

**Political Science 3348F
Federalism in Canada and Beyond
Department of Political Science
Western University
Fall Term, 2026**

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Office hours: Thursday 4-5:30 pm, or by appointment

Course Description:

This course addresses federalism conceptually, theoretically, and as a complex political project introduced in many countries. The empirical emphasis will be on the Canadian case, but with a sustained attempt to compare Canadian federalism with a significant number of other federal systems in a variety of global regions. The course will be organized thematically, based on coverage of definitional challenges, the sources of federalism, the ways federations have been institutionalized, and the implications of federalism for policy and other important social and political outcomes. The case studies will be woven into these treatments of key concepts, themes, and theories. Overall, the aim is to enable students to think carefully, critically, and comparatively about federalism and its prospects in a changing world.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- (a) Engage with the complexities of defining federalism and identifying federal cases
- (b) Make sense of the causes and circumstances supporting federalism
- (c) Establish the main effects of federalism, in areas such as development and democratization
- (d) Understand in detail the evolving role and character of federalism in Canada
- (e) Compare the Canadian case with a variety of other major federal cases.

Course Format:

We will meet in person on a weekly basis. Our class meetings will combine significant lecture segments with plenty of opportunities for questions and discussion. So, please do show up having read and absorbed the assigned readings, and ready to engage with the material in vigorous and critical fashion. All assigned readings, save those from the textbook, will be made available on the OWL site, at the Course Readings tab.

Required Textbook:

Douglas Brown, Herman Bakvis, and Gerald Baier, *Contested Federalism: Certainty and Ambiguity in the Canadian Federation* (Oxford University Press, 2019). This book is available for purchase at the Western University Bookstore.

****Attendance is required for success in this course.**

****Electronic devices will be permissible only for the purpose of note-taking and any other class-related activities. Disruptive use of these devices will not be permitted.**

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

- (a) Mid-Term Exam: 30%
- (b) Final Exam: 35%
- (c) Comparative Essay: Canadian federalism in relation to one other case (6-7 pages): 25%
- (d) Participation: 10%

Mid-Term Exam: Students will write a 90-minute exam, during class time on November 4th. The exam will cover all course materials – readings and lectures – introduced to that point. The exam will include short- and long-answer segments. This is the course assignment that permits no undocumented absence, but rather only accommodation based on medical or compassionate grounds. If accommodation is properly acquired through Academic Advising, the makeup exam will take place on November 13th.

Final Exam: Students will write a two-hour formal exam, in essay format, which will focus mainly on the material covered since the mid-term exam. The exam will take place during the final exam period, as determined by the registrar.

Comparative Essay: Students will draw on course materials, as well as at least five high-quality non-syllabus sources, to produce a critical and comparative analysis of federalism in Canada and one other country. The essay will emphasize comparison of the character of the federal arrangements and their most important impacts. How and how well is federalism established and institutionalized in the two countries, and how would you evaluate the role and results of federalism in these cases? More details will be provided on the course website. **Due date:** November 28, 11:59 pm, with flexibility to November 30, 11:59 pm.

Participation: Students will be expected to participate regularly and constructively in our weekly meetings. Participation will be evaluated based on the following considerations: relevance, responsiveness to the material laid out in assigned readings and lecture segments, and insightfulness. Keep in mind that a well-informed and helpful question can be an important element in course participation.

Prerequisite: Political Science 2230E, 2530F/G, 2234E, 2244E, 2245E or 2545F/G. Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This

decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisite.

Extensions and Accommodations

The mid-term exam will be the course requirement with accommodation limited exclusively to those providing supportive documentation on medical or compassionate grounds. Undocumented absence will not justify missing the exam. The one and only makeup exam is scheduled for November 13th for those granted such accommodation. The comparative essay will feature built-in deadline flexibility – if you require medical or compassionate accommodation, this must be registered before the proper deadline, *not* the flexible deadline, which means by November 28th. All requests for accommodation must proceed through Academic Advising, not the professor. Students with a formal accommodation permitting them to write exams separately or with extra time should contact Accessible Education as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism and AI

Academic offenses such as plagiarism and reliance on AI technologies such as ChatGPT will be taken very seriously. Students are expected to research and write their own assignments in full. The substantial benefits derived from engaging in independent research, formulating and organizing your own thoughts, and expressing them clearly and persuasively cannot otherwise be accessed.

