

POLSCI 3J03: Canadian Elections and Political Parties

Fall 2025

Instructor Information

Instructor Name: Anwar Sheluchin

Email: sheluchin@mcmaster.ca

Office hours: By appointment

Course Information

Lectures: Mondays, 11:30 am – 2:20 pm

Course Dates: September 2, 2025 – December 4, 2025

Units: 3.0

Course Delivery Mode: In person, KTH 109

Course Description: This course provides an in-depth analysis of federal elections in Canada, with particular emphasis on the key actors, institutions and factors that shape electoral outcomes. Students will analyze the mechanics of elections, including election administration, campaign financing and party strategies. Additional topics include the role of media, political communication, leadership and representation within electoral contexts.

Hours of Study: 3-hours (lecture and discussion)

Instructor-Specific Course Information

Lectures will be structured in two parts. The first half will present key theories, concepts, and frameworks relevant to the weekly topic. In addition to the assigned readings, lectures will incorporate material from a range of supplementary sources not listed on the syllabus. These additional materials are essential for deepening your understanding of the course content. Regular attendance is required as lectures will provide critical context, clarification and connections that extend beyond the assigned readings. The second half of each lecture will focus on the examination and analysis of real-world case studies, applying the theoretical concepts to concrete examples from Canadian politics.

Meeting Details

Lectures will be held every Monday from 11:30 am to 2:20 pm. Avenue to Learn (A2L) will serve as a central hub for important course announcements, required readings and assignment submissions. Throughout each lecture, there will be opportunities for in-class discussion, questions and engagement with the material. While it is important that we engage in lively academic discussions, it is also important that these discussions take place in an atmosphere of respect. If, for any reason, you believe that classroom conduct is not respectful, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Important Links

- [Mosaic](#)
- [Avenue to Learn](#)
- [Student Accessibility Services - Accommodations](#)
- [McMaster University Library](#)
- [eReserves](#)

Course Learning Outcomes

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

- Explain the core institutions and processes governing Canadian federal elections
- Identify key electoral actors, such as political parties and candidates, and describe electoral strategy within the Canadian context
- Analyze and explain the factors that influence voting behaviour in Canadian federal elections
- Improve and strengthen academic writing skills including synthesis of research materials, justifying positions and writing succinct policy justifications of complex issues
- Demonstrate well developed information literacy and research skills

Materials and Fees

All required readings will be made available to students at no cost on Avenue to Learn.

Course Evaluation

- Quizzes: 20% (4 x 5%), Weeks 3, 5, 7, 9 and 12.
- Briefing Note: 35%, due October 27
- Better Know a Riding: 45%, due December 1

Course Evaluation Details

Quizzes (20%)

You must complete five cumulative quizzes, each with 10 true/false or multiple-choice questions from the required readings. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped, and the best four quizzes will determine your final grade. Quizzes are available on A2L for 48-hours, and you may take them at any time during that period.

Briefing Note (35%)

You will write a briefing note about a policy issue related to Canadian elections or political parties. A list of approved topics will be provided on A2L. Students who wish to examine a topic outside of the provided list must seek approval from the instructor. The structure and format of the briefing note will be provided on A2L.

Word limit: 1250 words

'Better Know a Riding' Assignment (45%)

You will construct a comprehensive profile of a Canadian federal electoral riding using publicly available data to explain the riding's political characteristics. Your riding profile must include a geographical description, an analysis of key demographics and economic data, a summary of its recent political history and a discussion of any changes resulting from the 2022 electoral boundary redistribution. The objective is to build the essential "who, what and where" context that will serve as the basis for your analysis.

Building directly on the context established, you will write a detailed analytical paper explaining the "why" behind the riding's electoral outcome in 2025. Your central task is to move from description to explanation by analyzing the shift in voting patterns between the 2021 and 2025 federal elections. Your analysis must be grounded in relevant theoretical frameworks. This assignment is designed to develop your analytical and research skills, enabling you to connect theory to real-world political outcomes and improve your ability to construct a well-supported argument. Additional details and a grading rubric will be provided on A2L.

Word limit: 2500 words

Grading Scale

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Grade	Equivalent Grade Point	Equivalent Percentages
A+	12	90-100
A	11	85-89
A-	10	80-84
B+	9	77-79
B	8	73-76
B-	7	70-72
C+	6	67-69
C	5	63-66
C-	4	60-62
D+	3	57-59
D	2	53-56
D-	1	50-52
F	0	0-49

Course Schedule

Week 1 (September 8) Introduction to Elections and Political Parties in Canada

Required:

- Lithwick, Dara and Sebastian Spano. 2015. *The Canadian Electoral System*. Library of Parliament. Parliamentary Information and Research Service.

