

**CANADIAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS**  
**PhD Comprehensive Examination**  
**November 2010**

If this is your *major* field, you must choose TWO (2) questions from the core and ONE question each from the subfield lists, for a total of FOUR (4) questions. The questions are of equal value. The exam must be completed in FIVE (5) hours.

If this is your *minor* field, you must choose TWO (2) questions from the core and one question from your specific subfield list, for a total of THREE (3) questions. The questions are of equal value. The exam must be completed in FOUR (4) hours.

**CORE**

1. Understanding Canada's political parties and the party systems is no help in understanding the trajectory of social and economic policy in this country? True or false? Discuss.
2. How do the ideas of "polarized pluralism" and "franchise parties" inform each other? Put together, do these two ideas explain the broad pattern of party politics in Canadian national politics?
3. What are the three main impacts of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom on Canadian politics?
4. Is there one perspective on the study of Canadian politics that you find particularly persuasive? If so, which might it be and why?
5. Can constitutional reform ever provide a solution to the seemingly different visions of federalism one finds in Quebec and in the rest of Canada?

**PARTIES AND ELECTIONS**

6. Canadian federal elections are easily characterized as follows: despite the emergence, evolution, and occasional demise of a range of political parties, the Liberals almost always win. Respond to this claim and in doing so, be sure speak to institutional, cultural, and individual-level factors that explain this trend.
7. A pessimist might argue that the limited influence citizens can have within parties and on government decisions is fortunate given the low quality of political decision making among the majority of citizens. An optimist might suggest that more numerous and improved avenues for citizen input would motivate citizens to arrive at more enlightened preferences. Situate yourself in this debate. You may wish to identify some conditions in which greater citizen input would be a good or bad thing.
8. Are Canada's "mandates" somehow more "absent" than in other countries? Or more so than we should expect in modern mass democracy? Why or why not?

### **FEDERALISM AND REGIONALISM**

9. “No non-territorially based community – one defined by ethnicity, gender or occupation – is given independent voice under the Constitution. But neither is one very important territorial unit – the city”. (Jennifer Smith). Are these two omissions fundamental flaws in Canadian federalism?
10. How has Canadian federalism shaped the content, policy-making process, and structures of the Canadian welfare state?
11. Is Canada better seen as a multinational federation, a territorial federation, or a combination of the two?

### **CANADIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT**

12. Gad Horowitz uses Hartz’s fragment theory to argue the relationship amongst conservatism, liberalism and socialism in Canada. Seymour Martin Lipset, like Harold Innis before him, argues the existence of a counter-revolutionary tradition in explaining Canada’s political development. Which, in your opinion, provides the more convincing explanation?
13. Are multinationalism and multiculturalism one and the same thing? Does one sustain the other or are they potentially in conflict with one another?

**CANADIAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS**  
**PhD Comprehensive Examination**  
**April 2010**

If this is your *major* field, you must choose TWO (2) questions from the core and ONE question each from the subfield lists, for a total of FOUR (4) questions. The questions are of equal value. The exam must be completed in FIVE (5) hours.

If this is your *minor* field, you must choose TWO (2) questions from the core and one question from your specific subfield list, for a total of THREE (3) questions. The questions are of equal value. The exam must be completed in FOUR (4) hours.

**CORE**

1. "Donald Savoie's interpretation of the modern Canadian political executive has received unwarranted and uncritical acceptance by Canadian political scientists". Do you agree? Outline three research priorities that suggest studies of the Canadian political executive that differ from those now available.
2. Cui bono? What can political science tell us about who benefits from Canadian government? Be sure to justify your answer with evidence of the benefits acquired by different groups and discuss some of the institutional, historical, and cultural factors that help explain these outcomes.
3. The only hope for accommodating Quebec in the constitution was an elite compromise. That hope is now gone. Right?
4. "The study of Canada is parochial and inattentive to trends in comparative politics even as the Canadian case is strikingly absent from or poorly described comparative accounts." Discuss.

**PARLIAMENT**

5. Are there any important differences between Canadian and British parliamentary politics, and if so, what are the main political effects of these differences?
6. "Where bicameralism exists, it always matters – even if only as an institution to be domesticated by political executives whenever they can render it weak." Discuss with reference to the Canadian Senate.
7. Is the Canadian House of Commons ineffective or simply misunderstood?

