

POL 1030A: A Beginner's Guide to Canada
Fall 2025

Draft Date : 11 June 2025.

The final version of the syllabus will be posted on OWL by September 5, 2025.

Course Instructor:	Dr. Christopher Alcantara
Office:	Contact Instructor
Course Questions:	Please post your questions on the Brightspace Discussions page first.
Email:	For questions specific to your situation, contact calcanta@uwo.ca
Course Venue/Time:	Online – Asynchronous on OWL Brightspace
Course Structure:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students must complete the assigned readings BEFORE watching the recorded lectures on OWL Brightspace.• Each week's lectures will be released on Sunday at 6am, starting on Sunday Sept. 7 for week 1, Sunday Sept. 14 for week 2, etc. Please view the lectures sometime during that week before the next set of lectures is released.• Students will complete two one-hour tests on OWL over the course of the term, with the first one occurring during Week 4 (Friday Oct. 3). The test can be completed anytime between 6am and 10pm on that day. Details are below. You are expected to complete the test with no aids, human, AI or otherwise.• To pass this course, students must complete ALL tests and the final exam and achieve the minimum course grade to pass, as per university regulations. Failure to meet these requirements will result in an automatic failure in the course.
Please Note: This is a rigorous first year political science course. To be successful in it will require diligent studying and note taking. Last year's course averages were 74% for test 1 and 72% for test 2. If you choose to enroll in this course, be prepared to fully engage with all the required materials.	

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course provides international students, recent immigrants, and others with a comprehensive overview of Canada. Its purpose is to help mainly newcomers gain a better understanding of what it means to live, study, and work in Canada, with a focus on describing Canada's political and legal system, its key policy debates, and its social and economic bases. Specific topics may include Indigenous rights and decolonization, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, capitalism, climate change, education policy, federalism, foreign policy, health care policy, housing policy, the legal system, immigration, Quebec, multiculturalism, and value change. Students will learn about the key characteristics of Canada through lectures, guest speakers, readings, videos, and other materials.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

At the end of the term, students should be able to:

- Describe the nature and evolution of Canada's political, economic and legal systems;
- Explain the historical and on-going importance of Quebec and Indigenous peoples to Canada and Canadian identity;
- Assess the relationship between Canadian policies and the unique and complex makeup of Canadian society;
- Synthesize information on Canada from a variety of sources.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS AND READINGS:

- Donald Wright, 2020. *Canada: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
 - https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search?campus=UWO&term=W2024A&courses%5B0%5D=650_UW/POL_1030A
- Other readings are available through OWL, in the library, and/or online.

LIST OF ASSIGNMENTS

1) Two Tests on OWL Brightspace: 60%

- Week 4, Friday Oct. 3, anytime between 6am and 10pm: 25%
- Week 8, Friday Oct. 31, anytime between 6am and 10pm: 35%

2) Final Exam on OWL Brightspace: 40%

- To be scheduled by the Registrar's Office.

Total: 100% of Course Grade

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS

1) Two One-Hour Tests

60%

Students will write a test on OWL Brightspace on the Fridays of Weeks 4 and 8 (Oct. 3 and Oct. 31). Each test will be based on all course materials (e.g. lectures and readings) since the beginning of the term (for Test 1) or the last test written (for Test 2). The tests are NOT cumulative. Question formats will include multiple choice, true/false, and multi-select. **For multi-select questions, students must select all correct answers to receive full marks; no part marks will be awarded for partially correct responses.**

Students will have ONE hour to complete the test and may access the test at any time between 6am and 10pm on the day that the test is scheduled to occur. The test is **linear**, which means you cannot go back to a question once you have answered it. Students are expected to complete the tests alone and with **no aids**, human, AI (e.g. ChatGPT) or otherwise.

Once you submit your test, you will not be able to view the questions and your answers nor will you receive any feedback at the end of each test beyond your grade. This is to discourage cheating and the sharing of information about the tests.

2) Final Exam

40%

Students will write a 2-hour final exam on OWL Brightspace during the exam period as scheduled by the Registrar's Office. It will assess students' knowledge of course materials from the last test (#2) onwards using the same question formats as the previous tests. The final exam is **linear** which means you cannot go back once you answer a question.

A NOTE ON MISSED TESTS AND EXTENSIONS

You are expected to write each test on OWL Brightspace on the scheduled dates, Friday Oct. 3 and Friday Oct. 31, anytime between 6am and 10pm. If you require academic consideration in case of illness and/or another circumstance that prevents you from writing on these dates, you will automatically receive an extension for up to 7 days from the scheduled date. **There is no need to contact the instructor or academic counselling nor are you required to provide any additional information or supporting documentation.** Just log in to the Brightspace page and write the test. For Test 1, you may write the makeup test any time between 6am on Friday Oct. 3 and 10pm on Friday Oct. 10. For Test 2, you may write the makeup test any time between 6am on Friday Oct. 31 and 10pm on Friday Nov. 7. This extension applies automatically for both tests and for all students.

