

# Canadian Government and Politics Major Field Exam — questions with annotations

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The examiners for January 2013 will be Rod Haddow, Peter Loewen, and Graham White.

Normally the exam is divided into three sections, with students to select one question from among three in each. The first section is normally on the discipline as a whole, the second is about institutions, and the third is about process.

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# 1 | The state of the discipline as a whole

## 1.1 Making reference to specific subfields of the discipline, discuss whether Canadian political science is more in need of research on topics on which the literature is sparse, or of research which builds on and expands existing literature. (May 2011)

### Essentially identical questions (6):

What are the most pressing gaps in the literature of Canadian political science? Why do these gaps exist? (May 2009)

You have been asked by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to write a memorandum laying out the three principles issues that will likely dominate Canadian politics over the next 10 years as well as the principle means to study the issues. What do you propose as a research agenda? (August 2007)

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada has allocated substantial funds to encourage research in understanding areas of Canadian government and politics. The Council has asked you to prepare a memo proposing (and justifying) the fields and questions to which it should give priority. What do you write for the Council? (May 2005)

What don't we know about Canadian politics? What are the most significant gaps in our knowledge of Canadian politics? Why do these gaps exist? (August 2005)

As a discipline, what has Canadian political science done well? What has it not done well? (August 2003)

The Canadian Political Science Association has received a large donation with which to fund research into the aspects of Canadian politics where our knowledge and understanding are least well developed. You have been asked to write a memo recommending the areas of research to be supported. What do you write? (May 2003)

### Thesis:

**Loewen:** When arguing for the existence of a gap, explain both how it relates to pressing political concerns and how development in the area could help address scholarship generally. Explain how work in the area can take advantage of new insights, and in turn develop new ideas that will feed into other academic work. For example, cities have political structures that we can study using tools and theories developed for other levels of government. Cities are also different in intellectually interesting ways: they often lack political parties, and the powers of mayors vary.

Canadian politics has done a great deal of work in areas including: regionalism and federalism; political institutions including parliament and the courts; national unity and the management of diversity; and, to some extent, voting behaviour and political parties. Some of the more significant gaps and opportunities for new work include: updating our understanding of Canadian politics to better take into account environmental issues, especially climate change; continuing work on prospects for institutional reform, including constitutional amendment and parliamentary changes; further work on Canada's place in a world shifting away from American dominance; and continued examination of the political role of aboriginals, including in relation to resource development. In examining Canadian aboriginal issues, another critical set of questions pertains to what the state of Canada's aboriginal population now is, and how forays into self-government like the Nisga'a agreement are functioning. Democratic participation by aboriginals is also worthy of study, including how it varies between communities and how high- and low-participation communities differ from each other. Another under-studied area is urban and municipal politics, especially when it comes to large cities like Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal that have interests and governance needs that may not be well served by their provincial governments.

**Outline:**

**Russell:** Talking about climate change is "likely to get someone's hackles up" among the examiners. Also, climate change is a phenomenon and not a policy area. Some ideas for policy areas to discuss: managing diversity, incorporating perspectives from outside political science including demography, the declining participation of young people in Canada's democratic processes. Demography ties into pensions, the nature of society, immigration policy, etc. Regarding young voter participation, Henry Milner and Paul Howe have done comparative work, showing that Canada and the United States are doing worse than Europe.

In *Canada in Question: Federalism in the Eighties* (1980), Donald Smiley argues that gaps in our understanding of the federal system include: (1) linkages between political culture and the operation of institutions, using political attitudes from survey data (2) an inventory of generalizations about federal-provincial diplomacy (3) an investigation of institutions and processes of executive federalism, such as First Ministers' Conferences (4) the workings of

the courts, especially the Supreme Court (5) studies on province-building (6) collaboration with political philosophers.

**Sources:**

- Donald Smiley. *Canada in Question: Federalism in the Eighties*. 1980

**1.2 Making reference to specific subfields of the discipline, discuss why the literature on certain elements of Canadian politics makes substantial use of conceptual-theoretical perspectives, whereas the literature on other elements of Canadian politics is largely atheoretical. (May 2011)**

**Haddow:** None of the questions from the August 2013 exam will appear on the January 2014 exam.

**Essentially identical questions (7):**

Identify **TWO** subfields of Canadian political science that are especially rich theoretically and empirically and **TWO** subfields in need of more or better research. Discuss why such variation exists in the quality and quantity of research across subfields. (August 2010)

Canadian political science has been accused of being atheoretical. Choose one area of the discipline for which you believe the criticism is valid and one for which you believe it does not apply. Justify your choices through references to the literature. What accounts for the difference between the two in terms of theoretical underpinnings? (May 2009)

Canadian political science has been accused of excessive homogeneity in the approaches used and of valuing description over theory building and theory testing. Evaluate this statement while considering scholarship in **TWO** of the following **FOUR** areas: the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; federalism; political parties; and public policy. (August 2008)

Canadian political science has been accused of excessive homogeneity in the approaches used and of valuing description over theory building and theory testing. Evaluate this statement while considering scholarship in **TWO** of the following **FOUR** areas: the Canadian Charter of Rights Freedoms; federalism; political parties; and policy policy. (August 2008)

Canadian political science has been accused of excessive homogeneity in the approaches used and of valuing description over theory-building and theory-testing. Evaluate this statement

while considering scholarship in two (2) of the following four (4) areas: the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; federalism; political parties; and public policy. (August 2007)

Three or four decades ago, most of Canadian political science could be fairly criticised as overly descriptive and insufficiently theoretical. Are such criticisms still valid today? (May 2005)

Canadian political science has been accused of being atheoretical. Choose one area of the discipline for which you believe this criticism is correct and one for which you believe it is not. Justify your choice through references to the literature. What accounts for the differences between the two areas in terms of theoretical underpinnings? (August 2013)

Does the study of Canadian politics suffer from too many or too few theories? (May 2013)

### **Thesis:**

Draw distinction between normative and empirical theory: with the latter generally emphasized, about finding general connections, developing causal statements, and sometimes making predictions

### **More theoretical**

Canadian politics may be most well known in terms of the study of federalism, which has been a constant preoccupation for Canadian scholars. Arguably, the contributions from this sub-discipline extend beyond the descriptive and into the realm of the theoretical. For instance, there is the claim that ethnic differences of a territorial nature make federal systems more difficult to operate: compare Canada with Australia, or Spain with Germany. Also, because Canadians are preoccupied with regional and ethnic differences, it can be argued that we do a worse job of dealing with big economic issues, especially at the federal level. Theory continues to accumulate about comparative federalism, and institutions have been established in Canada and abroad to focus on it (Queen's). There are also normative questions in the field: such as about the relative advantages of centralization and decentralization.

Another area with considerable theoretical content is constitutional studies and the examination of the *Charter*. This includes a lot of normative theory: the legitimacy of judges compared with legislatures, the tensions between popular opinion and the protection of individual rights, and the ways in which the *Charter* has affected society.

Across its considerable variety, aboriginal politics is a sub-field of Canadian politics in which theoretical contributions have been made, and in which debates at a high level have long been ongoing.

### **Insufficiently theoretical**

One contender for an area where more theory could be useful is voting behaviour. Analyses are often very statistical and data-driven, identifying potentially interesting and surprising findings and patterns, but not often generalizing. This must be qualified, of course, as there are generalizations like Duverger's Law (the claim that plurality-rule elections normally generate a two-party system) and Arrow's impossibility theorem (when voters have three or more distinct alternatives (options), no rank order voting system can convert the ranked preferences of individuals into a community-wide (complete and transitive) ranking while also meeting a specific set of criteria). In particular, there may be a lack of attention to normative questions, such as the impact of the electoral system on the health of Canada's democracy, and what kind of system may be superior.

**Loewen:** Theory in voting behaviour may be "less grad because it's eminently testable". Theorizing about federalism is harder to refute with data. There is little normative theory in the field.

Public policy may be another area in which the study of Canadian politics has often been atheoretical. Historically, it was largely the study of public administration, focused on issues like the processes employed in the civil service and the relationship of bureaucrats to cabinet.

**Loewen:** Public administration is a quintessential example of a sub-discipline that is descriptive and atheoretical.

The study of the media in Canada may be another example, both of an area that receives less attention than it likely deserves and one where the work done is largely descriptive.

**Loewen:** Make sure to stay strictly focused on matters of politics.

**Outline:**

**Haddow:** The examiners are more interested in empirical theory (which is not necessarily predictive) than in normative theory.

**Russell:** Best to talk primarily about empirical theory

**Sources:**

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### 1.3 It has been said that “the world needs more Canada”. Can this be said of Canadian Political Science? Are there conceptual frameworks or empirical findings from the study of Canadian politics that could usefully be applied to other polities? (May 2010)

#### Essentially identical questions (2):

At an international symposium on the discipline of political science, you have been asked to speak on the topic: “Notable achievements in Canadian political science.” What do you say? (August 2007)

You are to address an international symposium on the discipline of political science. Your topic: ‘Notable achievements of Canadian political science’. What do you say? (May 2003)

#### Thesis:

Canadian theoretical contributions that have attracted attention internationally include:

- Managing diversity is an area where Canadian scholarship has been seen as definitive internationally. This includes theoretical analysis of the nature of citizenship. Canada is multicultural and multinational (both French Canadians and the First Nations constitute nations within). Canada also has regional diversity beyond the French-English divide — provinces used to be self-governing colonies, immigration patterns have shaped political cultures, and natural resource variation has enduring effects.
- Harold Innis’ staples theory of political economy, elaborated upon by Mel Watkins and others — this has influenced analysis of the political development of export-based economies elsewhere in the world and influenced the development debate in the Caribbean, Africa, and parts of Asia. This has included analysis of the economic and political impact of large foreign export-oriented corporations.
- Canada has a strong tradition of pluralist liberalism: what’s the best way of managing difference. Charles Taylor, James Tully, and Guy Laforest, among others. This relates closely to political philosophy, and addresses questions of justice and fairness.

#### Outline:

**Haddow:** He has his doubts about how widely the staples thesis has been adopted internationally. Furthermore, he draws attention to how Innis studied at the University of Chicago and saw the staples theory as applicable to a period of US history.

**Loewen:** Also doubts that the staples theory has had much international influence, espe-



cially compared with the ‘resource curse’ literature. If asked what Canadian political science can bring to the world, he would argue that there has been lots of internal innovation, but the main generalizable ideas relate to federalism and the management of diversity. In this field, there is both an empirical and a theoretical literature that can be generalized to other cases.

