

POLS*6150: Constitutionalism and Judicial Politics

Credit Weighting: 0.5**Pre-/Co-Requisites:****Restrictions:****INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION****Name:** Dave Snow**Email:** snow@uoguelph.ca**Office Location:** MCKN 534 (office hours virtual)**GENERAL DETAILS**

This course introduces students to the study of courts from a political science perspective, with a particular focus on the Canadian judicial system. It emphasizes institutional components of the judicial system, the norms that constrain judicial decision-making, external influences on judicial power, and the role of the judiciary with respect to Indigenous law and legal orders. Each week is organized around a different topic related to the Canadian judiciary, with the Supreme Court of Canada featuring prominently. Students will read excerpts from at least one judicial decision a week, and the second half of class will focus on that judicial decision. Students will also be encouraged to connect the concepts covered each week to the criminal justice system and public policy in Canada.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Analyze and evaluate the relationship between law and politics in Canada, and the role of the Supreme Court of Canada within this relationship
- Explain and assess the role the Constitution, legislatures, the executive, and the public play with respect to judicial power
- Describe the scope of judicial power, particularly with respect to federalism, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and Indigenous law
- Conduct legal and public policy research, including reading and analyzing judicial decisions
- Communicate effectively in written and oral forms specific to law and constitutionalism (including making legal arguments and describing Supreme Court decisions)

METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

Discussion and In-Class Participation: 20%

Individual Presentations (leading seminars): 20%

Weekly Reading Responses (8 x 5%): 40%

Take-Home Exam: 20%

REQUIRED READING

There are no required textbooks. All readings available on CourseLink, unless otherwise noted. Readings will primarily include academic material such as journal articles and book chapters, and may be supplemented with non-academic material such as newspaper articles, videos, and blog posts.