Lakehead University Fall 2025
Department of Political Science

POLI 1100
Introduction to Political Science

Mondays and Wednesdays, 8:30-9:50 a.m.
Braun Building 1021

Open the Navigation Pane for easy navigation (under the View menu).

I General Information

Instructor: Elsa Piersig
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.
Email: elsa.piersig@lakeheadu.ca
Office: Ryan Building 2039
Phone number: 647.515.6080

II Course Description

The course introduces the scope, concepts, and methods of Political Science. Over the course of two semesters, we will examine the role of political ideas and the institutional and social framework of political activity in Canada and other political systems. The scope of the discipline will take us from political theories and ideas that cross borders to core political institutions that serve as the arena for political activity and exist within borders or across borders. Concepts are rooted in political theory and address ideas about power, equity and diversity, and the state or governance structure. One core concept, the political institution, is at the heart of political science and this course: institutions are designed to reflect a community's ideas and political theories, members work within institutions to create political change, and their rules shape members behaviour and the political and policy outcomes.

III Course Format

The course is synchronous, in-person, and combines lectures and in-class group discussion activities.

IV Learning Outcomes

1. **Critical Thinking**: By the end of this course, you will be able to identify and apply two of the five components of critical thinking, namely explain an issue, and assess and organize evidence. (The remaining three are covered in the winter semester.)
2. **Backgrounder**: By the end of this course, you will be able to produce a backgrounder that explains and synthesizes evidence on a contemporary topic.

3. **Research Basics**: By the end of this course, you will be able to demonstrate how to find, cite, and recognize reputable source.
4. **Institutions and Power**: By the end of the full year course, you will be able to explain the concepts of power and political institutions and illustrate their importance for political science.
5. **Field Survey**: By the end of this course, you will be able to describe the four main fields of political science and the main topics of study.
6. **Groupwork**: By the end of this course, you will be able to practice positive and constructive groupwork and initiate facilitating group discussion.
7. **Examination Writing**: By the end of this course, you will be able to assess and interpret multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

V Texts

- Brodie, Janine, Sandra Rein, and Malinda Smith. 2023. *Critical Concepts*. 6th Edition. Toronto: Oxford University Press. (Available online from Vital Source.) $47.30 for a one-year subscription.
    - NOTE: Please purchase the year subscription. We are using the same text for the winter semester.
- Additional material as listed in on Brightspace.

VI Evaluation at a Glance

Assignment/Course Component	*Assignment Due Date*	*Percentage*	*Running Total*
Participation	Throughout the semester	10%	10%
Syllabus Quiz	Friday, September 19, 2025	1%	1%
Worksheets	Throughout the semester	5%	16%
Pop Quizzes	Throughout the semester	10%	26%
Backgrounder Plan	Friday, September 26, 2025	2%	28%
Backgrounder: Issue Explainer	Friday, October 6, 2025	2%	30%
Backgrounder: Issue Data	Friday, October 24, 2025	2%	32%
Backgrounder: Issue Impact	Friday, October 31, 2025	2%	34%
Backgrounder: Issue Consequences	Friday, November 7, 2025	2%	36%
Backgrounder	Friday, November 21, 2025	25%	61%
Activity Bingo Sheet	Friday, November 28, 2025	10%	65%
Reflection Assignment	Monday, December 1, 2025	4%	80%
Final Exam	Scheduled during the exam period	20%	100%

This course is designed to foster engagement and dialogue between learners and the course instructor in three ways:

1. Learners connect with the course instructor and each other through lecture, worksheets, and the activity bingo sheet.
2. The worksheets and Backgrounder submissions build off each other, providing learners/groups with constructive feedback for upcoming submissions.
3. Learners can critically review their work from each Backgrounder submission and the Reflection Assignment.

*** Remember, the course instructor is here to help! Please reach out through email, office hours, the Course Questions discussion forum, or schedule a meeting.

VII Course Evaluation in Detail

Participation – 10% of Final Grade – Ongoing (Weeks 1-12)

Learners earn participation by attending class and engaging with the lectures, discussions, and activities. All classes will include time for completing the worksheets and peer feedback sessions. Questions on course material and assignments are also welcome during lecture and group activities.