Week 2 (September 15) Electoral Systems and Reform

Required:

- Courtney, John C. 2007. "Canada's Electoral System," In *Canadian Parties in Transition*. University of Toronto Press. 279-300.
- Small, Tamara A. 2020. "Promises, Promises: Assessing the Liberals' Electoral Reform Agenda." *Canadian Studies* 89: 41-64
- Young, Lisa and Harold J. Jansen. 2011. "Reforming Party and Election Finance in Canada," In *Money, Politics, and Democracy: Canada's Party Finance Reforms*. UBC Press. 1-18.

Recommended:

- Johnston, Larry. 2006. *From Votes to Seats: Four Families of Electoral Systems*. Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.

Week 3 (September 22) Political Parties and Party Systems

Note: Quiz #1 due by Sep. 24, 11:59 PM

Required:

- Carty, R. Kenneth and William Cross. 2010. "Political Parties and the Practice of Brokerage Politics," In *The Oxford Handbook of Canadian Politics*. Oxford University Press. 191-207.
- Dufresne, Yannick and Alex Marland. 2012. "The Canadian Political Market and the Rules of the Game." In *Political Marketing in Canada*. UBC Press. 22-38.
- Patten, Steve. 2007. "The Evolution of the Canadian Party System" In *Canadian Parties in Transition*. Broadview Press. 55-81.

Recommended:

- Cross, William P., Scott Pruysers and Rob Currie-Wood. 2022. "Political Parties and Their Place in Canadian Democratic Life," In *The Political Party in Canada*. UBC Press. 3-21.

Week 4 (September 29) Partisanship and Ideology

Required:

- Cochrane, Chris. 2015. "The "Meaning" of Left and Right," In *Left and Right: The small world of political ideas*. McGill-Queen's University Press. 10-33.
- Flanagan, Tom. 2014. "Strategy I: Positioning," In *Winning Power: Canadian Campaigning in the Twenty-First Century*. McGill-Queen's University Press. 49-67.

Recommended:

- Gordon, Joshua, Sanjay Jeram and Clifton van der Linden. 2020. "The Two Solitudes of Canadian Nativism: Explaining the Absence of a Competitive Anti-immigration Party in Canada." *Nations and Nationalism* 26 (4): 902–22.

Week 5 (October 6) Voters and Voting Behaviour

Note: Quiz #2 due by Oct. 8, 11:59 PM

Required:

- Dabin, Simon, Jean-François Daoust and Martin Papillon. 2019. "Indigenous Peoples and Affinity Voting in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 52 (1): 39–53.
- Fournier, Patrick, Neil Nevitte, Elisabeth Gidengil, André Blais, and Joanna Everitt. 2012. "Explaining Vote Choice." In *Dominance and Decline*. University of Toronto Press. 1–18.
- Gidengil, Elisabeth. 2022. "Voting Behaviour in Canada: The State of the Discipline." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 55: 916-938.

Recommended:

- Ting, Michael M, Jonathan Bendor, Daniel Diermeier, and David A Siegel. "Bounded Rationality and Elections." In *A Behavioral Theory of Elections*, 1–22. Princeton University Press. 1-22.

Week 6 (October 13) Mid-term recess, No Class

Week 7 (October 20) Candidates

Note: Quiz #3 due by Oct. 22, 11:59 PM

Required:

- Koop, Royce, and Amanda Bittner. 2011. "Parachuted into Parliament: Candidate Nomination, Appointed Candidates, and Legislative Roles in Canada." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion, and Parties* 21(4): 431-452.
- Marland, Alex. 2021. "Vetting of Election Candidates by Political Parties: Centralization of Candidate Selection in Canada" *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 51 (4): 573-591.
- Tolley, Erin. 2023. "Gender is not a Proxy: Race and Intersectionality in Legislative Recruitment." *Politics & Gender* 19(2): 373-400.

Recommended:

- Albaugh, Quinn M., Elizabeth Baisley, and Kate Burke Pellizzari. 2025. "Are LGBTQ+ Candidates Disadvantaged in Financing Their Campaigns? Evidence from Canadian Federal Elections, 2015–21." *Politics & Gender*: 1–26.
- Sevi, Semra, Vincent Arel-Bundock and André Blais. 2019. "Do Women Get Fewer Votes? No." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 52: 201-210.

Week 8 (October 27) Party Leaders

Note: Briefing Note due today, 11:59 PM.

Required:

- Bittner, Amanda. 2018. "Leaders Always Mattered: The Persistence of Personality in Canadian Elections." *Electoral Studies* 54: 297-302.
- Bouchard, Joanie. 2022. "'I Think Canadians Look like All Sorts of People': Ethnicity, Political Leadership, and the Case of Jagmeet Singh." *The Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 7(2): 316–47.

Recommended:

- Marland, Alex. 2014. "The Branding of a Prime Minister: Digital Information Subsidies and the Image Management of Stephen Harper," In *Political Communication in Canada: Meet the Press and Tweet the Rest*. UBC Press. 55-73.

