



POLITICAL SCIENCE 2101A (670)
Introduction to Law and Public Policy
Summer 2026

Instructor: Dr. Laszlo Sarkany
Email: lsarkan@uwo.ca

Course Information

Calendar Description:

This course is designed to address a series of overarching questions about law, governance and public policy. Students will learn a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to study law and public policy, with a focus on the application of these debates to contemporary social and political issues.

Prerequisite(s):

Antirequisite(s):

Extra Information: 3 hours

Course Weight: 0.50

Breadth: Category A

Subject Code: POLISCI

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.



PS 2101A

(670)

Spring (Intercession) 2026

Introduction to Law and Public Policy

Instructor Information:	
Professor: Dr. Laszlo Sarkany	Office #: N/A
Email: lsarkan@uwo.ca	Ext: 4513

Mode of delivery: Online, asynchronous instruction

Office Hours: TBA

Course description: (from the course calendar)

This course is designed to address a series of overarching questions about law, governance and public policy. Students will learn a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to study law and public policy, with a focus on the application of these debates to contemporary social and political issues.

Course objectives:

The aim of this course is to compel students to think critically about how Canadian law and legal decisions impact public policy and Canadian society. One of the most pressing questions that will animate the discussion in this term is, what the relationship is between Canadian law, courts and legal processes and decisions made by political actors in society. During the course student will further be asked to reflect on the ways in which Canadian legal and political organs have approached key social issues such as medically assisted suicide or MAiD, Indigenous rights, health care, refugee policy, criminal justice reform, and other key issues.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

After the completing the course, students should be able to:

- I) Discuss and differentiate between the sources, the theories and the implementation of public policy in Canada
- II) Discover and understand ways in which the policy and legal realms intersect
- III) Identify and explain the relevance of key legislation on public policy
- IV) Analyze and discuss the variety of ways in which public policy received legal assent, and its impact on Canadian society

GRADING

Course Component	Percentage of Grade	Type	Due Date:
Weekly participation	24% (4% per week)	Online	May 8 th May 15 th May 22 nd May 29 th June 5 th June 2 nd
Supreme Court of Canada Case Analysis	16%	Online	May 15 th
Book review	25%	Online	May 29 th
Term test	35%	Online	June 10 th

Grading standards:

A+	90–100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	Below 50	Fail

Course grades will be determined by the following criteria:

I. WEEKLY FORUM PARTICIPATION

Each week, you will be asked to post two (2) answers to any of the questions posted under 'Discussion', on Brightspace. Your answers need to be approximately 150 words.

Your answers to the questions posted need to explicitly show that you have read the readings. This means that you will need to use identifiers such as authors' names, page numbers or references to concepts and theories discussed in the readings.

In addition, you will be asked to comment on two (2) separate answers posted by your colleagues. Your comments need to be at least 3 sentences, each. These comments do not need to contain references to the readings.

Both types of participation will need to be coherent; you will need to post your answers using full sentences that are grammatically correct. Late assignments will not be accepted.

Discussions regarding law and public policy may lend themselves to multi-faceted discussions involving a variety of view points and opinions, which may – or may not – be shared by all. Therefore, students are asked that they conduct themselves in such a way that they show the utmost respect to others who may – or may not – share their views. The key here is to respect each others' opinions and perspectives. Any student uttering any negative or derogatory comments towards the views of others will first be asked to change their behaviour, or will be asked to take a few-minute break from the discussion.

II. SUPREME COURT OF CANADA CASE DESCRIPTION AND OPINION

Students enrolled in this course will be responsible for composing a brief description and analysis of a key case heard before the Supreme Court of Canada. Students are encouraged to select cases that are listed in the following sources: The length of the analysis should be approximately 1500 words.