Syllabus Quiz – 1% of Final Grade – Due Friday, September 19, 2025 (Week 3)

The Syllabus Quiz is a quick review of the course components and communication policies. The quiz must be completed to unlock the modules for Weeks 4 and up. Quizzes completed on time will receive 1% and all late submissions will result in a grade of 0.[1]

Worksheets – 5% of Final Grade – Throughout the Semester

There are ten worksheets and exercises over the course. We will take time in class to work on the worksheets and exercises. The worksheets and exercises address lecture material, critical thinking and other transferable skills, and build towards the summative project. The worksheet schedule is listed in the Course Schedule below. Learners are expected to complete each worksheet. However, if unable to attend a class, learners can still submit an attempt on Brightspace.

Learners are asked to submit the completed worksheet in class or post it to the related Brightspace discussion forum within 24 hours of the class in which the worksheet was completed.

The worksheets and exercises are assessed out of 1: not completed (0) and completed (1). The instructor will provide feedback as needed.

Pop Quizzes – 10% of Final Grade – Throughout the Semester

The pop quizzes are based on the reading material for the week. They may also have a question about the previous week's reading material if there was no pop quiz that week. The quizzes will be approximately 10-15 minutes and feature a mix of multiple choice and short answer questions. Learners are graded on their best 5 of 6 quizzes.

The quizzes are completed prior class:

[1] The last day to register in a course is September 16, 2025. All learners, regardless of registration date, will have until the end of the week to complete the Syllabus Quiz.

- Monday Class: To respect the weekend, pop quizzes open by 9:00am on Friday morning and are due by 5:00pm on Sunday.
- Wednesday Class: Quizzes open after Monday's class and are due by 5:00pm on Tuesday.

Quizzes are due prior to class so the instructor has time to review results in preparation for class. Results will help serve as a discussion point for our class; learners are encouraged to raise questions about the quiz in class.

Activity Bingo Sheet – 15% of Final Grade – All Activities due by November 28, 2025

The activity bingo sheet is designed to get learners trying things inside and outside of the classroom. Learners will have a choice of several activities and need to complete a row, column, or diagonal line on the bingo sheet. The activities include:

- Attend a research talk
- Visit office hours
- Meet a librarian (preferably the political science librarian, Janice Mutz!)
- Attend a political science society event
- Facilitate groupwork discussion
- Contribute a point in class
- Present groupwork to class
- Ask a question during a research talk

These activities help learners work on their groupwork, oral communication, and research skills. Absorbing information, asking questions, and presenting material is an important part of doing research and communicating findings in an academic or professional setting.

Learners are asked to keep a journal of their activities over the course of the semester. The bingo sheet and journal entries are due on November 28, 2025 (Fall) and March 20, 2026 (Winter). Journal entries should briefly describe the activity/what happened and the learner's experience or thoughts on doing the activity. This might include whether the activity entailed trying something new or introduced a new perspective.

Backgrounder Assignment – 35% of Final Grade – Ongoing throughout the Semester

The backgrounder is a briefing document or presentation (deck) that explains a relevant, current issue or event, delves into its background or historical roots, connects it to a political organization, institution, or polity, and discusses the consequences that flow from the issue. Backgrounders can be prepared for an internal audience, such management or other teams, to prepare them for more detailed engagement on an issue. Or backgrounders can be external facing and meant to facilitate the public's understanding of a given topic.

The backgrounder is a group project. There are several scaffolded components that build up to the final project. Groups can decide whether they wish to submit the backgrounder as a formal written document or do a presentation deck with supplementary speaking notes. The component submissions are listed in the table on the next page.

All submissions will be graded use of course content, critical thinking skills (especially explanation and evidence), structure, and writing and grammar. As part of the evidence component of critical

thinking skills, it is important to properly cite all sources employed in a submission. It is recommended to submit single-spaced documents in Times New Roman, 12 point font.

Backgrounder Component	*Description*	*Suggested Length*	*Due Date*
Backgrounder Plan	Decide on the topic and final submission format (written document or presentation). Develop a groupwork plan for backgrounder – i.e., how to divide the content and requirements.		Friday, September 26, 2025
Issue Explainer	Provide a preliminary overview of the issue and its historical background. Can explain how it works.	1 page	Friday, October 10, 2025
Issue Data	A selection of relevant statistics, numbers, and/or graphs that present a picture of the issue. These should be current figures/numbers, but may also include historical data.	1-2 pages	Friday, October 24, 2025
Issue Impact	Why does the issue matter? Who or what organizations, groups or political units are impacted? Where and when does the impact happen?	1 page	Friday, October 31, 2025
Issue Consequences	What are the consequences of the issue and possible future developments?	1 page	Friday, November 7, 2025
Backgrounder	Background on a topic, why it matters to organization/political unit/institution, and potential future developments.	3-5 pages or 15-20 minute presentation + notes	Friday, March 28, 2025

Reflection Assignment – 5% of Final Grade – December 1, 2025 (Week 13)

The Reflection Assignment is due following the final Backgrounder submission. It is an informal journal entry for learners to reflect on their experience with their group and critically review their own work and thought processes/preconceptions. The suggested length is approximately 500-700 words.