### **Staples theory**

“At the heart of his Canadian political economy is the proposition that the export of staple products creates uncertainty, and havoc when markets turn against Canadian products. The work of Innis helped to understand how when the world economy collapsed, producing the great depression, it took the Canadian wheat-based economy with it.”

— Duncan Cameron. “The Staple Theory @ 50: Duncan Cameron”.

### **Sources:**

- Innis, Harold. *The Fur Trade in Canada*. 1930.
- Watkins, Mel. “A Staple Theory of Economic Growth.” 1963.
- Alan Cairns. “Political Science in Canada and the Americanization Issue.” 1975.

## **1.4 You are designing an upper-year course on Canadian politics, one section of which focuses on four or five books in Canadian political science which have made influential and lasting contributions to the field. What books do you put on the course and why? (August 2008)**

**Haddow:** None of the questions from the August 2013 exam will appear on the January 2014 exam.

### **Essentially identical questions (1):**

You are designing an upper-year course on Canadian politics, one section of which focuses on four books in Canadian political science that have made influential and lasting contributions to the field. What books do you put on the course and why? (August 2013)

### **Thesis:**

### **Outline:**

Candidate books:

- Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto** — Taiaiake Alfred — 1999  
 — Expose students to an aboriginal perspective that is not likely to be familiar to them, raise questions about the fundamental legitimacy of Canada's founding, naturally raises more questions about relations between First Nations and the Canadian state and society today
- Political Choice in Canada** — Harold Clarke et al. eds. — 1979 — Expose students to a classic text on voting behaviour and related methodologies, provide opportunities to contrast different approaches to the study of politics and the way its development in Canada has related to its development in the U.S. and U.K.
- Letting the People Decide: Dynamics of a Canadian Election** — Richard Johnston — 1992 - More contemporary book on voting behaviour, focused on 1988 election (itself focused on free trade). Based on "rolling cross section" daily opinion tracking, along with media analysis.
- Mr. Smith goes to Ottawa: Life in the House of Commons** — David Docherty — 1997 — Provide detailed information on the functioning of Canada's most important governmental institution, discuss issues of party loyalty and the degree to which individuals get socialized into and dominated by institutions
- The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History** — Harold Innis — 1930 — Provide a classic political-economic analysis of Canada's development, raise questions about the role of natural resources in Canada's history, transition into discussion of Canada's current issues of resource politics
- Federalism and the French Canadians** — Pierre Trudeau — 1968 — Gain insight into the thinking of one of Canada's most important Prime Ministers, and the man who set much of the essential background for current features in Canadian politics. Raise questions about how to appropriately and effectively accommodate Quebec's difference and the consequences of the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s
- Misconceiving Canada: the struggle for national unity** — Kenneth McRoberts — 1997 — Ideally paired with Trudeau, provides a counterpoint to the widespread narrative that patriation and the charter were a triumph, makes a compelling case that the means of their achievement stymied future constitutional evolution and made English Canada less willing to tolerate the key features of what Quebec feels it needs for cultural survival
- Constitutional Odyssey: Can Canadians Become a Sovereign People? (3rd ed.)** — Peter Russell — 2004 — Provides a great deal of excellent background on Canadian history and raises key contemporary questions about the nature of Canadian

society and identity

**Governing from the centre: the concentration of power in Canadian politics** — Donald Savoie — 1999 — A convincing description of the recent development of Canada's federal government, and the ways in which the power-concentrating features of Westminster-style parliamentary democracy have been taken to even greater extremes

**Federal-Provincial Diplomacy: the Making of Recent Policy in Canada** — Richard Simeon — 1972 — Provides a good introduction to the theory and history of federalism in Canada, while also exploring conceptual questions about the nature of Canadian democracy

**Russell:** If pushed to select four books, he would choose:

**Trudeau and the End of a Canadian Dream** — Guy Laforest — 1995 — Covers much of what is in Trudeau1968 and McRoberts1997. Also, a Francophone

**Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto** — Taiaiake Alfred — 1999

**Dynasties and Interludes: Past and Present in Canadian Electoral Politics** — Lawrence LeDuc et al. — 2010 — More up to date than Clarke1979

**Governing from the centre: the concentration of power in Canadian politics** — Donald Savoie — 1999

**Haddow:** This list is very institutional — but the same has been true of the study of Canadian politics in general. Identity politics provides an alternative strand of analysis (as would political economy), but it's hard to identify a stand-out book in the field.

**Loewen:** Doesn't especially like Clarke and especially dislikes LeDuc. Prefers Kenneth Carty on party systems, for instance: *Canadian political party systems: a reader* (1992), or *Rebuilding Canadian party politics* (2000), *The shifting place of political parties in Canadian public life* (2006). Simeon's book is "a masterwork of enduring importance".

**Sources:**

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**1.5 Many leading works in the field of Canadian politics employ institutionalist, political culture, political economy or regulation school approaches. Assess the extent to which these approaches have dominated research in any two (2) of the following four (4) substantive areas: courts and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, political parties, federalism, public policy. (May 2004)**

**Essentially identical questions (1):**

Many leading works on Canadian politics employ institutionalist, political economy or feminist/social identity approaches. Assess the extent to which these approaches have dominated research in any two (2) of the following four (4) substantive areas: courts and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, political parties, federalism, public policy. (May 2013)

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**1.6 “Too many Canadian political scientists are writing articles on narrowly defined topics and not enough are writing big books that thoroughly explore the main issues in Canadian politics.” Discuss. (May 2012)**

**Thesis:**

While there are features in modern academia that encourage scholars to focus on the voluminous publication of papers in well-regarded journals, Canada has experienced no shortage of influential books on big topics.

See: The state of the discipline as a whole

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**1.7 You are delivering the final seminar in the field course in Canadian politics. What are the three or four most fundamental lessons about the essential character of the Canadian polity you would wish the students to take away, and why? (August 2010)**

**Thesis:**

The four fundamental things to understand about Canada are the origins and evolution of federalism and the way that relates to Canada's history; the character of Westminster-style parliamentary democracy practiced here, including through the functioning of the civil service; the influences of the United Kingdom and the United States on the theory and practice of Canadian politics; and the efforts within Canada's system of government to address diversity, including in terms of Canada's First Nations and immigration.

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**1.8 You have been asked to address this year's meeting of the American Political Science Association in Toronto on the topic, "Strengths and Weaknesses of Canadian Political Science." What do you say? (May 2009)**

**Thesis:**

The academic study of Canadian politics has largely been bound up with the big issues and institutions that have shaped Canadian political life, including relations between English- and French-speaking Canadians, federalism, parliament, economic development, relations with the United States and United Kingdom, and Canada's economic and constitutional evolution. Arguably, Canadian political scientists have devoted less attention to areas like examining the political philosophy underlying Canada's approach to government, political culture, the relationship between ecology and politics, and (aside from the efforts of a subset of practitioners) aboriginal politics.

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**1.9 “The fundamental shortcoming of the Canadian political science literature is the unwillingness of scholars who write about Canadian politics to challenge and criticise one another’s work.” Discuss. (May 2008)**

**Thesis:**

There seems to be no lack of disagreement between scholars in the various sub-fields of Canadian politics. If anything, there is more of an issue with a lack of dialog between sub-fields. For instance, there could be intellectually profitable interactions between scholars of voting behaviour and political theorists, as well as useful collaborations between those with different methodological approaches, such as identity politics and political economy. Perhaps the desire to emulate the breadth of American political science has to some extent produced a “miniature replica” in Canada, in which scholars are widely separated in self-segregated communities.

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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1.10 Over the past 15 years, the Donald Smiley Prize, which is awarded annually by the Canadian Political Science Association for the best book in Canadian political science has gone to the authors of books comparing nationalism in Ireland and Quebec (Garth Stevenson), on the MacDonald Royal Commission (Greg Inwood), on the Saskatchewan CCF Government (Al Johnson), on the HRDC fiasco and the politics of public management (David Good), on the resurgence of indigenous law (John Borrows), on Aboriginal difference and the constitution of Canada (Patrick Macklem), on the republican option in Canada (David Smith), on the politics of public spending in Canada (Donald Savoie) and on unemployment and neoconservatism in Canada (Stephen McBride). What do the topics addressed by these books tell us about the preoccupations of Canadian political scientists? Does the range of topics accurately reflect the short-term and/or the perennial issues at the fore of Canadian politics and government over the prize's 15-year lifetime? NOTE: it is not necessary to discuss the specific books mentioned in the question. (May 2008)

Thesis:

Outline:

Sources:

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1.11 “We have many studies of specific Canadian public policies but don't have much systematic, generalized knowledge about policy in Canada.” Discuss. (August 2005)

Thesis:

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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## 2 | Federalism

### 2.1 Is there more insight to be gained by thinking of Canadian federalism as a dependent or an independent variable? (May 2012)

**Thesis:**

In the short term, federalism is best thought of as an independent variable affecting the context in which decisions are made and the processes followed. Over the longer term, however, the evolution of Canadian federalism in response to various endogenous and exogenous events and processes makes it fruitful for study as a dependent variable.

Metaphor: the situation is akin to a court decision made under a common law system. At the time of the decision, the context of laws and precedents is fixed: an independent variable affecting the outcome of the case. Each precedent, however, modifies the common law. As a result, across time jurisprudence evolves. The practice of federalism is similar.

**Outline:**

**Loewen:** Has trouble accepting that federalism can be both an independent and dependent variable. It may be that federalism is simply the result of a divided society, which is the ultimate cause of its effects (of course, aspects of federalism like the division of powers are embedded institutionally and would not arise directly from the existence of a divided society). To say that federalism has an independent effect, you would need to argue that federalism perpetuates regionalism even more than the background conditions of federalism would do in its absence.

**Sources:**

- Peter Russell. *Constitutional Odyssey: Can Canadians Become a Sovereign People?* (3rd ed.). 2004.
- Keith Banting and Richard Simeon. *The Welfare State and Canadian Federalism*. 1987.



- David Elkins and Richard Simeon. *Small Worlds: Provinces and Parties in Canadian Political Life*. 1980.
- Kathryn Harrison. *Passing the Buck: Federalism and Environmental Policy*. 1999.
- Samuel LaSelva. *The Moral Foundations of Canadian Federalism: Paradoxes, Achievements, and Tragedies of Nationhood*. 1996.
- Richard Simeon. *Federal-Provincial Diplomacy: the Making of Recent Policy in Canada*. 1972.
- Richard Simeon. *Political Science and Federalism: Seven Decades of Scholarly Engagement*. 2002.
- Donald Smiley. *Canada in question: Federalism in the seventies*. 1979.
- Pierre Trudeau. *Federalism and the French Canadians*. 1968.