<https://www.canadianlawyermag.com/resources/legal-education/powerful-precedents-the-most-famous-canadian-court-cases/391113>

<https://www.caij.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/droit-international-public-cour-supreme-du-canada-en.pdf>

<https://ojen.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Cases-That-Have-Changed-Society.pdf>

More information about the assignment will be available under the 'Resources' tab on Brightspace.

III. BOOK REVIEW

You will be responsible to write a book review on one (1) of the five (5) books listed below. It will be worth 25% of your final grade in this course. In the review you will be asked to summarize the main arguments in the book of your choice, and then spend at least half of the length of the essay analyzing the main arguments presented in the book. The book review needs to be **6 double-spaced pages long**. More specific instruction on how to write a book review and what to include – and not to include – will be provided on Brightspace.

Cloutier, Sheila-Watt. “The Right to be Cold.” Penguin House Canada, 2016.

Savoie, Donald J. “Speaking Truth to Canadians about their Public Service.” McGill – Queen’s University Press.

Shadd, Adrienne, et. al. “The Underground Railroad.” Dundurn Press, 2020.

Wells, Kari. “Women Who Woke Up The Law.” Second Story Press, 2025.

Wilson-Raybould, Jody. “Indian in the Cabinet: Speaking Truth to Power.” Harper-Collins Publishers, 2022.

IV. TERM TEST - THE TEST WILL BE DUE ON JUNE 10TH, ON BRIGHTSPACE.

POLICY ON ABSENCE AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

Penalties for late papers or projects may be avoided if extensions are requested in advance. Otherwise, a two- mark deduction will be taken for each of the first five days it is late (including weekends). After 5-days without communication, a zero will be assigned. Students are expected to schedule appointments and other responsibilities around class time. To be excused from participatory requirements (attendance or homework, etc.) due to temporary illness or an unavoidable scheduling conflict, contact the instructor directly via email as soon as you are aware of the problem. Ordinary problems of this nature do not require documentation or communication with the Dean’s Office; they will be dealt with by the course instructor. If a student experiences a disruption in their ability to study or participate in the course for more than one week, or if there is a personal loss or trauma of a serious nature, they may request more extensive accommodations, counselling, and other forms of help. The best way to do this is to contact the instructor and/or the Academic Dean’s Office.

***** POLICY REGARDING THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:**

Please note that you are explicitly asked not to use any type of software during the writing process which uses artificial intelligence. The use, or attempted use of such software for any part of any of the assignments or group discussions – the use of such platforms as ChatGPT, etc. – will result in you receiving ‘0’ on the assignment(s) in question.

Note on the use of Turnitin:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Required Textbooks:

Fairlie, John. “A Brief Introduction to Law in Canada.” Emond Publishing, 2025. [COST: \$77 - \$95]

Macfarlane, Emmett. “Policy Change, Courts, and the Constitution.” University of Toronto Press, 2018. https://ocul-uwo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_UWO/f0kqif/alma991044442317205163

Macfarlane, E., Drake, A., & Hiebert, J. (2024). *Legislating under the Charter : Parliament, Executive Power, and Rights*. University of Toronto Press,.
<https://doi.org/10.3138/9781487556105>

Puddister, K., & Macfarlane, E. (2022). *Constitutional Crossroads : Reflections on Charter Rights, Reconciliation, and Change*. University of British Columbia Press.
<https://doi.org/10.59962/9780774867931>

*****The rest of the readings assigned are accessible on-line in the appropriate journals, which are available electronically through UWO library web page.**

Recommended:

Margot Northey, Lorne Tepperman and Patrizia Albanese. *Making Sense in the Social Sciences: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing*, Fifth Edition. Oxford University Press, 2012. [Anticipated cost \$27.68 - \$45.99 CAD]

WEEKLY READING ASSIGNMENTS:

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION TO LAW AND POLITICS IN CANADA

Lecture notes – topic 1.1:

Please see under ‘Week1: Topic 1’, in ‘Lectures’ on Brightspace

Readings:

Fairlie, chapters 4 and 5

Lecture notes – topic 1.2:

Please see under ‘Week 1: Topic 2’, in ‘Lectures’ on Brightspace

Macfarlene, ‘Legislating under the Charter...’, chapter 1

Please complete the weekly participation questions and comments under ‘Discussions’, ‘Week 1.’