NOTE: The Backgrounder must be completed before submitting the Reflection Assignment.

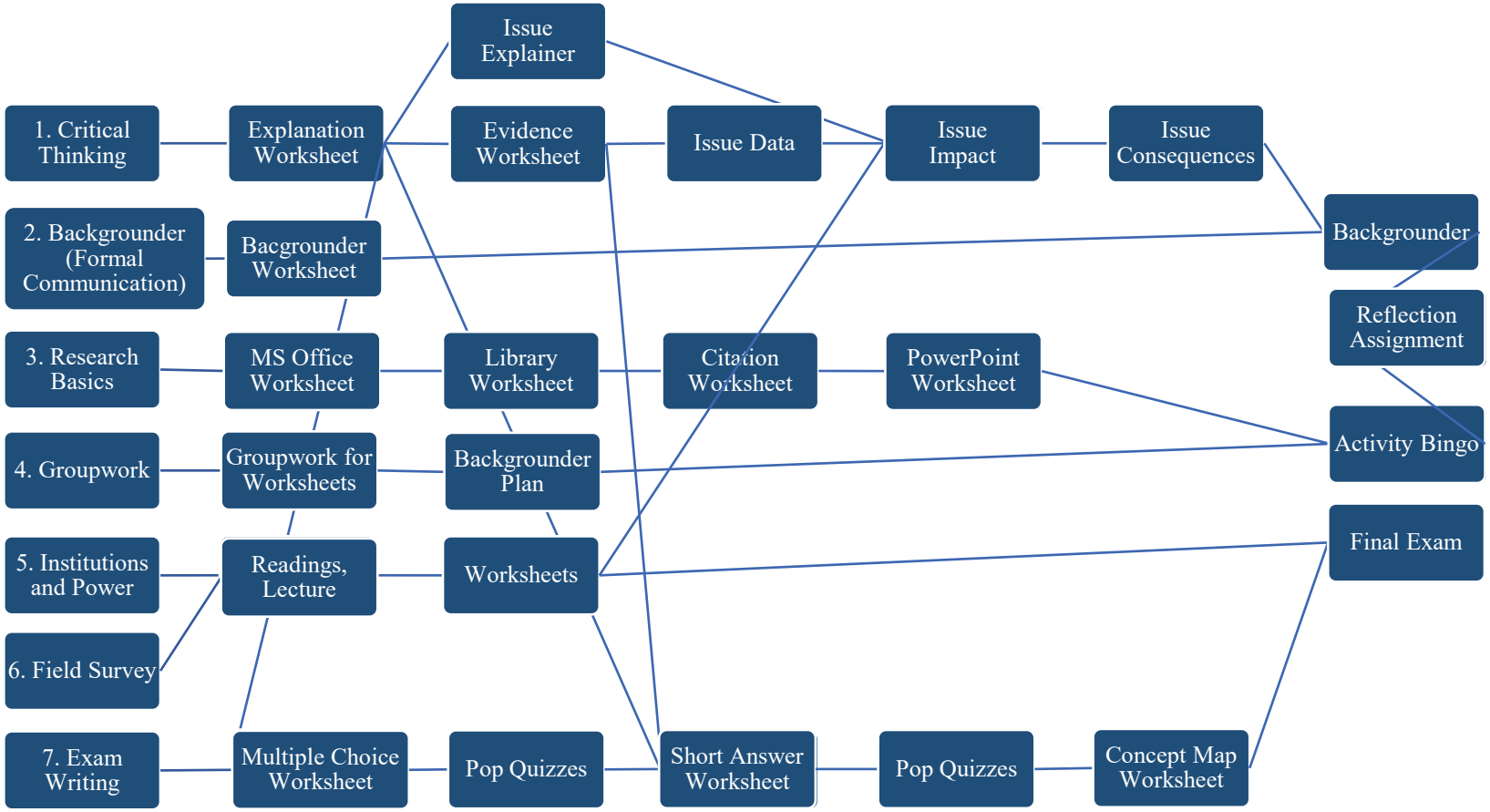
Final Exam – 20% of Final Grade – Formal Exam Period (December 2025)

The Final Exam is made up of a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and long answer questions. Details of the exam structure will be released closer to the exam date.