## 2.2 Do federalism and the electoral system work at cross purposes in Canada? (May 2011)

### Thesis:

While we cannot simply assume consensus about the ‘purpose’ of political institutions, it is plausible that the main features of federalism and Canada’s electoral system are at odds. Canadian federalism emerged from the need to accommodate both French-Canadian and English-Canadian society, and has largely remained concerned with doing so, though other regional political dynamics have emerged. Federalism, therefore, can be seen as a mechanism for accommodating difference within an over-arching structure. By contrast, the principal selling point of Westminster-style parliamentary democracy is how the first-past-the-post electoral system usually produces majority governments, the lack of separation between the legislative and executive branches empowers the government to act, and the conventions of cabinet empower the Prime Minister. All this speaks to unitary and forceful action of a kind quite at odds with the need to bargain and build consensus within a federation.

### Outline:

### Sources:

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### **2.3 Canada combines federalism with Westminster parliamentary government. What effects do each have on the other? (May 2010)**

**Thesis:**

See: [Do federalism and the electoral system work at cross purposes in Canada?](#) (May 2011)

In some ways, federalism and Westminster-style parliamentary government make for a curious mix. The first emerged from the need to manage French-English difference, in order to make confederation possible, and has arguably given many future Canadian political discussions a strong regional focus, with provinces empowered to challenge the federal government. On the other hand, the Westminster style of parliamentary democracy strongly concentrates power within the centre of the federal government, through mechanisms including the electoral system, the powers of the prime minister, and party discipline. Each may then be said to check the other in some ways: the federal government must engage with and bargain with the provinces, reducing the degree to which power is concentrated in one place. The Westminster system also pushes regional and provincial politics out from the federal government itself, which features no strong mechanisms for inter-provincial and inter-regional deal-making (especially due to the split between the federal and provincial party systems).

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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### **2.4 Has the study of federalism in Canada suffered because of a preoccupation with relations between Quebec and the central government? (August 2008)**

**Thesis:**

The need to accommodate French and English Canada explains the emergence of federalism in Canada, despite the preference of early leaders including John A. MacDonal for a unitary state. Similarly, the danger of Quebecois secession and related concerns about national unity have been at the centre of Canadian politics for decades. It is therefore quite proper that the study of Canadian federalism has been dominated by the study of relations between Quebec and the federal government. At the same time, analysis focused along these lines does miss

out on other topics of interest: notably, the dynamics between the federal government and other regions, along with the relationship of the crown with First Nations groups.

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**2.5 In academic accounts of Canadian federalism, where does the balance lie between political economy and institutionalist perspectives? Has the balance shifted over time? If so, why? (August 2008)**

**Thesis:**

To speak of a ‘balance’ between political economy and institutionalist perspectives on federalism suggests a kind of pendulum (or one way transition) wherein political scientists have gone from favouring one form of analysis to another. I would argue that this is a less useful categorization than to say that the two approaches mostly run along separate tracks. The institutional account of federalism largely takes provincial and federal interests for granted, and then examines the arenas in which they play out and the results that transpire. By contrast, the political economy perspective might help us to better understand where each ‘player’ gets their motivation, as well as what structural factors help shape their interaction over time.

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**2.6 “The territorial bias of federalism seriously limits the capacity of Canadian political institutions to respond to the multiple identities and interests that comprise contemporary Canada.” Discuss. (August 2007)**

**Thesis:**

While there may be ways in which this is true, for the most part Canadian federalism is a response to and means of accommodating Canada’s multiple identities and interests. Canadi-

ans are represented at two levels of government, and the provinces play a more effective role in regional representation than the senate. The ‘territorial bias’ in Canada’s system of government does mean that groups that are geographically concentrated — French-speakers in Quebec, the Alberta and Saskatchewan oil and gas industry — can more easily gain political clout than those that are dispersed, even if the latter groups are larger in absolute terms.

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

- Simeon, Richard. *Federal-Provincial Diplomacy*. 1971.

**2.7 “The federalism literature in Canada remains fixated on long-standing issues of federal-provincial relations, paying insufficient attention to other elements of multi-level governance, to the detriment of our understanding of critical issues facing the country.” Discuss. (May 2005)**

**Thesis:**

There are a number of notable senses in which this is true. In particular, Canadian politics has paid insufficient attention to issues of urban and municipal politics, to cross-cutting societal issues that lack a territorial focus, and to the modern experience of aboriginal self-government in Canada.

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**2.8 What are the strengths and weaknesses of federations, especially the Canadian one, in addressing long-term policy challenges like climate change or pension funding? (August 2013)**

**Haddow:** None of the questions from the August 2013 exam will appear on the January 2014 exam.

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**2.9 If federalism is an endogenous political institution, how can we study it in a manner that yields insights about its effects? (May 2013)**

**Thesis:**

The long and deep establishment of federalism as a core principle of government in Canada establishes it as a background condition that can be challenging to isolate and evaluate. There are nonetheless methodological approaches that can permit us to generate insights about its effects. Firstly, scholars can examine the institutional embodiments of federalism, including the constitutional division of powers, considering the ways in which these have affected federal-provincial negotiations and the deliberations of Canada's courts. Secondly, the comparative study of federalism allows us to contrast Canada's approach with those in related jurisdictions, permitting the evaluation of some causal claims about what federalism does. Thirdly, we can look at how federalism has evolved and at particular junction points in Canada's federalist experience. These can reveal what effects the system is having at any particular time, as well as generate insights into the processes of its endogenous evolution within the operation of Canadian politics.

**Outline:**

**OED:** Endogenous — Growing from within.

Other definitions include: “caused by factors inside the organism or system” and “produced or synthesized within the organism or system”.

**Sources:**

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## **3 | Regionalism**

### **3.1 General: comments on regionalism**

“Region is among the most important correlates of the vote. Voters often divide in their support for parties at each level. Federal and provincial parties of the same name often

have little in common organizationally or ideologically. Provincial party systems seldom duplicate or parallel the national system. The party system thus does not knit together politics at federal, provincial and local levels, nor does it provide a channel for movement of political leaders across levels.”

— David Elkins and Richard Simeon. *Small Worlds: Provinces and Parties in Canadian Political Life*. 1980. p. 293

“[D]espite a high level of interdependence and shared goals and values, there are few institutional linkages and networks binding together the regional communities. Federal and provincial political systems have little in common and few points of political contact; rather than forming a seamless web, they are sharply differentiated.”

— David Elkins and Richard Simeon. *Small Worlds: Provinces and Parties in Canadian Political Life*. 1980. p. 299

“In no province does even one-third of the population agree that their own region corresponds with the boundaries of their province. Thus, actors, such as provincial governments, may experience difficulties in being perceived as defenders of regional interests.”

— Clarke, Harold; LeDuc, Lawrence; Jenson, Jane; and Pammett, Jon H. *Political Choice in Canada*. 1979. p. 64

Alan Cairns identifies Canada’s single member plurality system as a mechanism that promotes regionalism in Canadian politics.

### **3.2 In Canada is regionalism the cause of federalism or is federalism the cause of regionalism? (May 2009)**

#### **Essentially identical questions (1):**

In Canada, is regionalism a product of federalism or is federalism a product of regionalism? (August 2005)

#### **Thesis:**

Both: first, regionalism made federalism necessary — now, federalism perpetuates regional difference. Despite the preference of some founders for a unitary state, the ‘double compact’ of French and English society in Canada made it necessary to divide powers between levels of government. The failure — despite Lord Durham’s recommendation and expectation — of French Canadians to assimilate easily into English Canadian society has largely explained why federalism has always been a key and central feature of Canadian political

life. Now that Canadian politics has evolved to centre around federalism, many other issues are addressed and interpreted through that prism, from foreign policy (for instance, conscription crises) to natural resource development to the welfare state.

Canada's regional difference is not all about the French-English divide. Prior to Confederation, what is now Canada consisted of self-governing British colonies. The Supreme Court has recognized that Canada doesn't have one responsible government, but rather eleven.

Once you have federalism, it encourages regionalism and localism. Whereas power in U.S. states is dispersed, it is quite concentrated in Canada's premiers. As a consequence, they can speak for their provinces much more than U.S. governors can, contributing to the character of federal-provincial diplomacy. Regionalism and federalism also interact in Canada's two-level party system, in which there is often a split organizationally and ideologically between parties of the same name at different levels, where voters may support different parties at different levels, and where relatively few political careers cross the federal-provincial divide.

**Outline:**

**Loewen:** Thinks the point about premiers being more powerful than governors is overstated. Perhaps it is simply because there are a lot more governors, and the U.S. isn't usually involved in active constitutional negotiations.

**Introduction**

**Briefly discuss definitions for 'federalism' and 'regionalism'**

**Sources:**

- David Elkins and Richard Simeon. *Small Worlds: Provinces and Parties in Canadian Political Life*. 1980.

**3.3 "Regionalism is the most elemental feature of Canadian politics." Discuss. (May 2010)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

- David Elkins and Richard Simeon. *Small Worlds: Provinces and Parties in Canadian Political Life*. 1980.

### **3.4 “The constitutional, judicial and intergovernmental dynamics of federalism, rather than regional sentiment among Canadians, are the key to understanding the powerful decentralizing forces in the Canadian polity.” Discuss. (May 2008)**

#### **Thesis:**

If this claim were strongly true, it would suggest that Canadian society was actually well adapted to a unitary model of government, but remains stuck with federalism because of some sort of political momentum. This possibility does not seem especially likely, for several reasons. In the first instance, there is the eternal French-English dynamic that has occupied so much of Canada’s political history. As the referenda of 1980 and 1995 demonstrate, this is a matter that has not lost importance in recent decades, though demographic trends and other factors may be reducing the odds of Quebec’s eventual secession. Beyond Quebec, there are also many factors that perpetuate the distinctiveness of Canada’s provinces and thus legitimate federalism as a means of addressing it. These include different patterns of immigration, different natural resource endowments, and arguably differences in political culture. All that being said, the constitutional, judicial, and intergovernmental dynamics are surely central to understanding how it functions as a system, and these factors exist in interplay with the enduring regional variations that largely power Canada’s decentralizing forces.

#### **Outline:**

#### **Sources:**

- David Elkins and Richard Simeon. *Small Worlds: Provinces and Parties in Canadian Political Life*. 1980.