**FEDERALISM AND REGIONALISM**

8. How do the impacts of federalism on public policy compare in the environmental and social policy fields?
9. The literature on federalism is replete with contradictions. Federalism is a source of innovation; federalism is biased toward the status quo. Federalism promotes government growth; federalism deters public spending. Federalism promotes intergovernmental conflict; federalism leads to secret backroom deals. How can

we make sense of these contradictions? What program of research would you propose to begin to move beyond them?

10. Should Canadian political science study federalism or multilevel governance?

**Canadian Government and Politics**  
**PhD Comprehensive Examination Questions**

**March 2009**

**Minor Field Examination. Answer Two questions from the Core Section; One question from your chosen subfield.**

***Core Section***

1. What accounts for the success or failure of Canadian political parties – in the long term and in the short term?
2. Evaluate this proposition: Canada's constitutional "Odyssey" is no pathology; constitutional change *should* take a while. What are the benefits and costs of a long-running constitutional debate in Canada?
3. Would government for all residents of what is now Canada be more effective and responsive if Québec were a separate country?
4. For us today, what, if any, is the relevance the debates that animated Canadian politics from 1840 to 1880?
5. Did the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* improve the quality of the national dialogue on the character and practices of Canadian liberalism? Or did it make that dialogue worse?
6. Has social class been unimportant to the development of the Canadian State? Is it now irrelevant for Canadian politics? Or is it simply hard to define, measure and observe?

***Parties / Elections / Public Opinon***

1. Canadian political science uses the concept of "brokerage parties" to describe the dominant mode of party organization and activity in the country. What does the concept refer to? Is it a unique concept or is it simply an idiosyncratic articulation of the modalities of political organization and competition encompassed by the more general term "catch all" party? And do voters reward or punish parties for brokerage (or its opposite, whatever that is)?
2. Discuss: Canadian voters would benefit from more stability in the party system, and more ideological parties.
3. Anthony Downs predicted first, that parties would converge to offer policies favoured by the median voter; but he qualified this by saying that there were costs for parties that showed little consistency in their platforms. How have Canadian parties managed this trade-off? How have voters responded?
4. Is Canadian electoral politics best analyzed as one arena, two arenas, or ten arenas?

## *Parliament*

1. In a two-part essay, i) make a theoretical and empirical argument for why the study of the Canadian Parliament should be sui generis, and ii) set out a theoretical and empirical counter-argument that explains why the Canadian Parliament is better studied from a comparative perspective.
2. Summarise the "responsible government" approach to the study of Parliament in Canada, and offer a critique of the approach. What (if any) have been the advantages of this approach, and what are its weaknesses?
3. "Where bicameralism exists, it always matters - even if only as an institution to be domesticated by political executives whenever they can render it weak". (John Uhr) How does bicameralism matter for the Canadian House of Commons and more broadly, for Canadian government?
4. David Smith writes: "...the (Canadian) House of Commons has a problem, and it knows it - no one is happy with its performance. Neither the public nor the media nor the members themselves approve of what the House does." What is the problem(s)? What should be done about it?

**Canadian Government and Politics**  
**PhD Comprehensive Examination Questions**  
**Fall 2008**

*Core Section*

1. Outline the main arguments about the considerable power of the Canadian Prime Minister. Does the political science research underlying these arguments take a broad enough view of power in Canadian politics and government?
2. What accounts for the considerable success of the Liberal Party of Canada and, in light of recent general election results, its apparent demise?
3. Does Canada have a constitutional deficit?
4. Québec is just like any other province. Right?
5. The 2008 federal election confirms the notion Canada has a bi-national party system rather than a national one. Discuss.
6. After the Charter, is the Supreme Court part of, or separate from, *The Canadian State*?
7. Evaluate the proposition: "It's not about 'conceiving' or *Misconceiving Canada*"; it's about preferences and power."

*Canadian Political Thought*

1. Why are "groups" so important in Canadian political thought when Canada is founded on liberal principles? Do we have the balance between "groups" and liberalism right in our thinking about the Canadian polity?
2. Does Canadian political thought lead cultural and institutional change in Canada, or follow them?
3. In *The Canadian Founding: John Locke and Parliament*, Janet Aizenstat writes: "We [Canadians] have lost the Fathers' insight." Might one reply, after due deliberation and thoughtful study: "And it is a very good thing that we have." Or does more need to be said?
4. In *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*, Charles Taylor writes: "Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being." Elsewhere in the same book Taylor writes: "There is no reason to believe that, for instance, the different art forms of a given culture should all be equal, or even of considerable value; and every culture can go through phases of decadence." Are these two statements compatible and insightful? Or is Canadian multiculturalism just a chaotic hotchpotch?