The short and long answers will be graded on use of course content and drawing connections between different weeks of the course. Students will not be graded based on spelling and grammar.

VIII Learning Outcomes and Concept Assessments Map

This concept map lists the 7 course-level learning outcomes in the left column and the connected activities and assessments. The activities and assessments move from left to right in chronological order, based on working towards the learning outcome. The dates for all of the weekly topics and assessments (minus pop quizzes) are provided in the next section (IX Course Schedule and Topics).



IX Course Schedule and Topics

Week	Topic	Field	Description	Readings	Worksheets and Assignments
Part I: Introductory Weeks					
Week 1 Sept. 3	Course Overview		• Introduction to the course and syllabus • Critical Thinking Skills Rubric (foundation for assignment grading rubrics) • Four main fields of political science	• Syllabus • Critical Thinking Skills Rubric	• Syllabus Quiz due Friday, Sept. 19
Week 2 Sept. 8, 10	Studying Politics		• Transferable Skills: OneNote and MS Word I (downloading MS Office and sharing Notebooks)	• Brodie. 2023. "Governing Ideas." In Brodie et al., Chapter 1	• Worksheet 1 – MS Office
Part II: Political Theory and Ideas					
Week 3 Sept. 15, 17	Political Theory (Western Traditions)	Theory	• Transferable Skills: Backgrounders	• Epp. 2023. "Enduring Ideas." In Brodie et al., Chapter 2	• Worksheet 2 – Backgrounder • Worksheet 3 – Group Meeting • Syllabus Quiz Due (Friday, Sept. 19)
Week 4 Sept. 22, 24	Democracy	Theory	• Transferable Skills: Library Resources and Citation	• Kellogg. 2023. "Democratic Ideas. In Brodie et al., Chapter 3	• Worksheet 4 – Library Resources • Worksheet 5 – Citation • Backgrounder Plan Due (Friday, Sept. 26)

Week	Topic	Field	Description	Readings	Worksheets and Assignments
Week 5 Sept. 29, Oct. 1	Radical Ideas	Theory	• Transferable Skills: Critical Thinking – Explanation	• Rein. 2023. "Radical Ideas." In Brodie et al., Chapter 4	• Worksheet 6 – Explanation
Week 6 Oct. 6, 8	Political Theory Beyond the West	Theory	• Transferable Skills: Multiple Choice Questions	• Mahdavi. 2023. "Non-Western Ideas." In Brodie et al., Chapter 5	• Issue Explainer Due (Friday, Oct. 10)
READING WEEK (October 13-17, 2025)					
Part III: Identities					
Week 7 Oct. 20, 22	Indigenous Peoples	All	• Transferable Skills: Critical Thinking – Evidence	• Altamirano-Jimenez. 2023. "Indigenous Peoples, Land, and UNDRIP." In Brodie et al., Chapter 6	• Worksheet 7 – Evidence • Issue Data Due (Friday, Oct. 24)
Week 8 Oct. 27, 29	Race and Politics	All	• Elsa away, October 29 – TALL Lecture	• Smith. 2023. "The Politics of Race." In Brodie et al., Chapter 7	• Issue Impact Due (Friday, Oct. 31)
Week 9 Nov. 3, 5	Race and Politics, Genders and Sexualities	All	• Transferable Skills: Short Answer Questions	• DeGagne. 2023. "Genders and Sexualities." In Brodie et al., Chapter 8	• Worksheet 8 – Short Answer Questions • Issue Consequences Due (Friday, Nov. 7)

Week	Topic	Field	Description	Readings	Worksheets and Assignments
Week 10 Nov. 10, 12	Genders and Sexualities, Disability	All	• Transferable Skills: PowerPoint and Word II	• Titchkosky. 2023. "Disability: A Peculiar Politics." In Brodie et al., Chapter 9	• Worksheet 9 – MS PowerPoint
Week 11 Nov. 17, 19	Citizenship and Borders	All	•	• Gabriel. 2023. "Citizenship and Borders." In Brodie et al., Chapter 10	• Backgrounder Due (Friday, Nov. 21)
Week 12 Nov. 24, 26	Political Socialization and Political Culture	Comparative	• Transferable Skills: Concepts (vertical levels/scalar and horizontal connections)	• MacLean et al. 2020. "Political Socialization and Political Culture." Chapter 8 (See Brightspace)	• Worksheet 10 – Concept Map • Activity Bingo Sheet Due (Friday, Nov. 28)
Week 13 Dec. 1	Conclusion		• Conclusion – The Four (Major) Fields of Political Science • Exam preparation		• Reflection Assignment Due (Friday, Dec. 1)

