

02-45-440 (01)

Remaking North America: Geographic Perspectives on US-Canada Politics

Dr. Jamey Essex / Fall 2015 / Wed 10:00 am - 12:50 pm / CHS 53-1

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Course description

The political geography of the United States and Canada in regional and global context, focusing on the political, cultural, and economic factors and processes shaping the two countries' internal political character, external relations, and bilateral relationship. This course is restricted to Semester 7 and 8 Political Science and International Relations majors, though I am willing to sign in other students given space constraints and relevant background courses. Students are recommended to take 45-120 Space, Place, and Scale: Foundations of Human Geography before taking this course.

Course learning outcomes

At the conclusion of this course, successful students will be able to:

- Describe, explain, and critically analyze major issues and phenomena of political science as they relate to geographic patterns, structures, processes, and representations in the context of US and Canadian politics and relations.
- Develop and demonstrate critical understanding of the study of international politics in relation to the changing political geography of North America, especially the US and Canada and US-Canada relations.
- Research and investigate political issues from a geographical perspective and using geographic concepts, synthesize data and information from varying sources and present descriptive and empirical evidence to support a central thesis.
- Demonstrate competence in research design, including formulating a clear question, selecting appropriate methods, collecting evidence and presenting findings.
- Engage in self-guided research while demonstrating skills in research methods appropriate to the study of politics, international relations, and geography.
- Confidently assert political and geographic ideas and arguments, and defend them with sound reason and logic.
- Critically analyze political and geographic ideas and arguments espoused by politicians, promoted by interest groups and reported by the media.
- Effectively, clearly, and confidently articulate and communicate ideas, arguments and evidence through clear, concise and coherent written work.
- Explain the rights and responsibilities associated with Canadian citizenship.

- Through geographical analysis, demonstrate understanding of political traditions and practices in the US and Canada, while recognizing and assessing the value of social, political, economic, and environmental connections within and between places in the US and Canada.
- Engage in and lead focused dialogue and debate concerning complex and controversial political and geographical issues, presenting well-reasoned arguments while being respectful of alternative opinions.

Required readings

Required readings for this course consist of **four books**, listed below, available at the university bookstore and from online retailers, and where possible, available on electronic and/or hard copy reserve at Leddy Library. Assigned reading averages 60+ pages per week, but sometimes is much more than this, and you should read before coming to class. Some of the readings are difficult, but **it is essential that you obtain these books and read them** for a full understanding of the concepts, cases, and themes of the course, and to provide you with the ability to participate in class discussions and to successfully complete in-class participation assignments.

- Desbiens, Caroline. 2014. *Power From the North: Territory, Identity, and the Culture of Hydroelectricity in Quebec*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Nevins, Joseph. 2010. *Operation Gatekeeper and Beyond: The War on "Illegals" and the Remaking of the US-Mexico Boundary (2nd ed.)*. London: Routledge.
- Nikiforuk, Andrew. 2010. *Tar Sands: Dirty Oil and the Future of A Continent (2nd ed.)*. Vancouver: Greystone Books.
- Reding, Nick. 2009. *Methland: The Death and Life of an American Small Town*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Assignments and grades

Your grade in this course is based on several main components, linked to three primary modes of student engagement and assessment:

- **participation (10%);**
- **four in-class reading quizzes (5% each, 20% total);**
- **two short writing assignments (15% each, 30% total);**
- **and a final paper (40%).**

The two short writing assignments include a news analysis and an opinion/editorial piece; see the course schedule for due dates. The in-class reading quizzes are designed to take no more than 20 to 30 minutes, and will test your understanding of key concepts and ideas from the

assigned readings. They will be short answer and fill-in-the blank format; see the course schedule for the dates on which these will occur. The final paper, based on a specific question I will provide and that draws on one or more of the four assigned books, will require you to do some extra research beyond the assigned readings. Your participation mark depends on your attention in class, your contributions (quality and not just frequency) to discussions, and your engagement with the material, your peers, and me.

