Political Science 4870
Regionalism in Canada
Fall 2010

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Office: SN2035
Office Hours

General Information

Regionalism is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that has had a major impact on policy debates across policy fields, not only in Canada, but around the world. Especially since the 1990s, there has been an explosion of experiments in regionalization at the community, sub-national, national, and even continental levels. This course is designed to provide students with an opportunity to employ key concepts and theories used in political science to explore not only the forces driving regionalization, but the outcomes achieved. Getting a consensus on new regional ideas, institutions, and identities is never easy without a common crisis, leadership, or sense of historical identity. Viewed this way, regionalism is a slippery, contested concept that has often been connected with attempts by outside experts to impose homogenization, whether at the Atlantic or local community level. We will discuss historical political-policy outcomes, paying close attention to not only drivers of regionalization, but constraints also. Regionalization is not inevitable and there is much we can learn about how competing values, interests, institutions that complicate the task of achieving a consensus and implementing changes on a regional basis. Our objective in the course is to explore new as well as comparative historical forms of regional governance but in a way that offers critical insights. Much attention will be placed on understanding the various agenda-setting and implementation challenges associated with regional transformation, whether across provinces, municipalities, continents, or policy fields. The course adopts a comparative approach to public policy and politics.

In the first part of the course we will deal with major theoretical and conceptual issues: past and present. The second part of the course will be devoted to case-studies and the challenges associated with putting theory into practice. Topics for papers and class presentations will be organized the first couple weeks of class.

Mark Distribution

Paper: 40%
Participation: 20%
Final Take-Home 40%
Required Textbooks:


Lecture Themes

I. Introduction


II. Theoretical Approaches


Control. 19-46.


III. Case-Studies and Frameworks


2. Herman Bakvis and Grace Skogstad, editors, Canadian Federalism: Chapters 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

3. Contested Federalism: Chapters 1,2,3,6, 7,9.

4. Stephen Tomblin, Ottawa and the Outer Provinces, Chapters 2,3,5.