### *Federalism / Regionalism*

1. Does Canadian federalism provide for weak and/or conservative and/or unaccountable government? In your answer, make specific reference to the literature.
2. With a freshly minted PhD you have been hired to join a research team that has been asked to provide an analysis of the changing nature and impact of regionalism in Canadian politics. Identify what you believe to be the central issues the project must confront, indicate the hypotheses it ought to centre its research on, and suggest what data and analytic techniques must be brought to bear on the problem.
3. The title of Donald Smiley's last book is: *The Federal Condition in Canada*. Is federalism in Canada so different or so important that it needs a book all to itself? Or can Canadian federalism simply be subsumed under a more general and more universally applicable model or theory of federalism?
4. Who cares what we call the different periods of Canadian federalism? Have we explained them? Does the periodization help us understand the institutions and the actors within them?

### *Parties / Elections / Public Opinion*

1. Is there really a 'Decline of Party' in Canada? What have been the consequences of changes or stability in the 'strength' of Canadian parties?
2. Why does Canada have more parties than its electoral institutions should produce?
3. Should we now say Canadian voting behaviour is all about values? If so, has it always been this way?
4. Do any of the currently competitive national parties suffer from a "syndrome" similar to the one termed "The Tory Syndrome"? Why or why not? How have they contracted this disease? Have the Conservatives been cured?



## **Comprehensive Examination – Canadian Politics Nov., 2007**

### **Erin Penner Major Field – Length 5 Hours**

Write on **2 questions** from the **core** section of the exam and **1 each** from the **Federalism & Regionalism** and **Parliament & Elections** sections for a total of **4 questions**.

### **Clark Banack & Clare McGovern Minor Field – Length 4 hours**

Write on **2 questions** from the **core** section of the exam and **1** from either the **Federalism & Regionalism** or the **Canadian Political Thought** section that you have designated for a total of **3 questions**

### **Core**

- 1) Were the Meech Lake and Charlottetown constitutional debates just a great big waste of time?
- 2) Is there an approach, e.g. institutionalism, political economy, rational choice, that you find particularly helpful in coming to terms with the functions and role of the Canadian state?
- 3) Is Senate reform one of those questions that simply refuses to go away although there is no possible resolution in sight?
- 4) In light of the Gomery inquiry and recent allegations regarding Brian Mulroney, should we conclude that political corruption is a significantly understudied feature of Canadian political science? Have Canadian political scientists simply been caught napping, or is there a deeper explanation for why so little attention has been paid to this subject?
- 5) What does it mean to declare, as the House of Commons did in Nov., 2006, that “the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada?”

### **Federalism & Regionalism**

- 1) What accounts for the continuing vitality of Canadian provincial governments?
- 2) Can Canadian federalism and the program of equalization payments in particular survive Alberta’s burgeoning oil and gas revenues?
- 3) Is Canadian federalism really just about English-French accommodation?

## **Parliament & Elections**

- 1) Provide an explanation for why the Harper minority government has survived longer than most recent federal minority governments.
- 2) Would it be fair to observe that since the emergence of the Bloc Québécois in 1993 Canada has had a bi-national party system at the federal level rather than a strictly national one? What have been some the implications of the Bloc's presence?
- 3) What are the main themes and conclusions of the literature on Canadian legislatures? What other topics require sustained scholarly research?

## **Canadian Political Thought**

- 1) To what extent have Canada's founding constitutional debates permanently marked Canadian political culture?
- 2) "In his famous report, written in 1839, Lord Durham said that he found in Canada 'two nations warring in the bosom of a single state.' Nevertheless, Canadian political thinkers continue to ask whether the origins of Canada are liberal or tory or republican? Would it not be more accurate to say that both the origin of Canada and its present reality are Hobbesian and that there will be no end to trouble in Canada until a strong, unified and all-embracing government is established like the kind favoured by Hobbes?" Discuss critically.
- 3) In the 1940s, Frank Underhill observed: "It is a remarkable fact that in the great debate of our generation about the fundamental values of liberalism and democracy we Canadians have taken very little part. . . Our thinking is still derivative." Would Underhill, were he still alive today, have any reason to alter his pessimistic views?