No further academic considerations will be made for either test after Oct. 10 and Nov. 7. **In other words, supporting documentation submitted to your Academic Counselling Office to cover the time frame between Oct. 3 and Oct. 10, and Oct. 31 and Nov. 7 will not result in a further extension being granted.** In cases where extenuating circumstances exist, students are advised to contact their Academic Counselling Office to discuss other options. This same policy applies to the final exam in which you automatically receive an extension for up to 7 days from the scheduled date. Please be aware that receiving a mark of zero on this course component and/or lost time because of an extended absence in this course will negatively impact the learning outcomes and your ability to be successful in this course.

CLASS AND READING SCHEDULE

Week 1 (Sept. 8): Course Details and an Overview of Canada

READ:

- Wright Introduction.
- Wright Chapter 1: Beginnings.

Week 2 (Sept. 15): Canadian Values and Value Change

READ:

- Jennifer Ditchburn. 2016. "Our constantly evolving Canadian values." *Policy Options* <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/september-2016/our-constantly-evolving-canadian-values/>

Week 3 (Sept. 22): Canada's Political System

READ:

- Alex Marland and Jared Wesley. 2020. "Chapter 1: Overview of Canadian Politics." *Inside Canadian Politics* 2nd Edition, Oxford University Press.

Week 4 (Sept. 29): Canadian Political Economy

READ:

- Heather Whiteside. 2020. "Introduction: Changes, Crises, and Conflicts in Canadian Political Economy." *Canadian Political Economy*. Edited by Heather Whiteside. University of Toronto Press. Read only pp. 3-17.

Week 5 (Oct. 6): Indigenous-Settler Relations

READ:

- Wright Chapter 2: Disposessions.
- Arthur Manuel. 2017. "In Canada, white supremacy is the law of the land." *Now Toronto*. October 26. Available at: <https://nowtoronto.com/news/in-canada-white-supremacy-is-the-law-of-the-land/>

Week 6 (Oct. 13): Quebec and the West

READ:

- Wright Chapter 3: Nationalisms.
- Lisa Young and Loleen Berdahl. 2022. "Standing up to Ottawa: Western alienation shifts into Prairie constitutional challenges." *Policy Options* December 14. Available at: <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/december-2022/western-alienation-constitutional-challenges/>

Week 7 (Oct. 20): Multiculturalism and Immigration

READ:

- Tina J. Park. 2021. "Tackling racism against Asian-Canadians as multiculturalism turns 50." *Policy Options*. <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/march-2021/tackling-racism-against-asian-canadians-as-multiculturalism-turns-50/>
- Mireille Paquet. "Canada's merit-based immigration system is no magic bullet." *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/canadas-merit-based-immigration-system-is-no-magic-bullet-90923>

- Optional Reading – Skim The Canadian Citizenship guide (which newcomers use to prepare for the [citizenship test](https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/discover-canada.html)): <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/discover-canada.html>

Week 8 (Oct. 27): The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

READ:

- Wright Chapter 4: Rights.
- Jonathan Rudin. 2018. "The (in)justice system and Indigenous people." *Policy Options* <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/april-2018/the-injustice-system-and-indigenous-people/>
- Optional Reading - Peruse this website on the Charter: <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/rfc-dlc/ccrf-ccd1/>

Week 9 (Nov. 3): FALL READING WEEK – NO LECTURES OR READINGS THIS WEEK

Week 10 (Nov. 10): Research in Political Science

READ:

- Complete the module on the OWL Brightspace page.

Week 11 (Nov. 17): Social Movements

READ:

- Alex Marland and Jared Wesley. 2020. "Chapter 12: Interest Groups and Social Movements." *Inside Canadian Politics* 2nd Edition, Oxford University Press.

Week 12 (Nov. 24): Public Policy and Racial Inequality

READ:

- Keith Banting and Debra Thompson. 2021. "The Puzzling Persistence of Racial Inequality in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 54 (4): 870–891. Doi: 10.1017/S0008423921000585.

