Options can be retrieved from www.irpp.org. Go to Policy Options and then "back issues".)

I. **Introduction.** What is politics? What law is. Law and politics. Politics and morality. Political resources and methods. Dirty hands.

- (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.
- Mary Nemeth, Maclean's, "Fighting back" (farmers, hunters, firearms enthusiasts and gun-control) 5 June, 1995, pp. 14-18. Access through Canadian Newstand/CBCA (Proquest) database.
- Rob Cunningham, "Why Canada Has Been Successful" Chapter 17 of Smoke and Mirrors: The Canadian Tobacco War, Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 1996, pp. 189-205. Find at www.idrc.ca/en/ev-28835-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html
- "Are 'Dirty Hands' Necessary in Politics?" Issue 16 in Contemporary Political Issues, 4th edition. Introduction pp. 337-8) and Postscript (p. 355) by Mark Charlton and Paul Barker. Michael Walzer, "Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands," pp. 339-45 and David P. Shugarman, "Democratic Dirty Hands?" pp. 346-54.

II. **Democracy.** Components and requirements. Is democracy 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. **Parliamentary vs. Presidential Systems.**

- (CP) Mark Dickerson & Thomas Flanagan, "Parliamentary and Presidential Systems," in An Introduction to Government and Politics, 7th edition. Toronto: Nelson, 2006, pp. 297-326.

IV. **Federalism.**

- TBA

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

- (CP) C. Richard Tindal, "The Many Myths of Medicare" in A Citizen's Guide to Government, 3rd edition.

- Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 2005, pp. 286-98.
- (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.
 - Health Canada, "Canada's Health Care System at a Glance," at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/media/releases/2002/health_act/glance.html

VI. **Torture.** Is it ever justified? Role of the medical profession. Canada, the United States and torture.

- Michael Levin, "The Case for Torture." Find at <http://ontology.buffalo.edu/smith/courses01/rrtw/levin.htm>
- Giovanni Maio, "History of medical involvement in torture-then and now," The Lancet, 19 May 2001. Approx. 5 pages. Retrieve from Expanded Academic database.
- Wikipedia, "Medical Torture." Approx. 2 pages.
- Steven H. Miles, "Abu Ghraib: its legacy for military medicine," The Lancet, 21 August 2004, pp. 725-9. Retrieve from Expanded Academic.
- Eyal Press, "In Torture We Trust?" The Nation, 31 March 2003. Approx. 7 pages. Retrieve from www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Torture/Torture_We_Trust.html

Recommended:

- Wikipedia, "Torture"

VII. **Global warming and climate change.** The Kyoto Accord. Positions of the Canadian and Alberta governments.

- Douglas Macdonald and Debora VanNijnatten, "Sustainable Development and Kyoto Implementation in Canada: The Road Not Taken," July-August 2005, Policy Options, pp. 13-19.
- Thomas d'Aquino, "A Business Case for Responsible Climate Change," Policy Options, Dec. 2002/Jan. 2003, pp. 50-52.
- "Savings in the energy account," Canada and the World Backgrounder. March 2000, pp. 24-27. Access through Canadian Newstand/CBCA (Proquest) database.
- (CP) Ross Gelbspan, "Climate Change is Here. Now," pp. 148-56.
- (CP) Brian Tucker, "Science Friction: The Politics of Global Warming," pp. 157-67.

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

Recommended:

- Elizabeth May, "From Montreal to Kyoto," Policy Options, Dec. 2002/Jan. 2003, pp. 14-18

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

- Gregg Easterbrook, "Safe deposit: the case for foreign aid," New Republic, 29 July 2002, pp. 16-20. Retrieve from Expanded Academic.

- (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.

- The Charter of Rights. Retrieve from http://canada.justice.gc.ca/Loireg/charte/const_en.html
- (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.
- (CP) "Is the Canadian Charter of Rights Antidemocratic?" pp. 96-108 including Charlton & Barker, Introduction and Postscript; Robert Martin, "The Canadian Charter... is Antidemocratic and Un-Canadian," pp. 96-102; and Philip Bryden, "... An Opposing Point of View," pp. 103-107

Recommended:

- Nelson/Thomson, "Civil Rights in Canada," at <http://polisci.nelson.com/rights.html>

XII. 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.

- Nancy Bellingham, "Is Mary Jane really bad?"
Canadian Speeches. July-August 2001, pp 28-36.
Retrieve from CPI.Q database.

Recommended:

- 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.

XIII. **Obligation to obey the law.**

- Plato, "Crito" Retrieve from
<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/crito.html>
- (CP) Jan Narveson, "Obeying the Law," ch. 13 of Moral Matters.
Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, pp. 259-67.