WEEK 2: THEORIES OF LAW AND PUBLIC POLICY

Lecture notes – topic 2.1:

Please see under ‘Week2: Topic 1’, in ‘Lectures’ on Brightspace

Readings:

Fairlie, chapters 1, 2, and 3

Lecture notes – topic 2.2:

Please see under ‘Week 2: Topic 2’, in ‘Lectures’ on Brightspace

Macfarlene, ‘Policy Change, Courts and the Cnstitution ...’, chapter 1

Please complete the weekly participation questions and comments under ‘Discussions’, ‘Week 2.’

WEEK 3: KEY ISSUES: MAID, REFUGEE POLICY, AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Lecture notes – topic 3.1:

Please see under ‘Week3: Topic 1’, in ‘Lectures’ on Brightspace

Readings:

Fairlie, chapters 6 and 10

Lecture notes – topic 3.2:

Please see under ‘Week 3: Topic 2’, in ‘Lectures’ on Brightspace

Macfarlene, ‘Policy Change, Courts and the Cnstitution ...’, chapter 9

Macfarlene, ‘Legislating under the Charter...’, chapter 3

Please complete the weekly participation questions and comments under ‘Discussions’, ‘Week 3.’

.....

WEEK 4: KEY ISSUES: INDIGENOUS RIGHTS AND HEALTH CARE

Lecture notes – topic 4.1:

Please see under ‘Week 4: Topic 1’, in ‘Lectures’ on Brightspace

Readings:

Fairlie, chapters 3

Lecture notes – topic 4.2:

Please see under ‘Week 4: Topic 2’, in ‘Lectures’ on Brightspace

Macfarlene, ‘Policy Change, Courts and the Cnstitution ...’, chapter 16, and 17

Macfarlene and Puddington, “Constitution at a Crossroads”, chapters 4

Please complete the weekly participation questions and comments under ‘Discussions’, ‘Week 4.’

.....

WEEK 5: WHO GOVERNS, AND HOW: THE LEGISLATURES, THE COURTS, OR BOTH?

Lecture notes – topic 5.1:

Please see under ‘Week 4: Topic 1’, in ‘Lectures’ on Brightspace

Readings:

Macfarlene, ‘Policy Change, Courts and the Cnstitution ...’, chapter 4

Lecture notes – topic 5.2:

Please see under ‘Week 4: Topic 2’, in ‘Lectures’ on Brightspace

Macfarlene, ‘Legislating under the Charter...’, chapter 7

Macfarlene and Puddington, “Constitution at a Crossroads”, chapters 5

Please complete the weekly participation questions and comments under ‘Discussions’, ‘Week 5.’

.....

WEEK 6: TERM TEST ON BRIGTHSPACE

***** Please complete the weekly participation questions and comments under ‘Discussions’, ‘Week 6.’**

.....

Statement on Gender-Based Sexual Violence:

“King’s (Western) is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

Mental Health and Wellness at King's - King's University College

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing Care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing Care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a Case Manager/Social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western’s Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by email or by calling 519-661-3568.

King's University College General Course Policies 2025-2026

1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences

Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at [here](#).

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course. Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course. For further information, please see:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/exams/index.html.

Please note, Friday Make-Up Exams may only be written with the instructor's consent.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

2. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University College: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/personal-counselling>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King's University College:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>

GBSV Support:

King's is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/campus-safety-and-reporting/gender-and-sexual-violence>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing Care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by [email](#) or by calling 519-661-3568.

See also https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/campus-safety-and-reporting/student-code-of-conduct>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

4. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at [here](#).

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with you instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/OriginalityReports-TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

5. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member.

Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

6. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

7. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.