### **3.5 Regionalism remains a primal force in Canadian politics, but do we have good explanations for its persistence in the face of such developments as globalization, the rise of identity politics, advances in communications technology, the homogenizing effects of the Charter and the like? (May 2005)**

#### **Thesis:**

There have been those who predicted that globalization would largely be a process of homogenization: a Starbucks and a McDonald’s on every street corner, and an end to the



debate about what political or economic system states ought to maintain. At the same time, many analysts of globalization have highlighted how it shifts around power in more complex ways: empowering corporations at the expense of governments, but also spreading capability downward in a way that can enhance local power. The presence of homogenizing influences from globalization, identity politics, new communication technologies, and the Charter ought to be acknowledged and analyzed, and such analysis can also yield understanding about why they have not undermined regionalism as a 'primal force' in Canadian political life, though they may well be changing its precise form and mode of operation.

**Outline:**

**Globalization**

**Identity politics**

**Communication technology**

**The Charter**

**Other factors**

**Sources:**

- David Elkins and Richard Simeon. *Small Worlds: Provinces and Parties in Canadian Political Life*. 1980.

### **3.6 For all the attention paid recently to 'identity politics' is it not still the case that the primal political divisions in Canada are regional? (August 2003)**

**Thesis:**

See: General: definition of 'identity politics' and comments on the subject

Part of the point of 'identity politics' is that self-identification has become an a la carte affair: people can choose which aspects of themselves to emphasize and give political salience to. The word 'primal' is used in a general sense to mean 'chief' or 'important', but it also simply means 'oldest' or 'original'. In the latter sense, it is tautological that Canada's primal political divisions remain as they were at the outset, and a strong case can be made that those were between the founding French and English cultures, at least in terms of the pre-Confederation period. Confederation and the later growth of the Canadian federation naturally brought new regional issues into Canadian politics. That being said, scholars of identity politics often highlight how sources of identity are not objective and easily enumerable. Further, the task of creating self-identity is complicated by factors like globalization

and the decline of deference. In the end, regional identification is one important input feeding into a broader process of identity formation that can be analyzed in useful ways using an identity politics approach.

**Outline:**

**OED ‘Primal’:**

- Belonging to the earliest time or stage; original, first. Also: belonging to an ancient time; primitive, primeval.
- Of, relating to, or designating the needs, fears, behaviour, etc., that are held (esp. in Freudian theory) to form the origins of emotional life.
- Most important, chief; fundamental, essential.

**Sources:**

- David Elkins and Richard Simeon. *Small Worlds: Provinces and Parties in Canadian Political Life*. 1980.
- Neil Nevitte. *The Decline of Deference*. 1996.

## 4 | The comparative turn

### 4.1 “What has been described as the ‘comparative turn’ in recent Canadian political science is better understood as a quantitative turn.” Discuss.

**Haddow:** None of the questions from the August 2013 exam will appear on the January 2014 exam.

**Essentially identical questions (1):**

“The comparative turn in the study of Canadian politics is really a quantitative turn.” Discuss. (August 2013)

**Thesis:**

If the study of Canadian politics has shifted in two major ways in recent decades, it has been toward greater use of comparative analysis and more extensive use of quantitative tools. The two trends have overlapped chronologically, and both have arguably been driven by the

evolution of the social sciences as undertaken in the United States. At the same time, the two trends are separable in conceptual and practical terms and need not be intermingled. For instance, it is entirely possible to make extensive use of statistical analysis to study matters entirely internal to Canada, from debates in parliament to opinion survey results. Similarly, highly comparative but entirely qualitative work can be done — for instance, in comparing the operation of federalism or the constitutional structure of different parliamentary democracies around the world.

**Outline:**

**Loewen:** It is quite possible that the turns toward comparativism and quantitative methods are separable in theory, but that they have arisen together in practice.

**Sources:**

- Linda White, Richard Simeon, Robert Vipond, and Jennifer Wallner. *The Comparative Turn in Canadian Political Science*. 2008

## 4.2 What is gained and what is lost if Canadian political scientists fully embrace ‘the comparative turn’? (August 2010)

**Thesis:**

The tension between comparativism and a national focus is in many ways akin to the tension between specialization and generalism in scholarship generally. Being comparative grants you perspective, revealing which features of a phenomenon are rare and which are ubiquitous or near-ubiquitous among all entities of the same type. Being focused on a single subject reduces the danger of importing misleading analogies or theories (assuming, for instance, that the Canadian Prime Minister is necessarily much like the American president). Part of the controversy about the approaches is probably tied to the pride and prestige of academics who, in some cases, measure success by international citation and being exporters of theoretical perspectives or, in other cases, take pride in creating custom-fitted analyses of Canadian politics with more subtlety than comparative accounts yield easily, and which represents a kind of national scholarly project. Scholars have rightly asked whether it is not worthwhile to “cultivate theoretical gardens”, and whether there are dangers in Canadian political science being a “miniature replica” of the American sort.

Fully embracing “the comparative turn” — if it were possible to do so — would presumably mean totally discounting any analysis that draws only on data from Canada. Almost all political scientists would likely agree that such a doctrinaire approach may be going too

far. It makes more sense, then, to consider the advantages and disadvantages of embracing comparativism to a greater or lesser degree.

**Advantages**

**Disadvantages**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

- Linda White, Richard Simeon, and Robert Vipond eds. *The Comparative Turn in Canadian Political Science*. 2008.

**4.3 The recently published book, *The Comparative Turn in Canadian Political Science* has no chapters on either parliamentary institutions or local/municipal politics. In light of the book's objective of examining the influence of Canadian literature on the comparative literature and the latter's influence on Canadian political science, what might a chapter on EITHER parliamentary institutions OR local/municipal politics look like? (August 2008)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

- Linda White, Richard Simeon, and Robert Vipond eds. *The Comparative Turn in Canadian Political Science*. 2008.

**4.4 The recently published book on Canadian political science, *The Comparative Turn*, has chapters on federalism and on the courts but nothing on other Canadian governmental institutions. If you were asked to write a chapter for the second edition of the book rectifying this oversight, what you would [sic] say about the Canadian literature on governmental institutions in terms of how non-Canadian literature has influenced it and what it has to offer the study of other political systems? (May 2008)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

- Linda White, Richard Simeon, and Robert Vipond eds. *The Comparative Turn in Canadian Political Science*. 2008.

**4.5 “A continuing weakness of the Canadian political science discipline is its failure to apply conceptual frameworks and theoretical models developed elsewhere to Canadian situations.” Discuss. (August 2005)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

- Linda White, Richard Simeon, and Robert Vipond eds. *The Comparative Turn in Canadian Political Science*. 2008.

## 5 | The democratic deficit

### 5.1 General: three notions of democracy

Many Canadian political scientists and political theorists highlight the interpretative character of ‘democracy’. One perspective is that there are at least three views on that the ‘killer feature’ of democracy really is:

1. Implementing the public will: does the government make the decisions that opinion polls would suggest the greatest support for? (Note: this should ideally be more than simply implementing the immediate whim of the populace — it should involve a reasoned general discourse among the public and policy-makers)
2. Choice in representation: do people have a real choice between candidates, and the frequent ability to select from among them?
3. Protecting rights: are the rights of individuals being effectively protected, including from government itself? (This distinguishes liberal democracy, and can easily be in tension with the other views)

Our evaluation of how Canada is doing depends on the relative stress laid on these and other factors. In *Political Choice in Canada*, Clarke et al. argue that feelings about parties, party leaders, and local candidates all affect voting behaviour. (330) In 1974, 40% of voters saw the party as a whole as the most important factor, 33% the party leader, and 27% local candidates. This contributes to the ambiguity involved in determining exactly what gains legitimacy from electoral success: party leaders, individual candidates, policy proposals, etc.

One incident that highlights these divisions effectively is the FLQ crisis of October 1970. Polls at the time suggested a high degree of support for Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s invocation of the *War Measures Act*. Among other things, the *War Measures Act* gave police the power to arrest people without warrant. At the same time, the use of these powers sharply curtailed civil liberties, and the police and other state security forces abused the powers granted to them.

#### **Regarding choice in representation:**

“The motivation to change support is usually antipathy toward a party, rather than an affinity for another.”

— Clarke, Harold; LeDuc, Lawrence; Jenson, Jane; and Pammett, Jon H. *Political Choice in Canada*. 1979. p. 150

In *The Parliament of Canada* (1987) C.E.S. Franks describes how Canadian MPs serve for less time than British ones, giving them less independent influence. The weakness of individual MPs challenges their ability to represent the views and interests of their constituents. This dovetails with the analysis of David Docherty in *Mr. Smith goes to Ottawa: Life in the House of Commons* (1997) — which highlights how little influence individual MPs have in parliament, and how they get socialized into the existing system.

**Proposed fixes:**

**Relax party discipline** Create more circumstances where individual MPs can vote according to their conscience or according to the will of their constituents. Would challenge the ability of party leadership to control the agenda.

**Enhance the role of parliamentary committees** Enhance the power of the legislature compared to the executive, give opposition parties a chance to have an influence, bring in witnesses to consult with Canadian society

**Change the electoral system** Among parliamentary democracies, which form a plurality of all democracies, only Canada and the UK have retained FPTP (India also has a version). Some sort of proportional representation could create greater equivalence between vote share and share of seats in the legislature, as well as give smaller opposition parties a chance to be part of coalitions.

**Reform the senate** Many possibilities exist — from abolishment, to moving to the election of senators, to replacing the senate with a chamber that more directly represents the provinces.

## 5.2 General: Surveillance and the democratic deficit

There are a number of ways in which the growth of the surveillance state, particularly after the terrorist attacks in the United States in September 2001, challenges Canada's democratic traditions:

- Secret laws, secret court orders, court orders not to publicly disclose what private individuals and firms have been ordered to do (we know more about this in the U.S. than Canada)
- Potentially problematic cooperation with foreign governments with poor human rights practices, including in cases concerning Canadian citizens
- The largely invisible erosion of *Charter* rights, including through secret ubiquitous surveillance not publicly debated in Parliament or among Canadian citizens

- Lack of clarity about what the intelligence services are doing, including in relation to peaceful groups that oppose important elements of the government’s agenda — including First Nations and environmental groups
- Chilling effects: because Canadians can have no confidence that their communications are not being monitored and stored, they self-censor and refrain from engaging in open political debate in ways that may be harmful to democracy

Technology has vastly multiplied what sort of surveillance is possible — from the storage and analysis of internet traffic like web searches to automatic license plate reading for vehicles and automated facial analysis — as well as the degree to which that data can be analyzed. Recent disclosures from around the world suggest that oversight of the use of these technologies have often been poor, and that governments have often actively misled their citizens about the capabilities in place and activities being undertaken. Vast amounts of information are being recorded, to be used for unknown purposes in the future.