Course expectations

Below I outline very clearly what I expect of you as a student in this course, and what you should expect of me as the instructor. For more information on the rules and regulations that govern student rights and responsibilities, please consult the University Senate bylaws (see especially Bylaws 31, 32, 33, and 51) at <http://www.uwindsor.ca/secretariat/47/senate-bylaws-and-policies> and the Academic Integrity Office at www.uwindsor.ca/aio.

In this course and in this classroom, I expect that you will:

- Attend class regularly (i.e., every day), arrive on time, and do all required reading;
- Pay attention, turn off your phone, refrain from distracting yourself and your classmates, and use your laptop for class-related activities only;
- Approach the course materials with an open mind and a serious attitude;
- Strictly adhere to the student code of conduct and observe the University's policies regarding academic honesty;
- Respect your fellow students' right to learn in a safe and hospitable classroom;
- Respect and take advantage of office hours, particularly if you are falling behind or having difficulty with the material;
- Understand that grades refer to the quality and precision of the work being graded, not to your need for a particular grade or to an open-ended negotiation between you and me.

For my part, you can expect that I will:

- Arrive to class on time and well-prepared to lecture and facilitate discussion;
- Complete the grading of exams and assignments in a timely fashion;
- Reply to emails in a timely fashion, normally within two working days;
- Be available during my scheduled office hours, and will re-schedule them if necessary (i.e., I won't cancel them without making them up at some other time);
- Take your questions and ideas seriously, so long as they are relevant to the material;
- Maintain a relaxed and professional classroom space for learning and discussion;
- Treat all students equitably with regard to grading and class discussion.

Classroom etiquette and academic dishonesty

Consistent with University of Windsor policy, cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty and misconduct are not tolerated. **Relevant official university and faculty policies on plagiarism and academic misconduct are at <http://www1.uwindsor.ca/aio/relevant-policies> and <http://www1.uwindsor.ca/fahss/faculty-staff-procedure-manual>.** Those suspected of violating these policies will be referred to the Associate Dean for potential disciplinary action. We may use the SafeAssign feature on the course Blackboard site as a means of guarding against plagiarism in this course. If you feel you need help with the materials, please see me or the GAs.

In class, you are expected to respect others' right to learn and discuss course themes and content in a safe and comfortable environment. You should rely on facts, reason, and evidence to back arguments, and overtly racist, sexist, or otherwise inflammatory remarks will not be tolerated. I am very open about my own political views, and I encourage open debate and exchange of ideas.

Course Schedule

Sept 9: Introductions

- No reading – we will go over basic issues related to course structure, assignments, readings, and expectations

Sept 16: The US-Mexico border I

- Nevins, *Operation Gatekeeper and Beyond*, chapters 1-3

Sept 23: The US-Mexico border II

- Nevins, *Operation Gatekeeper and Beyond*, chapters 4-6
- In-class reading quiz #1

Sept 30: The US-Mexico border III

- Nevins, *Operation Gatekeeper and Beyond*, chapters 7-8

Oct 7: The Alberta tar sands and Canada's resource economy I

- Nikiforuk, *Tar Sands*, chapters 1-7
- Writing assignment #1 due in class: News analysis of border and immigration issues

Oct 14: Reading week

Oct 21: Alberta tar sands and Canada's resource economy II

- Nikiforuk, *Tar Sands*, chapters 8-14
- In-class reading quiz #2

Oct 28: Hollowing out - social crisis in middle America I

- Reding, *Methland*, chapters 1-5
- Writing assignment #2 due in class: Op-ed on the tar sands

Nov 4: Hollowing out - social crisis in middle America II

- Reding, *Methland*, chapters 6-10
- In-class reading quiz #3

Nov 11: Hollowing out - social crisis in middle America III

- Reding, *Methland*, chapters 11-15 + Epilogue and Afterword

Nov 18: Quebec and hydropower I

- Desbiens, *Power from the North*, Introduction + chapters 1-2

Nov 25: Quebec and hydropower II

- Desbiens, *Power from the North*, chapters 3-4
- In-class reading quiz #4

Dec 2: Quebec and hydropower III

- Desbiens, *Power from the North*, chapters 5-7 + Conclusion