Week 9 (November 3) Party Platforms and Policy Capacity

Note: Quiz #4 due by Nov. 5, 11:59 PM

Required:

- Wesley, Jared and Renze Nauta. 2020. "Party Platform Builders," In *Inside the Campaign: Managing Elections in Canada*. UBC Press. 123-134.
- Flynn, Greg. 2011. "Rethinking policy capacity in Canada: The role of parties and election platforms in government policy-making." *Canadian Public Administration* 54 (2): 235-53.
- Gollom, Mark. 2025. "7 million Canadians voted before all party platforms were out. Do platforms still matter?" CBC News, 25 April: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/election-platforms-do-canadians-care-1.7517338>.

Recommended:

- Robbins-Kanter, Jacob. 2022. "Undisciplined Constituency Campaign Behaviour in Canadian Federal Elections." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 55: 444-466.

Week 10 (November 10) Issues

Required:

- Bélanger, Éric and Bonnie Meguid. 2008. "Issue Salience, Issue Ownership and Issue-Based Vote Choice." *Electoral Studies* 27 (3): 477–91.
- Dumouchel, David, Catherine Ouellet, and Thierry Giasson. 2023. "Guns for Votes: Wedge Politics in the Canadian Multiparty System." *Parliamentary Affairs* 76 (1): 85-106.

Recommended:

- Nadeau, Richard, and André Blais. 1990. "Do Canadians Distinguish Between Parties? Perceptions of Party Competence." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 23 (2): 317–33.

Week 11 (November 17) Campaigns

Required:

- Esselment, Anna. 2014. "The Governing Party and the Permanent Campaign," In *Political Communication in Canada: Meet the Press and Tweet the Rest*. UBC Press. 24-38.
- Kilibarda, Anja, Clifton van der Linden and Yannick Dufresne. 2020. "Do Campaign Events Matter? New Evidence from Voting Advice Applications." *Political Science Quarterly*, 135: 259-280.
- Small, Tamara A. and Thierry Giasson. 2020. "Political Parties: Political Campaigning in the Digital Age," In *Digital Politics in Canada: Promises and Realities*. University of Toronto Press. 136-158.

Recommended:

- Flanagan, Tom. 2014. "Going Negative," In *Winning Power: Canadian Campaigning in the Twenty-First Century*. McGill-Queen's University Press. 131-147.

Week 12 (November 24) Media and Message Control

Note: Quiz #5 due by Nov. 26, 11:59 PM

Required:

- Popplewell, Brett. 2022. "The Media: The Narratives that Defined the Mainstream Election Coverage," In *The Canadian Federal Election of 2021*. McGill-Queen's University Press. 148-170.

- Lawlor, Andrea. 2017. "The Message Despite the Media? Conservative Parties' Relationship with the Press," In *The Blueprint: Conservative Parties and their Impact on Canadian Politics*. 198-220.
- Marland, Alex. 2020. "Message Discipline," In *Whipped: Party Discipline in Canada*. UBC Press. 125-156.

Recommended:

- Giasson, Thierry and Tamara A. Small. 2017. "Online, All the Time: The Strategic Objectives of Canadian Opposition Parties," In *Permanent Campaigning in Canada*. UBC Press. 109-126.

Week 13 (December 1) Populism and Polarization

Note: 'Better Know a Riding' Assignment due today, 11:59 PM

Required:

- Medeiros, Mike, and Timothy B. Gravelle. 2023. "Pandemic Populism: Explaining Support for the People's Party of Canada in the 2021 Federal Election." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 56 (2): 413–34.
- Johnston, Richard. 2023. "Affective Polarization in the Canadian Party System, 1988–2021." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 56 (2): 372–95.

Recommended:

- LeDuc, Lawrence, Jon H. Pammett and Harold D. Clarke. 2023. "Populism in Canada: Something Old, Something New." *Electoral Studies* 86: 1-9.

Late Assignments

Extensions for course assignments will only be granted under conditions of medical, family, or other extraordinary circumstances. All other late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 5% per day. Late assignments will not be accepted after 7 days beyond the original deadline without appropriate documentation from the Office of the Associate Dean of Social Sciences.

Absences, Missed Work or Illness

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".

Turnitin.com

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For students using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with an explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Generative AI

Generative AI: Some Use Permitted

Students may use generative AI in this course in accordance with the guidelines outlined for each assessment, and so long as the use of generative AI is referenced and cited. Specific permitted uses of generative AI will be outlined in assignment instructions. These permitted uses are very narrow; they are limited to use for things like editing, brainstorming or generating a title. Use of generative AI outside assessment guidelines or without citation will constitute academic dishonesty. It is the student's responsibility to be clear on the expectations for citation and reference and to do so appropriately

APPROVED ADVISORY STATEMENTS

Academic Integrity

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-proceduresguidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-proceduresguidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Authenticity / Plagiarism

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. Avenue to Learn, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster’s use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Email Communication

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including Tasks), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his/her/their discretion.

Courses with an On-line Element

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn, LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access

the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, usernames for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss this with the course instructor.

Online Proctoring

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online.**

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the [Policy on Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work](#).

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous, or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, Avenue to Learn and/or McMaster email.