Plagiarism involves reliance on the work of another author without attribution. Students must compose their own essays and assignments, in their own words. Whenever students incorporate an idea, or a passage, or data from another author, they must fully acknowledge this by using quotation marks where appropriate and by properly citing the borrowed material.

Plagiarism can be direct, involving straightforward copying of an author's work without providing both attribution and quotation marks. It can be less direct, involving lightly paraphrasing an author's work, rearranging their sentences while maintaining the same general structure and meaning, or stitching together material from two or more sources — these would count as plagiarism even with the source or sources identified, as they rely too heavily upon the way the author or authors chose to present their ideas. Take note that students may satisfactorily write up an author's ideas in their own words, but then neglect to cite the source or sources of the ideas, which also counts as plagiarism. And students may plagiarize themselves by submitting work they have previously submitted in other courses.

Plagiarism is a major academic offence, one which is taken seriously at Western.

See Scholastic Offence Policy and Procedures in the Western Academic Calendar for more detail:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/undergrad_scholastic_offence_procedure.pdf

"All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of

plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).”

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Use of Artificial Intelligence for generating content is prohibited in this course. The aim of the paper project is to improve your ability to think, to develop and organize your ideas, and to present the results cogently and effectively. The ideas as well as their expression should be your own; anything else is plagiarism. AI-generated writing tends in any case to be bland and mediocre, which your grader may easily recognize. When using AI, reliance on false citations (i.e., AI hallucinations) will also be considered as an academic offence. Although this doesn't involve plagiarizing from a specific author, it does involve inclusion of AI-generated material without proper attribution, and which simply may not even exist to properly attribute.

Appeals

Grade appeals must begin with a brief statement (1-3 paragraphs) of what you feel the professor missed or failed to fully appreciate in your assignment. The appeal will only be taken up if the provided reasons are sufficiently compelling. Please wait at least 48 hours after the release of grades before submitting a grade appeal. No appeal will be accepted beyond three weeks after the release of grades.

Grading and Grade Adjustments

The Department of Political Science has a policy that undergraduate final course grades will only be rounded to the next whole grade if they end at 0.5 or higher; otherwise, they will be rounded down. Grade adjustments will only occur based on the appeals process, as above.

Lecture Notes

Lecture slides will be provided to students, generally just prior to the lecture. These slide sets are no substitute for the lectures themselves, but having them may permit less in-class note-taking and more engagement in class discussions.

Support Services

Please contact accessibility@uwo.ca if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material and/or physical space accessible to you. <https://accessibility.uwo.ca/index.html>.

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these

traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts on the Wellness and Wellbeing website <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/index.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca. Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. <https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental-health/index.html>.

Course Meetings and Readings

Week One

Introduction (September 9)

Week Two

Conceptualizing Federalism (September 16)

Brown et al., chapter 1.

Thomas O. Hueglin and Alan Fenna, 2015. *Comparative Federalism: A Systematic Inquiry* (University of Toronto Press, Second Edition), chapter 4.

Ronald L. Watts, 1998. "Federalism, Federal Political Systems, and Federations." *Annual Review of Political Science* 1: 117-37.

Week Three

Federalism: Origins, Institutions, and Justifications (September 23)

Brown et al., chapter 2.

Sean Mueller and Alan Fenna, 2022. "Dual versus Administrative Federalism: Origins and Evolution of Two Models." *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 52 (4): 525-52.

Erik Wibbels, 2006. "Madison in Baghdad? Decentralization and Federalism in Comparative Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 9: 165-88.

Week Four

Federalism, Ethnicity, and Nationalism (October 7)

Brown et al., chapter 12.