Surveillance and the security state threaten many *Charter*-protected rights, including “freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication”, “freedom of peaceful assembly”, “freedom of association”, “Everyone has the right to be secure against unreasonable search or seizure”, and the right “to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law in a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal”.

“Mass surveillance has the potential to erode privacy. As privacy is an essential pre-requisite to the exercise of individual freedom, its erosion weakens the constitutional foundations on which democracy and good governance have traditionally been based in this country.”

— British House of Lords. “Surveillance: Citizens and the State.” 2009. p. 10

### 5.3 General: Comments on the democratic deficit

“But what was the state of Canadian democracy in 1921? Women (other than those with relations in the military) were only permitted to vote in federal elections that very year, and in Quebec would not get the vote for another generation. Aboriginal Canadians were only allowed to vote if they legally renounced their Aboriginal status; within a few years, Parliament would make it illegal for ‘Indians’ to raise money or to hire lawyers to pursue legal cases against the Crown. Candidates and parties were free to raise and spend money in any amounts and in any ways they wished, with no public scrutiny and subject only to the legal prohibitions in the Criminal Code of Canada against bribery and corruption. Freedom of information legislation was unknown. The public and organized groups, save the well-heeled and well-connected, had few opportunities to put their views on policy issues before



decision makers through mechanisms such as public hearings. The country did have far more newspapers than today and all were independently owned, but many if not most were closely tied to political parties and offered their readers highly partisan and parochial slants on the news. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was scarcely imaginable and no human rights codes existed: factories in Toronto and elsewhere could with impunity post signs saying “Men wanted. No Irish or Jews need apply.” Moreover... well, let us not belabour the point: by current standards, many aspects of Canadian democracy were deeply flawed, making for a huge democratic deficit.”

— White, Graham. “The ‘Centre’ of the Democratic Deficit: Power and Influence in Canadian Political Executives.” 2008. in Lenard, Patti Tamara and Richard Simeon eds. *Imperfect Democracies: The Democratic Deficit in Canada and the United States*. 2012. p. 230

## 5.4 Is the ‘democratic deficit’ in Canada growing or contracting? (May 2010)

### Essentially identical questions (7):

“At no time in Canadian history have there been as many ways to achieve effective political representation as exist today.” Discuss. (May 2009)

Analyzing critically the literature on democracy and citizen engagement, to what extent do Canadian political institutions (e.g. Parliament, electoral system, political parties and the party system, intergovernmental relations) suffer from a democratic deficit? (August 2007)

How adequate are vehicles of political representation in Canada? (August 2008)

Discuss and explain changes in the nature, extent and influence of citizen engagement in Canada over the past two or three decades (August 2005)

Is Canada becoming more or less democratic? (August 2005)

Does Canada have a ‘democratic deficit’? Does the key to improving the quality of Canadian democracy lie in institutional reform or in a shift in political norms and behaviour? (May 2005)

Over the past two or three decades, has Canada become more or less democratic? (May 2003)

### Thesis:

Democracy is probably an ‘essentially contested concept’, subject to a variety of possible definitions that cannot be authoritatively chosen between. See: [General: three notions of democracy](#)

In a number of ways, the democratic deficit in Canada has probably worsened in recent decades: party loyalty is now very strong, reducing the ability of MPs to represent their constituents, provinces, and regions; government is highly centralized, with a dominant prime minister; the consolidation of the political right has led to a party system where First Past the Post returned a majority government with under 40% of the vote; and the post-9/11 security state and surveillance threaten many democratic values and institutions. Against that, one area where there has arguably been a reduction in the democratic deficit is through the more effective protection of some rights through the *Charter* — notably, reduced discrimination toward homosexuals — and the attainment of greater political influence for aboriginal groups, largely through the courts.

**Outline:**

**Russell:** Pay attention to whether the question is asking about the democratic deficit generally, or about the ways in which it is changing.

**Loewen:** Would exclude talking about federal-provincial diplomacy and executive federalism. There is enough material without it, and the examiners may see it as outside the scope of the question.

**Party loyalty, centralization, and the power of the Prime Minister**

One manifestation of the growth of the power of the government of the day compared with Parliament as an institution can be seen in recent determinations by the Speaker of the House that the government has been in contempt of Parliament. In addition, there is at least one recent example of the government using the prorogation of Parliament as a means of escaping the scrutiny of Parliamentary committees, raising doubts about the strength of Parliamentary supremacy and even the responsible government convention. Peter Russell argues that Prorogation as a political manoeuvre unrelated to the natural end of a parliamentary session shows contempt for Parliament and the principle of responsible government, dating back to the 1840s.

Since Trudeau, the PMO has expanded from about 25 people to about 80. Many Ottawa-watchers consider it the most powerful institution in government: more than parliament, the cabinet, or the civil service. Service at the PMO is all about loyalty to the PM. On key files, perhaps better informed and more influential than cabinet ministers. Described at length by Savoie: not subject to ATIP or much outside scrutiny. In the television age, must be able to use advertising tactics to spin issues. Peter Russell considers it a “threat to

democracy”.

### **The party system and First Past the Post**

Of the world’s parliamentary democracies, only Canada and the UK retain FPTP (India has a version).

### **Party financing**

#### **A mixed bag: intergovernmental relations**

Intergovernmental relations are a mixed bag, from the perspective of the ostensive democratic deficit. Richard Simeon articulates both views. On the one hand, the power of the provinces under Canada’s system of federalism provides dual representation to all citizens, who have representatives in both provincial legislatures and the federal parliament. Arguably, ‘federal-provincial diplomacy’ has been a much more effective mechanism for the representation of provincial and regional interests than the senate, which was designed to play that role. At the same time, intergovernmental relations are largely an executive process, with no direct parliamentary oversight. Particularly in cases where the agreement of Quebec was hard-won, the federal parliament often finds itself with only the choice of accepting what has already been negotiated or of rejecting it outright.

#### **The security state and surveillance**

See: [General: Surveillance and the democratic deficit](#)

The 2001 *Anti-Terrorism Act* gave CSE its first enabling legislation and mandate, and this legislation has subsequently been called ‘inadequate’ by the CSEC Commissioner.

On the basis of the insights gained into intelligence practices through leaks — and the numerous times when governments have been caught lying to their citizens in assuring that surveillance is not taking place — Canadians now live with the realistic fear that all their communications, movements, and financial transactions are being tracked by government authorities. Beyond fostering distrust toward the state among many, this has chilling effects which are important to the state of Canadian democracy. Every citizen now expects to leave a broad and enduring digital trail, accessible for legitimate or illegitimate purposes by officials in the present government, possibly open to unauthorized access by other states or technologically sophisticated organizations, and retained for the use of future governments, which may be less respectful of democratic practices than those that exist now.

#### **The Charter and social progress**

##### **Aboriginals**

Canada is doing better: Supreme Court precedents, consultation and accommodation, an end to many assimilationist policies (residential schools), self-government

**Sources:**

- Graham White. "The 'Centre' of the Democratic Deficit: Power and Influence in Canadian Political Executives." 2008.

## **5.5 "In the Canadian context, the 'democratic deficit' is a conceptually empty idea." Discuss. (May 2011)**

**Essentially identical questions (1):**

Academics and pundits alike refer to a 'democratic deficit' in Canada. Is this an analytically useful term? To what extent does Canada suffer from a democratic deficit? (May 2008)

**Thesis:**

Given the extent to which it has been debated and discussed, it would indeed be surprising if the concept of a 'democratic deficit' were conceptually empty. It is more appropriate to say that the concept is contested: scholars and observers of Canadian politics differ in their assessment of the core feature of democracy, as well as their perception of the degree to which it is challenged at present. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify coherent and conceptually valid strains or argument pertaining to the present quality of Canada's democracy, and use them to evaluate possible policy prescriptions.

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**5.6 A number of solutions to the so-called democratic deficit have been proposed in recent years. They include a relaxation of party discipline in Canadian legislatures, enhancements to the role of parliamentary committees and the introduction of electoral changes at the federal and provincial levels, as well as reforms to the Canadian Senate. Does the evidence indicate that Canada suffers from a democratic deficit? To what degree would the prescriptions as proposed address the malady as it has been identified? (May 2004)**

**Thesis:**

Both in terms of whether it exists or not and in terms of what character it has, the 'democratic deficit' remains a contentious issue. In particular, different critics of Canadian democracy focus their attention on various aspects of the current system, making sometimes-contradictory suggestions for reform. This can be clarified in part by examining three different major interpretations of what the central feature of democracy is... For those focused on the protection of individual rights, none of the listed changes are likely to have direct effects (though changes like weakening party discipline or changing the electoral effects could eventually yield changes in these policies). Those concerned about aligning public policy with public opinion or maintaining effective choice in representation could theoretically be better served by changes like altering how senators are selected and what roles they play.

Major changes can be divided between those that would probably require constitutional revision, and this a process of provincial consultation, and those that could essentially be achieved on the whim of the prime minister or the governing party. Large-scale senate reform and changes to the electoral system are probably in the first category, while changes to party discipline or committees are fairly clear in the latter. While changes requiring constitutional division would likely have more power to address the democratic deficit, the difficulty of bringing them about may put them outside the realm of practicality.

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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## **5.7 For increasing numbers of Canadians, Parliament and political parties have become largely irrelevant. Is this a problem or is it an indication that more effective means of citizen engagement are emerging? (August 2003)**

### **Thesis:**

In *Political Choice in Canada* (1979), Clarke et al. argue that voting is the only form of substantive political participation engaged in by most Canadians. This likely remains the case today, with only a subset of Canadians calling or writing to their elected representatives, engaging in voluntary advocacy groups, or otherwise working to influence the political process. At the same time — as cataloged by Neil Nevitte and others — Canadians are part of a global trend away from strong identification with political parties, reduced trust in government, and a general growth in cynicism. While there are a few new outlets that offer the illusion of democratic participation, such as social media, these are likely to have a limited effect. At best, they might supplement opinion polling as a mechanism for political leaders and party elites to gain a sense of public sentiment. Parliament and political parties are far from irrelevant to the policy landscape in which Canadians will live, so it is regrettable that they have been disengaging from involvement in them.

### **Outline:**

### **Sources:**

- Harold Clarke, Lawrence LeDuc, Jane Jenson, and Jon H. Pammett. *Political Choice in Canada*. 1979.
- Neil Nevitte. *The Decline of Deference*. 1996

# **6 | The Charter of Rights and Freedoms**

## **6.1 General: responses to the Charter**

Alberta Premier Peter Lougheed originally saw the Charter as “the substitution of judge-made law for parliamentary sovereignty”, later he saw it as part of how the tide of human history was flowing toward individual human rights at the end of the 20th century. Others, like former NDP Premier Bob Rae, saw it as desirable, about the relationship between

citizens and government, and as part of a global trend bigger than Canada. Many saw this as ‘Americanization’, in terms of how it brought the courts into the process of law-making.