Week 13 (Dec. 1): Canadian Social Policy: The Education and Health Care Systems

READ:

- Jane Jenson. 2010. "Chapter 23: Continuities and Change in the Design of Canada's Social Architecture." *The Oxford Handbook of Canadian Politics*. Oxford University Press: 417-433. Available for free here: <https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/28243/chapter/213350177>

COURSE POLICIES

Academic Offences and Plagiarism:

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy about what constitutes a scholastic offence, here:

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

That policy reads:

“Scholastic Offences include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Plagiarism, which may be defined as “The act or an instance of copying or stealing another’s words or ideas and attributing them as one’s own.” Excerpted from Black’s Law Dictionary, West Group, 1999, 7th ed., p. 1170. This concept applies with equal force to all assignments, including laboratory reports, diagrams, and computer projects. Students wishing more detailed information should consult their instructor, Department Chair, or Dean’s Office. In addition, they may seek guidance from a variety of current style manuals available in the University’s libraries. Information about these resources can be found at: <http://www.lib.uwo.ca/services/styleguides.html>
2. Cheating on an examination or falsifying material subject to academic evaluation.
3. Submitting false or fraudulent assignments or credentials; or falsifying records, transcripts or other academic documents.
4. Submitting a false medical or other such certificate under false pretences.
5. a) Improperly obtaining, through theft, bribery, collusion or otherwise, an examination paper prior to the date and time for writing such an examination. b) Unauthorized possession of an examination paper, however obtained, prior to the date and time for writing such an examination, unless the student reports the matter to the instructor, the relevant Department, or the Registrar as soon as possible after receiving the paper in question.
6. Impersonating a candidate at an examination or availing oneself of the results of such an impersonation.
7. Intentionally interfering in any way with any person's scholastic work.
8. Submitting for credit in any course or program of study, without the knowledge and written approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which

credit has been obtained previously or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere.

9. Aiding or abetting any such offence.”

Extensions and Academic Consideration for Student Absence:

Extensions are not generally given. When there are genuine and unavoidable family or medical circumstances, you may seek academic accommodation.

“University policy on academic considerations are described [here](#). This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation. Further information about academic considerations, and information about submitting this self-attestation with your academic consideration request may be found [here](#).

Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.

“If you fail to hand in an assignment, but are pursuing academic accommodation, **please advise your professor immediately**.

A Note Regarding Computer Problems:

Students are expected to back up their written work and lecture/tutorial notes. Furthermore, students will be responsible for finding replacement lecture/tutorial notes where they fail to back-up their files.

Religious Accommodation

When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the course instructor and/or the Academic Counselling office of their Faculty of Registration. Please consult University's list of recognized religious holidays (updated annually) at

<https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>.

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Accessible Education, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or

psychological and cognitive testing. The policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities can be found at:

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

Lecture Copyright:

The course instructors claim material and image copyright so please ask for permission if you want to audio record or video record any part of the course.

Statement on Contact

Please expect at least a 48 hour delay in receiving a response to emails, although at our discretion responses may occur sooner.

Statements concerning Online Etiquette

Some components of this course may involve online interactions. To ensure the best experience for both you and your classmates, please honour the following rules of etiquette:

- please “arrive” to class on time
- please use your computer and/or laptop if possible (as opposed to a cell phone or tablet)
- ensure that you are in a private location to protect the confidentiality of discussions in the event that a class discussion deals with sensitive or personal material
- to minimize background noise, kindly mute your microphone for the entire class until you are invited to speak, unless directed otherwise
- [suggested for classes larger than 30 students] In order to give us optimum bandwidth and web quality, please turn off your video camera for the entire class unless you are invited to speak
- [suggested for cases where video is used] please be prepared to turn your video camera off at the instructor’s request if the internet connection becomes unstable
- unless invited by your instructor, do **not** share your screen in the meeting

The course instructor will act as moderator for the class and will deal with any questions from participants. To participate please consider the following:

- if you wish to speak, use the “raise hand” function and wait for the instructor to acknowledge you before beginning your comment or question
- remember to unmute your microphone and turn on your video camera before speaking
- self-identify when speaking.

- remember to mute your mic and turn off your video camera after speaking (unless directed otherwise)

General considerations of “netiquette”:

- Keep in mind the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students in the course.
- Be courteous toward the instructor, your colleagues, and authors whose work you are discussing.
- Be respectful of the diversity of viewpoints that you will encounter in the class and in your readings. The exchange of diverse ideas and opinions is part of the scholarly environment. “Flaming” is never appropriate.
- Be professional and scholarly in all online postings. Cite the ideas of others appropriately.

Note that disruptive behaviour of any type during online classes, including inappropriate use of the chat function, is unacceptable. Students found guilty of Zoom-bombing a class or of other serious online offenses may be subject to disciplinary measures under the Code of Student Conduct.

Support Services

Please visit the Social Science Academic Counselling webpage for information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters: [Academic Counselling - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](https://www.uwo.ca/academic_counselling/)

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html.

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Learning-skills counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre (<https://learning.uwo.ca>) are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered

throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

Western University is committed to a thriving campus as we deliver our courses in the mixed model of both virtual and face-to-face formats. We encourage you to check out the Digital Student Experience website to manage your academics and well-being:

<https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital/>.

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC,

<https://westernusc.ca/services/>.