Brendan O'Leary, 2001. "An Iron Law of Nationalism and Federation? A (Neo-Diceyan) Theory of the Necessity of a Federal *Staatsvolk* and of Consociational Rescue." *Nations and Nationalism* 7 (3): 273-96.

Alain-G. Gagnon, 2021. "Multinational Federalism: Challenges, Shortcomings and Promises." *Regional and Federal Studies* 31 (1): 99-114.

*****Break Week – No session October 14**

Week Five

Federalism, Diversity, and Territory (October 21)

Brown et al., chapter 11.

Helder de Schutter, 2011. "Federalism as Fairness." *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 19 (2): 167-89.

John Kincaid, 2020. "Origins and Consequences of American Multicultural Federalism: Constitutional Patriotism, Territorial Neutrality, and National Polarization." In Alain-G. Gagnon and Arjun Tremblay, eds., *Federalism and National Diversity in the 21st Century* (Springer International Publishing).

Week Six

Federalism and Democracy (October 28)

Brown et al., chapter 5.

Arthur Benz and Jared Sonnickson, 2017. "Patterns of Federal Democracy: Tensions, Friction, or Balance Between Two Government Dimensions." *European Political Science Review* 9 (1): 3-25.

Scott Brenton, 2023. "Does Federalism Enhance Representative Democracy? Perpetual Reform and Shifting Power in a Divided Belgium." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 31 (2): 500-18.

Week Seven

Mid-Term Exam (November 4)

90-minute exam featuring short- and long-answer segments.

Week Eight

Federalism: Constitutional Design, Development, and Democratization (November 11)

Brown et al., chapter 3.

J. Tyler Dickovick, 2014. "Federalism in Africa: Origins, Operation and (In)Significance." *Regional and Federal Studies* 24 (5): 553-70.

Rotimi Suberu, 2009. "Federalism in Africa: The Nigerian Experience in Comparative Perspective." *Ethnopolitics* 8 (1): 67-86.

Julian Durazo Hermann, 2016. "Federalism: The Latin American Experience." *The Ashgate Research Companion to Federalism* (Ashgate). 517-33.

Week Nine

Federalism and the Judiciary (November 18)

Brown et al., chapter 4.

Robert Schertzer, 2017. "Federal Arbiters as Facilitators: Towards an Integrated Federal and Judicial Theory for Diverse States." *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 15 (1): 110-36.

Arthur Benz, 2017. "The Federal Constitutional Court of Germany: Guardian of Unitarism and Federalism." In John Kincaid and Nicholas Aroney, eds., *Courts in Federal Countries: Federalists or Unitarists?* (University of Toronto Press).

Week Ten

Fiscal Federalism (November 25)

Brown et al., chapter 6.

André Lecours, Gregory P. Marchildon, MR Olfert, Daniel Béland, and Haizhen Mou, 2017. *Fiscal Federalism and Equalization Policy in Canada: Political and Economic Dimensions* (University of Toronto Press), chapter 1.

Jennifer Wallner, "(Dis)Empowerment and Self-Rule: Fiscal Federalism and Minority Nations in Canada," In Francois Boucher and Alain Noel, eds., *Fiscal Federalism in Multinational States: Autonomy, Equality, and Diversity* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021).

Week Eleven

Federalism as Economic Union (December 2)

Brown et al., chapter 8.

Louise Tillin, 2021. "Building a National Economy: Origins of Centralized Federalism in India." *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 51 (2): 161-85.

Milan Vaishnav, 2024. "The Rise of India's Second Republic." *Journal of Democracy* 35 (3): 38-56.

Week 12

Federalism and Social Policy (December 9)

Brown et al., chapter 7.

Paul Pierson, 2018. "Federalism, Race, and the American Welfare State." In Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant, John Myles, Will Kymlicka, and Richard Johnston, eds., *Federalism and the Welfare State in a Multicultural World* (McGill-Queen's University Press).

Louise Tillin and Anthony W. Pereira. 2017. "Federalism, Multi-Level Elections and Social Policy in Brazil and India." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 55 (3): 328-52.