Alexandra Dobrowolsky — *The Politics of Pragmatism: Women, Representation, and Constitutionalism in Canada* (2000) — The Charter and courts have provided an “alternative ground for certain forms of feminist contestation”. (26)

“It was argued that rights could be safeguarded in an absolute fashion, but section 1 of the Charter reads, ‘The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the rights and freedoms set out in it subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.’ No prudent consumer would buy a refrigerator with a ‘guarantee’ subject to such imprecise qualifications. The Charter would have been more honestly and accurately entitled ‘A Constitutional Enactment for the Better Protection of Certain Rights and Freedoms in Canada.’ The problem is not, after all, the ‘guaranteeing’ of rights, but rather the procedures by which government actors are permitted to define, rank, modify and override certain claims of individuals and groups.”

— Smiley, Donald. “A Dangerous Deed: The Constitution Act, 1982” in Banting, Keith and Richard Simeon eds. *And No One Cheered: Federalism, Democracy & The Constitution Act*. (Methuen, Toronto). 1983. p.91

In *The Political Purposes of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1983), Peter Russell argues that elites supported the Charter in hopes it would aid national unity, but for the Canadian population at large, the hope was that it would better protect rights and freedoms. Like Donald Smiley, Russell emphasizes how the *Charter* is largely about the process and theory whereby rights are limited.

**Haddow:** The *Charter* arose principally from the will of Trudeau, not from extensive public demand at the time, though it grew to be very popular.

“It is ironic that the national unity strategy, although conceived primarily in relation to Quebec, has had its main impact, not in Quebec, but in the rest of the country and has transformed the way many English Canadians think of Canada. As such elements of the Trudeau strategy as a charter of rights, multiculturalism, or the equality of the provinces have become central to English Canadians’ view of Canada, so they have destroyed any willingness to recognize Quebec as a distinct society. Indeed, within the Trudeau strategy these principles were intended to negate Quebec’s claim to recognition.”

— McRoberts, Kenneth. *Misconceiving Canada: The Struggle for National Unity*. 1997. p.xii

## 6.2 Alan Cairns predicted that the adoption of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* would have a transformative effect on Canadian political culture and governing. To what extent have such predictions been borne out? (August 2010)

**Haddow:** None of the questions from the August 2013 exam will appear on the January 2014 exam.

### **Essentially identical questions (1):**

Alan Cairns predicted that the adoption of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* would transform Canadian political culture and governance. To what extent has this happened? (August 2013)

### **Thesis:**

The impact of the *Charter* can be identified in three distinct chronological periods. First, the popularity of entrenching a bill of rights in Canada's constitution had wide popular appeal and helped with the process of patriation. Secondly, that process was interpreted as a betrayal by the people of Quebec, contributing to Canada's crisis of national unity and undermining subsequent attempts at constitutional amendment. Third, the *Charter* has influenced how politics and government have been undertaken since it entered into force. Since only the last of these really relates to the content of the *Charter*, I will focus on it, though the other two issues certainly connect to the question of the *Charter's* total impact. While there have certainly been important consequences that have arisen from the *Charter*, it would be going too far to say that it 'transformed' Canadian political culture and governance. It built upon and entrenched the Diefenbaker bill of rights, and fit into an international trend toward the protection of individual rights. Both in the process of its emergence and in its contents, the *Charter* was certainly important, but it has been more of a step in the evolution of Canadian governance than a transformation in its practice.

### **Outline:**

**Haddow:** This question is asking *only* about the effects of the *Charter* after it came into force — not about the consequences of the process through which it was established. A good answer would cite leading cases; discuss the 'dialog view' of the courts, legislatures, and the *Charter*; discuss how most political scientists are against the *Charter* and the activism of the courts; and discuss the issue of 'Charter Canadians'.

### **The *Charter*, the courts, and parliament**

Arguably, the biggest direct effect of the *Charter* has been to shift the balance of power be-



tween Canada's executive-legislative branch and the judiciary. The courts have been called upon to evaluate the constitutionality of criminal procedure, the treatment of minorities, and many other issues of public concern. For some, this raises questions about parliamentary supremacy.

"Many scholars, notably Alan Cairns, believed that the Charter would transform Canadian political culture. Now all Canadians would be endowed with rights by virtue of their membership in a pan-Canadian community, rights that would be enforced by a national institution, the Supreme Court of Canada. The extension of equality rights, the recognition of the rights of Aboriginal peoples, and the enshrinement of multiculturalism would also shift the focus of Canadian politics from regional to more contemporary bases of identity. 'Chartered' Canadians would come to see the constitution less as a covenant among governments, and more as a contract between citizen and government. 'The Charter,' wrote Cairns, 'is a federal government instrument to limit the balkanization of Canada.' In a great many ways this analysis was correct. Its reality was displayed not only in the dramatically increased role of the courts, but also in the successful popular revolts against the Meech Lake Accord (1987) and the Charlottetown Accord (1992). Both agreements, especially Meech Lake, were negotiated in the traditional pattern of closed door executive federalism, by 'men in suits,' as the critics said. Many (including myself) believed that these episodes spelled the end of federal-provincial diplomacy: such elite-driven decision-making was no longer legitimate in the new, open, democratic 'Chartered' Canada. From the vantage point of 2006, however, we can see that the intergovernmental diplomacy described in the book is as solidly established as ever."

— Simeon, Richard. *Federal Provincial Diplomacy*. 1971. p. 316

#### Sources:

- Simeon, Richard. *Federal Provincial Diplomacy*. 1971.
- Kenneth McRoberts. *Misconceiving Canada: the struggle for national unity*. 1997.
- Keith Banting and Richard Simeon. *And No One Cheered: Federalism, Democracy and the Constitution Act*. 1987.
- Michael Mandel. *The Charter of Rights and the Legalization of Politics in Canada*. 1989.
- F.L. Morton and Rainer Knopff. *The Charter Revolution and the Court Party*. 2000.
- Peter Russell. *The Political Purposes of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. 1983.

### **6.3 To what extent have the traditional pillars of [sic] Canadian constitutional system — federalism and parliamentary responsible government — been transformed by the addition of a third pillar: the Charter of Rights and Freedoms? (August 2007)**

**Thesis:**

See: General: responses to the *Charter*

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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### **6.4 Which has been influenced more by the advent of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Canadian federalism or the cabinet-parliamentary system? (August 2005)**

**Thesis:**

While the *Charter* has had effects that range across Canada's political systems, its impact has been greatest in the area of federalism. The impacts of the *Charter* have been in two main areas: the balance of power between legislatures and the judiciary and important legal precedents, and less tangibly the evolution of Canada's political culture and the perception Canadians have about government.

**Laforest:** The Charter was meant to build the central state: empower the Supreme Court (135), reinforce the sense of each citizen belonging to a single Canadian nation, serve as a unifying symbol, homogenize policies across the country (especially language policy, with language rules that cannot be overridden by the notwithstanding clause), drive the judicialization of Canada's political system, and encourage non-regional constitutional players - 'Charter Canadians'. Post-1982 Canadian political culture outside Quebec made accepting dualism and asymmetrical federalism impossible.

**Outline:**

Discuss impacts in general terms

Discuss how they apply to federalism

Discuss how they apply to the cabinet-parliamentary system

Explain why the former category of impacts have been more significant

**Sources:**

- Guy Laforest. *Trudeau and the End of a Canadian Dream*. 1995.

**6.5 Major changes have transformed Canadian politics over the past three or four decades. Has the Charter been the cause or effect of these changes? (August 2003)**

**Thesis:**

Both - the *Charter* has produced significant changes. See: [General: responses to the Charter](#)  
At the same time, the *Charter* is a consequence of important changes that have occurred — changes that are deeply linked to the political philosophy and legacy of Pierre Trudeau, but which are also linked to broad societal changes taking place in Canada and other democratic states, such as the rise of identity politics, the ‘decline of deference’, and the strengthening of post-materialist values.

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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## 7 | The courts

**7.1 Ran Hirschl’s research on judicial empowerment in Canada and elsewhere suggests that delegating increased powers to courts has had far from benevolent, progressive or redistributive effects. If Hirschl is correct, then how can we explain the enormous popularity of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the relatively solid legitimacy of judges versus politicians in this country? (May 2004)**

**Thesis:**

Many scholars have argued that the *Charter* has become a key part of the political identity of post-1982 Canadians, shaping how they see themselves in relation to government, and what

forms of the exercise of power they see as being legitimate. Alongside this, some of the application of the *Charter* has produced results that are likely to be generally popular, from eliminating governmental interference in the consensual adult sexual relations of Canadians to enforcing due process in the criminal justice system (though the latter risks being unpopular in cases where it seems that guilty criminals escape punishment on technicalities). At the same time, at least part of the explanation for the relatively high level of esteem accorded to judges is explained by growing cynicism about politics, rather than a growing appreciation of the judiciary. As such, we now find ourselves in a situation where Canadians have been socialized to interpret the government through the *Charter*, and in which an institution ostensibly designed to protect individuals from governmental over-reach finds appreciation in an era where trust in government is low.

Regarding redistribution, the lack of popular uproar about rising inequality of wealth and income suggests that it is not an issue that provokes a strong political response among Canadians. As such, it may be unsurprising that people are not up in arms about the failure of the courts specifically to address it.

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

- Keith Banting and Richard Simeon. *And No One Cheered: Federalism, Democracy and the Constitution Act*. 1983.
- Michael Mandel. *The Charter of Rights and the Legalization of Politics in Canada*. 1989.
- F.L. Morton and Rainer Knopff. *The Charter Revolution and the Court Party*. 2000.
- Peter Russell. *The Judiciary in Canada: The Third Branch of Government*. 1987.

## 8 | Diversity

**8.1 Will Kymlicka inform us that Canada is called on to manage three different dimensions of diversity: Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal, French/English, and multiculturalism. To what extent do responses to the three require different policies and political practices? Might there be a comprehensive approach for reconciling the three diversities? (August 2010)**

**Haddow:** None of the questions from the August 2013 exam will appear on the January 2014 exam.

**Essentially identical questions (1):**

Will Kymlicka argue that Canada must manage different dimensions of diversity: Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal, French/English, and multicultural. To what extent do responses to these three require different policies and political practices? Might there be a more global approach to reconciling them? (August 2013)

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

- Will Kymlicka. *Finding our way: Rethinking ethnocultural relations in Canada*. 1998.

