

Grande Prairie Regional College
Political Studies 1020
Introduction to Political Institutions, Processes and Problems
University Transfer
Winter 2003

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Office hours: TBA

Room: B201
Time: M, W 14:30-15:50

College Calendar course description:

This course is an introduction to the institutions, processes and problems of government emphasizing Canadian and other democratic governments. The course includes discussions of law, constitutions, civil liberties, public opinion, voting behaviors, electoral systems, political parties, interest groups, federalism and nationalism. This course offers an introduction to different fields of political study. Problems to be examined may include: political integration, the right to national self-determination, humanitarian intervention, globalization, global warming, terrorism and other issues.

Course description, winter term 2003:

This course is designed to introduce you to political institutions and processes, primarily through a comparison of Canadian and American political systems. How similar are they? How significant are the differences? How might each country influence the other in the future? Will Canada have an independent future?

In addition to issues of nationhood and ethnicity, we will discuss gun control and health care.

We will also explore ways in which political actors attempt to persuade others to accept their political messages.

Course objectives:

By the end of this course you should be able to define key terms, explain major functions of various components of political systems, and think critically about the performance of the systems. You should be better able to compare, contrast, scrutinize, analyze, question, argue and think clearly and independently about political players and political systems. You should leave with basic knowledge to utilize as a citizen, and as a student when pursuing further academic study of politics.

Course requirements:

6 very short reviews of articles from Thomas text...	10%
3 very short course reflections exercises.....	10%
Midterm exam.....	25%
Term paper.....	25%

Final exam..... 30%

Note: You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with College Calendar information pertaining to cheating and plagiarism, for which there are a range of penalties (see pages 37-38). Also note and observe key dates during the term (pp. 12-13).

Required Texts:

1. Mark Dickerson & Thomas Flanagan, An Introduction to Government and Politics: A Conceptual Approach, 6th edition. Scarborough: Ontario: ITP Nelson, 2002.
2. David M. Thomas, editor. Canada and the United States: Differences that Count, 2nd edition. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2000.

Topics

I. **Introduction.** What is politics? Political resources. What is Political Science?

II. **Institutions and Political Processes**

1. The political process
2. Political culture
3. Parliamentary vs. presidential systems
4. Gun control
5. Health care
6. The executive branch
7. Bureaucracies
8. Legislatures or representatives assemblies
9. Courts and rights
10. Political parties and interest groups
11. Elections and electoral systems
12. Local government

III. **Political information and persuasion**

1. News media and democracy
2. Mass entertainment and the Canadian identity
3. Political communications

IV. **Accommodating national and ethnic identities and aspirations**

1. Sovereignty and sovereignty options - unitary, federal and confederal arrangements
2. Nationalism and national self-determination
3. Aboriginal Peoples
4. Quebec and language and race in the United States
5. Immigration and multiculturalism

V. **Conclusion**

The Canadian and American political relationship. Should Canada join the

United States?

Readings for Topics

I. **Introduction.** What is politics? Political resources. What is Political Science?
- D&F, Introduction, "The Study of Political Science," and Chapter 1, "Society, Government and Politics"

II. **Institutions and Political Processes**

1. The political process

- D&F, Ch. 22

2. Political culture

- D&F, Ch. 5, "Political Culture & Socialization"

3. Parliamentary vs. presidential systems

- D&F, Ch. 20

4. Gun control

- Leslie Pal, "Between the Sights," in Thomas, pp. 68-93

5. Health care

- Robert Evans, "Two Systems in Restraint," in Thomas, pp. 21-51

6. The executive branch

- D&F, Ch. 27

- Jennifer Smith, "The Grass is Always Greener," in Thomas, pp. 229-47

7. Bureaucracies

- D&F, Ch. 28, "The Administration"

8. Legislatures or representatives assemblies

- D&F, Ch. 26, "Representatives Assemblies"

- Roger Gibbins & Peter McCormick, "A Tale of Two Senates," in Thomas, pp. 248-61

9. Courts and rights

- D&F, Ch. 29

- Hon. Justice Kerans, "Two Nations Under Law," in Thomas, pp. 359-76

- Christopher Manfredi, "Rights & the Judicialization of Politics in Canada and the United States," in Thomas, pp. 301-18

10. Political parties and interest groups

- D&F, Ch. 23

11. Elections and electoral systems

- D&F, Ch. 25

- Michael Martinez, "Turning Out or Tuning Out," in Thomas, pp. 211-28
- 12. Local government
- handout

III. Political information and persuasion

1. News media and democracy

- D&F, Ch. 24, "Communications Media"
- handout

2. Mass entertainment and the Canadian identity

- David Taras, "Swimming Against the Current," in Thomas, pp. 192-208

3. Political communications

- TBA

IV. Accommodating national and ethnic identities and aspirations

1. Sovereignty and sovereignty options - unitary, federal and confederal arrangements

- D&F, Ch. 21, "Unitary and Federal Systems," and Ch. 3, "Sovereignty, State & Citizenship"
- Francois Rocher, "Dividing the Spoils," in Thomas, pp. 262-83

2. Nationalism and national self-determination

- D&F, Ch. 4, "The Nation," and Ch. 13. "Nationalism"

3. Aboriginal Peoples

- D&F, Ch. 13, "Nationalism," pp. 206-9 ("Aboriginal Nationalism")
- Kathy Brock, "Finding Answers in Difference," in Thomas, pp. 338-58

4. Quebec and language and race in the United States

- D&F, Ch. 7, "Constitutionalism," pp. 91-3 ("Two Decades of Constitutional Politics")
- Richard Iton, "The Backlash & the Quiet Revolution," in Thomas, pp. 141-64
- Handout

5. Immigration and multiculturalism

- Tamara Palmer Seiler, "Melting Pot and Mosaic," in Thomas, pp. 97-120

V. Conclusion

The Canadian and American political relationship. Should Canada join the United States?

- Christopher Kirkey, "The Canada-United States Political Relationship," in Thomas, pp. 284-98