

Electoral Process

Government 396-004/696-004

Spring 2007

W. 2 :10 to 4 :50

Office hours : W. 11 :00 to 12 :00

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Course Syllabus

Objective : This seminar aims at providing a comparative overview of the legal framework that regulates electoral processes. Organizing a « free and fair » election involves a sequence of steps, each involving debates among competing views and necessitating political choices by lawmakers and election officers. Election rules are not neutral, and therefore remain a topic of contention within democratic polities. This seminar will allow participants to identify the various options and what they entail, and to get acquainted with the debates they generate.

Class design : This will be a reading seminar. Lectures by the professor will be kept to a minimum, and the emphasis will be put on discussions based on the readings below. It is essential for each student to read assignments and to participate actively in the discussion. On each topic, a student will make an oral presentation, followed by an open discussion. Each presentation will include suggested topics for discussion. Occasionally, students will be invited to divide into two groups, each arguing the pros and cons of a specific issue.

Graded work : Students will have to make two oral presentations, and to submit on the same day a 3-page summary thereof. In addition, they will submit a 20-page paper on a topic of their own choosing that falls within the ambit of the course. Each presentation will focus on one of the readings marked with an asterisk (*) below. Each reading summary will count for 15% of the grade. Participation will count for 30%. Paper will count for 40%.

Course contents and outline

January 17: General presentation of the seminar and assignment of readings

January 24: Who has the right to vote?

* Louis Massicotte, André Blais and Antoine Yoshinaka, *Establishing the Rules of the Game*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2003, ch. 1, p. 15-39.

* Arno J. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime. Europe to the Great War*, 1981, chap. 3.

* Z. Planinc, "Should Imprisoned Criminals have a Constitutional Right to Vote?", *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, vol. 2, 1987, p. 153-164.

Issue to be debated : Should convicted felons be entitled to vote?

January 31 : Who may be a candidate?

* Louis Massicotte, André Blais and Antoine Yoshinaka, *Establishing the Rules of the Game*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2003, ch. 2, p. 40-65.

Issue to be debated : Should voting age be lowered at 16?

February 7: Registering voters

* Louis Massicotte, André Blais and Antoine Yoshinaka, *Establishing the Rules of the Game*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2003, ch. 3, p. 66-82.

* Carter-Baker Commission, *Building Confidence in U.S. Elections*, 2005, chap. 2, pp. 9-23

Issue to be debated : Should voting be compulsory?

February 14: How people vote

* Louis Massicotte, André Blais and Antoine Yoshinaka, *Establishing the Rules of the Game*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2003, ch. 5, p. 102-41.

* Carter-Baker Commission, *Building Confidence in U.S. Elections*, 2005, chap. 3 and 4, pp. 25-43

February 21: Counting the votes and adjudicating elections

* Louis Massicotte, André Blais and Antoine Yoshinaka, *Establishing the Rules of the Game*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2003, ch. 6, p. 142-57.

February 28: Electoral systems (1) : An in-depth exploration of the various formulas

David M. Farrell, *Electoral Systems. A Comparative Introduction*, Houndmills, Palgrave, 2001.

- * Chap. 2, p. 19-48 : Single-Member plurality systems
- * Chap. 3, p. 49-67 : Majoritarian systems
- * Chap. 4, p. 68-96 : List systems of PR
- * Chap. 5, p. 97-120 : Mixed systems
- * Chap. 6, p. 121-152 : The Single Transferable Vote

March 7: Electoral systems (2) Political consequences of various systems

* Arend Lijphart, "The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws, 1945-1985", *American Political Science Review*, vol. 84, 1990, p. 481-495.

* Arend Lijphart, « Democracies : Forms, Performance and Constitutional Engineering », *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 25 no 1, 1994, pp. 1-17.

Douglas W. Rae, *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1967.

Issue to be debated : Is PR the way to go in a democracy?

March 14: Spring break

March 21: Who conducts the elections?

* Louis Massicotte, André Blais and Antoine Yoshinaka, *Establishing the Rules of the Game*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2003, ch. 4, p. 83-101.

* Carter-Baker Commission, *Building Confidence in U.S. Elections*, 2005, chap. 6, pp. 49-59.

March 28 : Redistricting

* Lisa Handley, *Challenging the norms and standards of election administration : Boundary delimitation standards*, IFES, 2006. 13 p.

* David E. Butler and B. Cain, "Reapportionment: A Study in Comparative Government", *Electoral Studies*, vol. 4 no 3, 1985, p. 197-213.

April 4 : Political finance

* Richard S. Katz, « Party Organizations and Finance », ch. 4 in Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G. Niemi and Pippa Norris (eds.), *Comparing Democracies. Elections and Voting in Global Perspective* (Thousand Oaks, Sage, 1996), p. 107-133.

L. Massicotte: « Financing Parties at the Grass-Root Level : The Québec Experience », chapter in Keith D. Ewing and Sam Issacharoff (eds.), *Party Funding and Campaign Financing in International Perspective*, Oxford and Portland (Ore.), Hart Publishing, 2006, pp. 153-179.

April 10 : What do we mean by « Free and fair elections »?

* Gisela Geisler, "Fair? What Has Fairness Got to Do with It? Vagaries of Election Observations and Democratic Standards", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 31 no 4, 1993, p. 613-37.

* Jennifer McCoy, Larry Garber and Robert Pastor, "Pollwatching and Peacemaking", in Larry Diamond et Marc Plattner (eds.), *The Global Resurgence of Democracy* (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993): 178-190.

April 17 : Referendums, Initiatives, and Recall

* Lawrence LeDuc, « Referendums and Initiatives : The Politics of Direct Democracy », in Pippa Norris, Richard Niemi and Larry LeDuc (eds.), *Comparing Democracies 2. New Challenges in the Study of Elections and Voting*, London, Sage, 2002, p. 70-87.

Issue to be debated : Should voters be empowered to recall elected officials?

April 24 : Electoral reform processes

* Richard S. Katz, « Why are there so many (or so few) electoral reforms? », chap 3 in Michael Gallagher and Paul Mitchell (eds.), *The Politics of Electoral Systems*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, 57-76.

* David M. Farrell, *Electoral Systems. A Comparative Introduction*, Houndmills, Palgrave, 2001. Chap. 8, p. 175-191.

* British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, *Making Every Vote Count. The Case for Electoral Reform in British Columbia*, Vancouver, December 2004.