**8.2 Is Canada's international reputation justified as a political system that manages diversity well? (May 2012)**

**Thesis:**

To an extent: French and English Canadians have been able to coexist in the Canadian state without major armed conflict, Canada is perceived as having successful multiculturalism and immigration policies, and — especially in the post-*Charter* period — minority groups have been able to effectively enforce some of their rights through the courts. At the same time, Canada has both present and historical failings in the management of diversity which should be borne in mind and which partially stand at odds with this reputation.

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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### **8.3 Quebec nationalists and Canadian Aboriginal peoples both have political aspirations that challenge the status quo. Compare the methods they have chosen to achieve their aspirations and the success they have achieved. (May 2008)**

#### **Thesis:**

The aspirations of feminists and aboriginals vary significantly across a range of opinions. In some cases, the emphasis is on addressing material discrepancies, in other cases the agenda is more ambitious. Discuss waves of feminism. Talk about range of perspectives on the process of aboriginal decolonization and the transition toward self government, as well as the complex question of urban aboriginals.

Regarding methods — largely through the courts for feminists and aboriginals. The First Nations have also stressed the government-to-government character of negotiations with the Crown, going back to the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and extending to include the attempt to fight patriation in London and the modern treaty process after *Calder*. Because of geographic concentration, Quebecois nationalists have been able to contest elections and win seats federally and provincially. In power in Quebec, they have advanced policies to preserve and enhance Quebecois language and culture: signage and media policy, education policy, immigration policy. Beyond the courts and gaining power, other methods include attempts to alter public perceptions, school curricula, and so on.

Preferred methods connect to the character of aspirations.

#### **Outline:**

#### **Sources:**

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### **8.4 Compare the political aspirations of Quebec nationalists, Aboriginal peoples and feminists and the success of the strategies they have employed to realize those aspirations. (May 2003)**

#### **Thesis:**

See: Quebec nationalists and Canadian Aboriginal peoples both have political aspirations that challenge the status quo. Compare the methods they have chosen to achieve their aspirations and the success they have achieved. (May 2008)

Describe aspirations of feminists, through lens of the three 'waves' of feminism

The experience of feminists has been more akin to that of aboriginals, with major successes through the courts and less of an emphasis on contesting elections and passing legislation specifically about feminist issues. Canadian feminists have also sought to influence public opinion, promote sexual equality in government and private industry, and influence educational curricula and the like.

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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### **8.5 Are Canadian state structures too rigid to accommodate the interests of non-traditional players such as Aboriginal peoples and cities? (August 2003)**

**Thesis:**

Constitutionally, cities are the creatures of the provinces. This may not be adequate for some needs, and there have been attempts by cities to work with the federal government directly.

Over the last 40 years, First Nations have had a lot more success in making use of constitutional flexibility, making use of the 1982 constitution and useful legal precedents.

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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### **8.6 Canadian multiculturalism is theoretically distinct from multiculturalism as understood in most other countries. (May 2013)**

**Thesis:**

Multiculturalism is not viewed in a homogenous way outside Canada. At the same time, the Canadian perspective on multiculturalism is unusual in both its practical and legal embodiment and in terms of Canadian political theory. The Canadian view is distinct from ethnic nationalistic views that hold self-determination to be the right of all ethnic groups. At the

same time, it is distinct from the ‘melting pot’ assimilationist perspective that is dominant in the United States.

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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## 9 | Identity politics

### 9.1 General: definition of ‘identity politics’ and comments on the subject

OED: “the adherence by a group of people of a particular religion, race, social background, etc., to political beliefs or goals specific to the group concerned, as opposed to conforming to traditional broad-based party politics.”

**1979** Political activism among the handicapped and former mental patients... exemplifies a type of politics which we will term identity politics.

**1989** Black feminists sought to create a form of ‘identity politics’ that would advance their unique interests.

**2006** In politics—not least, identity politics, which now embraces religion—misinterpretation is a common way of gaining advantage.

**Haddow:** New layers of identity have been added, in part due to the emergence of post-materialist values. Before, the dominant elements were region, religion, and language (all of which had a territorial component). A way to define ‘identity politics’ is politics grounded in non-material interests.

**Sources of general utility:**

- Neil Nevitte. *The Decline of Deference*. 1996.



## 9.2 “The term ‘identity politics’ is fairly recent, but the substance of what identity politics entails has long been a central concern of Canadian political science.” Discuss. (May 2010)

### Essentially identical questions (4):

Is the increasing emphasis given by Canadian political scientists to identity politics a reflection of fundamental changes in Canadian politics or is it better understood as a new analytic approach to longstanding elements of Canadian politics? (August 2008)

Canadian political scientists have long understood the importance of ‘identity’, though they may not have used that term. Is the recent emphasis on identity politics really all that different from earlier approaches to Canadian politics? What insights has it provided that could not have been obtained from more traditional ways of looking at Canadian politics? (May 2008)

Is the increasing emphasis given by Canadian political scientists to identity politics a reflection of fundamental changes in Canadian politics or is it better understood as a new analytic approach to longstanding elements of Canadian politics? (August 2008)

Does the heightened academic attention to ‘identity politics’ in recent years reflect a fundamental change in the nature of Canadian society and politics or simply new ways of analysing long established social and political phenomena? (May 2003)

### Thesis:

Elements have been around for a long time, but it is being modified by contemporary forces like globalization, and post-materialist values. Empirical work shows that most people now see themselves with multiple identities, and can pick and choose which are most politically salient for them. Globalization and the internet drives people to identify more with worldwide movements, while arguably diminishing the importance of national or regional identification.

Whereas there is little conflict about national identity in the US, France, or Australia in Canada it has been contested from the beginning by the French and by aboriginals. For instance, Taiaiake Alfred describes himself as not being Canadian, since he sees the Indian Act setting him apart. Diefenbaker-Pearson tension: maintaining the British tie, versus asserting an independent Canada — also related to George Grant’s lament

### Outline:

### Sources:

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**9.3 “Like the political economy approach before it, the identity politics approach has reached the point where it has little left to contribute to the understanding of Canadian politics.” Discuss. (May 2012)**

**Thesis:**

Neither approach is spent, when it comes to being able to contribute to understanding Canadian politics. In each, there is work to be done internal to the theory, in linking insights from within the theory to the broader field of Canadian politics, and to applying theories and modes of analysis to new historical developments.

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**9.4 “Whereas two or three decades ago, some of the most innovative work in Canadian political science followed a political economy approach, more recently the best work as been located within the identity politics paradigm.” Discuss. (August 2005)**

**Thesis:**

The identity politics approach is well-matched to the new *a la carte* self-identification that has accompanied globalization and the decline of deference. Individuals understand their political identities less in the traditional senses of religion, region, and language and more in terms of membership in non-territorial groups. This has provided rich opportunities for developing scholarly insights through an identity politics focus. At the same time, globalization has a major economic dependence and economic factors remain powerful shaping forces in Canadian politics. As such, political economy analyses remain relevant, and could be poised for a resurgence as scholars find new theoretical and methodological approaches to understanding linkages between economic developments and politics, and as these analysis are linked to other sub-fields within Canadian politics.

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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## 10 | Political economy

### 10.1 How has globalization affected the nature and the role of the state in Canada? (May 2010)

**Essentially identical questions (1):**

Is globalization having new and different effects on Canadian politics and the Canadian state, or does it simply represent the continuation of longstanding trends? (August 2005)

**Thesis:**

A central feature of economic globalization and political internationalization (Skogstad) is that they confront nearly all countries with similar issues, including communication technologies, the globalization of manufacturing, and cultural change. While much of the context is common between many countries — and especially among advanced industrialized economies — there are circumstances specific to Canada that shape the impact it has here. These include institutional political structures like federalism and the Westminster parliamentary system, as well as economic and geographic factors like the distribution of natural resources. In general, globalization forces Canada's government to pay more attention to the choices being made by governments elsewhere, both because growing global awareness of the citizenry drives global comparisons in policy and because international competitiveness has been highlighted as an economic concern. Canada's government must also deal with new ways in which individual loyalties overlap, and how advances in communication technology can bring together interest groups that are geographically dispersed, even as traditional media forms like television and newspapers wane in importance. Globalization has also been institutionalized in Canada: for instance, through NAFTA and membership in the WTO.

**Outline:**

**Haddow:** The literature on globalization in Canada is “ambiguous and ambivalent”.

**Sources:**

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**10.2 By most accounts, Canada survived the recent economic crisis much better than most other western countries. What role did public policy play in accounting for Canada's superior performance? (August 2010)**

**Thesis:**

Canada's relatively good experience after the global financial crisis of 2008 can partly be explained in terms of public policy choices: notably, the slower rate of deregulation in the Canadian banking sector, compared to those in harder-hit countries like the United States, United Kingdom, and Ireland. At the same time, Canada's economic situation has benefitted from the commodities boom that has accompanied strong economic growth in China, as well as high oil prices. Long-standing structural factors, such as the small number of major banks in Canada and the corresponding ease with which they can be supervised, also provide some explanation.

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**10.3 "In previous decades, political economy analyses contributed greatly to understanding Canadian politics, but in recent years little of analytic value has come from applying political economy approaches to Canadian politics." Discuss. (May 2010)**

**Thesis:**

See: "Like the political economy approach before it, the identity politics approach has reached the point where it has little left to contribute to the understanding of Canadian politics." Discuss. (May 2012)

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

•

**10.4 “While the Canadian political economy literature has generated unique insights about Canada, it has suffered intellectually from a lack of incorporation of comparative perspectives.” Discuss. (August 2007)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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## **11 | Political culture**

**11.1 Is political culture a useful concept for the analysis of Canadian politics? (May 2012)**

**Essentially identical questions (2):**

In what, if any, sense can we speak of a ‘Canadian political culture’? (May 2010)

What are the strengths and weaknesses of using ‘political culture’ to understand modern, Canadian politics? (May 2013)

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**11.2 To what extent have new modes of citizen participation and the development of new communications media changed interest group politics in Canada? (May 2009)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

Sources:

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11.3 “In terms of both approach and substance, for most of Canadian political science, Neil Nevitte’s ‘Decline of Deference’ analysis has largely supplanted the Hartz-Horowitz analysis of Canadian political culture. This shift speaks volumes about the development of the discipline over the past three or four decades.” Discuss. (May 2005)

Thesis:

Outline:

Sources:

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11.4 Does Canadian research on protest movements provide a satisfactory explanation of the peaks and valleys of social mobilization during the decades since World War II? How would the existing literature, for example, address surges of political activism and engagement, periods of social disengagement, and cycles of violent versus non-violent protest? (May 2004)

Thesis:

Outline:

Sources:

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## 12 | Neo-liberalism

**12.1 “For all the talk of the pervasive and pernicious effects of neo-liberalism on Canadian politics, policy and governance, its actual influence has been relatively modest.” Discuss. (May 2009)**

**Essentially identical questions (2):**

“Neo-liberalism as a set of ideas about the appropriate relationship between individuals, markets and the state has had a pervasive impact on governing practices and public politics in Canada over the last 25 years.” Discuss. (May 2008)

“A close examination of Canadian public policy over the past two decades suggests that the rhetoric of neo-liberalism has been a good deal stronger than the reality.” Discuss. (May 2003)

**Thesis:**

Neoliberalism is generally understood as a political trend in which the state is de-emphasized in favour of the market, which is interpreted to be more efficient and effective at meeting the needs of the population. It is associated with reduced social spending and a contraction of society’s social safety net, the promotion of policies like tax cuts that favour business, the privatization of governmental function, and reduced regulation of business.