X Course Procedures and Policies

Assignment Submission

- All assignments are due on Brightspace. Learners are responsible for ensuring that the correct file has been uploaded. Assignments should be uploaded as Microsoft Word documents (not PDFs) to the appropriate online dropbox by 11:59 p.m. on the due date.
- The recommended length for an assignment reflects both the expected effort of the learner and the time available to the course instructional team for providing feedback. Please respect the recommended length. Assignments over or under the expected length by 10% will receive a reduction in the assigned grade.
- Lakehead offers MS Office 365 (including Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneNote, etc.) for free from the Technology Services Centre: Office 365 | Lakehead University.

Citation is Required!

- Citing is important for a) giving credit where credit is due (intellectual property), b) justifying evidence, and c) avoiding plagiarism. Find more about academic integrity here.
- Learners must use proper citation for all evidence and arguments derived from sources other than themselves. Citation is required for all sources beyond the course material.
- The preferred citation format is an in-text option such as MLA, Chicago Author-Date system, or the Canadian Journal of Political Science guide. Please avoid APA.

Late Penalties and Extensions

- Late papers will lose 3% per day, inclusive of weekends and holidays.
- Learners may find an extension necessary due to their specific circumstances. This is understandable, and identifying how to balance all the requirements of university life is a skill in and of itself. If an extension is needed, please email the professor and *recommend a new due date before* the deadline. The professor will accept all reasonable extension requests. Please note:
  - Extensions without a recommended new due date will not be granted.
  - Extensions requested or confirmed by the professor after the deadline will incur a minor penalty (including last minute emails after working hours).
  - Learners are asked to keep in mind that many of the assignments are linked and should consider how the extension will impact other work. An appropriate schedule can be worked out if necessary.

Communication

- Please make use of email, discussion forums, lectures, and office hours to get in touch.
- All email communication must be via official Lakehead University e-mail accounts.
- Email formatting basics:
  - Please use a formal greeting, such as 'Hi,' 'Hello,' or 'Dear' and *include the name of the person* to whom the email is addressed.
  - Use multiple paragraphs to breakout the content – doing so improves readability and highlights information!
  - Emails that look like a quickly typed text message may not get a response.

- There is no expectation of email responses for *anyone* in the course after regular business hours – both for learners and the instructor.
- Suggested communication options for questions/comments:
  - Lakehead University email for technical concerns, course procedures,
  - Lectures and office hours, or scheduled meetings for substantive questions,
  - Submit general questions to the Course Questions discussion forum,
  - Schedule a meeting with the instructor for personal questions and issues.

XI Student Mental Health

As a university student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. This can happen to any of us, and everyone can benefit from support when feeling overwhelmed or struggling to cope. If you or anyone you know needs help with difficult life events, anxiety, or depression, please reach out to Student Health and Wellness. The office offers free, confidential services to Lakehead students. You can find more information here: Health Services | Lakehead University.

XII Academic Accommodations

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. An accommodation could be needed for health, religious obligations, student activities pregnancy, or (dis)abilities. For an accommodation request, please contact me as soon as the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Accommodation for Students with (Dis)Abilities

Lakehead University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities and/or medical conditions to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you are a student with a disability and think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and register as early as possible. For more information, please visit Student Accessibility here: Support for Students with Disabilities | Lakehead University

XIII Sexual Violence Policy

As a community, Lakehead University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and is survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Lakehead's Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Response Policy. For more information and/or support, visit: Sexual Violence | Lakehead University

XIV Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is an essential element of a productive and successful academic career. Lakehead's Academic Integrity Code addresses academic integrity violations, including

plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, misrepresentation, impersonation, withholding of records, obstruction/interference, disruption of instruction or examinations, improper access to and/or dissemination of information, or violation of test and examination rules. It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the university's academic integrity rules.

Plagiarism

The Academic Integrity Code defines plagiarism as "presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own." This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include, but are not limited to, the following: books, articles, papers, websites, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, research findings, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- Any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else;
- Using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- Using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement; and
- Failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Unless explicitly permitted by the instructor in a particular course, any use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools to produce assessed content (e.g., text, code, equations, image, summary, video, etc.) is considered a violation of academic integrity standards.

Intellectual Property

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).