## **Canadian Comprehensive Examination March, 2008 Erin Penner**

### **Core**

#### **Write on *two* (2) questions from the core portion of the exam:**

- 1) Has the patriation of the Constitution and adoption of the Charter altered the fundamental principles governing the Canadian political system? How, if at all, did the change affect the balance of institutional power in Canadian politics?
- 2) Does federalism strengthen or inhibit the democratic character of Canadian politics?
- 3) The Canadian state has loomed large in Canada's development as a country ever since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. To what degree is the contemporary role of the Canadian state rooted in what has gone before?
- 4) Discuss the influence of 'New Public Management' ideas on the structure, conduct and performance of Canadian governments.

#### **Write on *two* (2) questions, one from each of the two sub-fields you have chosen:**

##### **Parties and elections**

1. What accounts for the federal Liberal Party's electoral success in the twentieth century? What are the major consequences of its electoral success and subsequent domination of the Government of Canada?
2. The theoretical elections literature elsewhere in the world has distinguished "rational choice" from "social-psychological" explanations. Does this distinction make sense in light of the findings from the nearly half-century of survey research on voting behaviour in Canada?

##### **Parliament**

- 1) Why is the Canadian Prime Minister so powerful?
- 2) Should the proponents of a revitalization of the House of Commons really just hope for perpetual minority governments?
- 3) In many respects, the Canadian Parliament is very similar to its Westminster progenitor, but as Canadian political scientists have pointed out, there are several

crucial differences between the two Parliaments. What are the central differences and what impact have they been seen to have on the Canadian Parliament and on Canadian politics more generally?

### **Parliament**

- 1) “If, in the early twenty-first century, Canadians could magically return to the 1860s and begin, once again, the job of creating our country’s political institutions, we would surely construct a number of them differently”. Which ones would you “construct differently”? Why?
- 2) Provide an explanation for why the Harper minority government has survived longer than most recent federal minority governments.
- 3) In many respects, the Canadian Parliament is very similar to its Westminster progenitor, but as Canadian political scientists have pointed out, there are several crucial differences between the two Parliaments. What are the central differences and what impact have they been seen to have on the Canadian Parliament and on Canadian politics more generally?

### **Parties & Elections**

- 1) Does Canada need electoral reform to deal with its “democratic deficit”?
- 2) Would it be fair to observe that since the emergence of the Bloc Québécois in 1993 Canada has had a bi-national party system at the federal level rather than a strictly national one? What have been some the implications of the Bloc’s presence?

**Canadian Comprehensive Examination**

**March 8, 2007**

**Adam Waiser**

**Core**

**Write on *two* (2) questions from the core portion of the exam:**

**Time 3 hours 45 minutes**

- 1) Is Canadian federalism really just about English-French accommodation?**
  
- 2) Outline three important subjects that have been neglected or seriously underemphasized by Canadian political scientists. Suggest a research strategy for dealing with *ONE* such area.**
  
- 3) “Inside every Canadian is an American”. Discuss the implications of this assertion for the study and practice of Canadian politics.**
  
- 4) Would Siegfried be surprised by Savoie’s arguments about the concentration of power in Canadian government or would he argue that there is nothing new under the (northern) sun?**

# **Canadian Comprehensive Examination**

**March 15, 2007**

**Adam Waiser**

## **Part 2**

**Time 3 hours 45 minutes**

**Write on *two* (2) questions, one from each of the two sub-fields you have chosen:**

### **Canadian public policy**

- 1) Writing in 1976, Richard Simeon said of the study of public policy by political scientists: ‘... , we have not really advanced very far in increasing understanding of how government policies and actions are to be explained or understood. There is a proliferation of case studies, and of different methods and approaches, but precious little in the way of explanation. Indeed, we are not even sure of what it is that we want to explain...’.

Is Simeon’s observation still valid in 2007?

- 2) Is there room (perhaps even need for?) greater reliance on quantitative methods in the study of Canadian public policy? If yes, where are the most pressing gaps? If no, why not?

### **Parliament**

- 1) Does Canada need parliamentary or electoral reform to deal with its “democratic deficit”?
- 2) In many respects, the Canadian Parliament is very similar to its Westminster progenitor, but as Canadian political scientists have pointed out, there are several crucial differences between the two Parliaments. What are the central differences and what impact have they been seen to have on the Canadian Parliament and on Canadian politics more generally?