Despite the strength of neoliberalism in the post Reagan / Thatcher / Mulroney era, it is possible to look at Canada’s government and institutions and perceive relatively little change. Universal health care remains in place — albeit supplemented by private facilities in many provinces — and Canada continues to provide an extensive welfare state and play a redistributive role. That being said, there are areas in which neoliberal policies have become entrenched, particularly by the governments of Stephen Harper, as marketing boards have been eliminated, corporate taxes have been cut, environmental regulations have been substantially cut back, and overt support for corporate projects has increased. Also, there is a significant degree to which the language and assumptions of neoliberalism have been internalized, even by ostensibly left-wing governments. Sylvia Bashevkin argues that the Reagan / Thatcher / Mulroney governments popularized a view of welfare recipients as morally unworthy that was internalized by Clinton, Blair, and Chretien, for instance. Neoliberalism has also shifted the general view of the purpose of education more toward preparation for the workforce, and arguably shifted the focus of scientific research more toward what has immediate commercial applications.

**Outline:**

**OED:** Neoliberalism — Of, relating to, or characteristic of a modified or revived form of

traditional liberalism, esp. one based on belief in free market capitalism and the rights of the individual.

Mel Watkins argues that Canada remains an economy characterized by staples: in which changes in external demand largely influence the rate of economic growth, in which diversification is undesirable in good times and infeasible in bad, and in which change in technology and even tastes elsewhere can influence Canadian prosperity.

**Sources:**

- Keith Banting. *The Welfare State and Canadian Federalism*. 1987.
- Sylvia Bashevkin. *Welfare Hot Buttons*. 2002.
- George Grant. *Lament for a Nation*. 1965.
- Kathryn Harrison. *Passing the Buck: Federalism and Environmental Policy*. 1999.

## 13 | Studying government institutions

**13.1 “Although some Canadian political scientists continue to study governmental institutions, such as Parliament, cabinet and the bureaucracy, the Canadian discipline has largely lost interest in government.” Assess the validity of this statement and, to the extent you believe it accurate, comment on whether it identifies a problem with Canadian political science. (May 2012)**

**Essentially identical questions (1):**

“Despite being Canada’s foremost representative political institution, Parliament has attracted relatively little scholarly attention in recent years and most work on it has been descriptive or normative rather than analytical or theoretical.” Discuss. (August 2007)

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**



Sources:

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**13.2 Does the Canadian policy literature suffer from paying too little attention to the operation of government institutions, especially the public service? (May 2012)**

Thesis:

Outline:

Sources:

•

**13.3 Have students of Canadian public policy focused too much on the role of institutions — to the neglect of other explanatory factors — in their accounts of policy-making and policy outcomes? Choose either economic or social policy to make your argument. (August 2010)**

Thesis:

Outline:

Sources:

•

**13.4 “In Canada, since the late nineteenth century, society and economy and the attitudes and values associated with them have changed fundamentally, yet the principal institutions of government remain much as they were 120 years ago.” Discuss. (May 2011)**

Thesis:

Outline:

Sources:

•

**13.5 Reform is again in the air. Examine the competing ideas and prospects for major change in any TWO of the following: the electoral system; the Senate; the power of the Prime Minister; the role of the Governor-General; judicial appointments. (August 2010)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**13.6 In a series of books over the past decade, Donald Savoie has argued that the principal institutions of Canadian governance have become deeply flawed. Outline Savoie's main arguments and evaluate them. (May 2009)**

**Thesis:**

Power has been greatly centralized in Canada, with the prime minister and Prime Minister's Office capable of side-stepping parliament and even cabinet. MPs are inexperienced and easy to control. The central agencies serve the executive and dominate the civil service. The skills required of politicians and of senior civil servants are converging. The media has become a powerful political force, and the PCO and PMO are adept at and focused on managing it.

The civil service has serious morale problems, and a diminished ability to attract the best and brightest. People question if they can make a difference there. Institutional memory has been lost, making it hard to speak truth to power. Ministers are also less capable and empowered than before, and the convention of ministerial responsibility is breaking down.

This has also happened to a large extent in the UK.

**Outline:**

**Governing from the Centre: The Concentration of Power in Canadian Politics**

Focused on the machinery of government. The central agencies “shape policy, government decisions, government operations, and federal-provincial relations to a far greater extent than has been generally assumed.” (ix) The centre is defined here as the PM, PMO, cabinet, and the central agencies (including the Public Service Commission and Intergovernmental Affairs secretariat). These are the gatekeepers of the cabinet decision process. Trudeau created the modern PMO, and subsequent PMs have stuck with the same basic approach. The centre is an “early warning system” for the PM. (336)

The PM “towers above his cabinet colleagues.” (73) Constraints on the PM are — most importantly — time, and also the need to have a balanced cabinet and maintain the perception of mastery over it. MPs have high turnover, so there is a relatively shallow pool of experience for the PM to draw on in choosing a cabinet. (324) Exacerbated by need for regional balance, etc.

The media has become more demanding and intrusive. Now an important political actor, to which the centre is very sensitive.

“The bottom line is PCO is into risk management”. (134) PCO is “the nerve centre of the federal public service”. Oka crisis urgently managed by them. Prepares mandate letters for ministers. (137)

The extent of the power of the centre signals institutional change and failure: “Parliament is increasingly failing to hold the government to account.” (339) “Opposition members of Parliament, perhaps because they have such limited access to policy advice, are free to walk in the unconstrained world of make-believe.” (341)

Decks introduced in 1983. (153) “Largely empty of analysis.” ATIP has made officials wary of writing things down (290) The centre only trusts itself to oversee overall management, especially when it comes to national unity and federal-provincial relations.

### **Breaking the bargain : public servants, ministers and Parliament**

“[The traditional deal struck between politicians and career officials that underpins the workings of our national political and administrative process is today being challenged. [Savoie] argues that the role of bureaucracy within the Canadian political machine has never been properly defined, that the relationship between elected and permanent government officials is increasingly problematic, and that the public service cannot function if it is expected to be both independent of, and subordinate to, elected officials.

While the public service attempts to define its own political sphere, the House of Commons is also in flux: the prime minister and his close advisors wield ever more power, and cabinet no longer occupies the policy ground to which it is entitled. Ministers, who have traditionally been able to develop their own roles, have increasingly lost their autonomy.

Federal departmental structures are crumbling, giving way to a new model that eschews boundaries in favour of sharing policy and program space with outsiders. The implications of this functional shift are profound, having a deep impact on how public policies are struck, how government operates, and, ultimately, the capacity for accountability.”

### **Court government and the collapse of accountability in Canada and the United Kingdom**

Largely similar in theme to *Governing from the Centre* — though it highlights how trends in the UK have been similar. Focuses on “the relationship between elected politicians, bureaucracy, and citizens”. (3) “An uneasy alliance, a kind of love-hate relationship, from the very beginning.” (7) Skills of politicians and senior civil servants are converging. (19)

The civil service has ceased to be appealing to many of the best and brightest — lack of clarity about whether you can actually accomplish anything there. “Serious morale problem” in both Canada and UK. (x) “I have come to the conclusion that our national, political, and administrative institutions are in urgent need of some rethinking. They are beyond repair.” (xi)

Powerful new “voices” have emerged, and access to information rules have changed the operation of government. (71, 160) Time of difficulty largely began in 1970s. Growth in the power of the media. (157) Expectations and procedures relating to loyalty in government have changed. (192) Loss of institutional memory, with commensurate loss of ability to speak truth to power. (254)

“The policy role of civil servants now is less about having an intimate knowledge of a relevant sector and being able to offer policy options and more about finding empirical justifications for what the elected politicians have decided to do... These skills are much more akin to the political world than those found in Weber’s bureaucratic model.” (228-9)

#### **Sources:**

- Donald Savoie. *Governing from the Centre: The Concentration of Power in Canadian Politics*. 1999.
- Donald Savoie. *Breaking the bargain : public servants, ministers and Parliament*. 2003.
- Donald Savoie. *Court government and the collapse of accountability in Canada and the United Kingdom*. 2008.

### **13.7 What is lost and what is gained by studying Parliament within a framework of “responsible government”?**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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### **13.8 Alan Cairns has written that “the mainstream political scientists’ version of the biographer’s disease of identifying with their subjects is to become committed to the defence of institutions they have long and lovingly studied”. To what extent has this ‘disease’ been characteristic of Canadian political science? (May 2005)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

“One participant, who objected to this characteristic of the debate said: ‘It is a cock-eyed way of going about looking at a constitution; it is extremely short-sighted. It predetermines the discussion in favour of retaining, by and large, the existing fabric; it closes the door on a whole range of alternatives.’ Said another, ‘We are still thinking in terms of existing forms and structures.’ To mention this point is not to agree with the criticism: one may well argue that this is the most appropriate way to conduct the exercise, that any alternative method would be doomed to failure and would not produce useful results. The point is that this form and content of discussion are to a large extent implicit in the unspoken — and undiscussed — choice of the forum and the participants.”

— Simeon, Richard. *Federal-Provincial Diplomacy*. 1971. p. 274–5

**Sources:**

- Simeon, Richard. *Federal-Provincial Diplomacy*. 1971.

**13.9 What have been the most convincing interpretations in the literature on the changes and continuities in the Canadian state over the past few decades? (August 2003)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**13.10 Is the institutional framework of the Canadian state better understood as flexible or rigid? (May 2003)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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## **14 | The constitution**

### **14.1 General: comments on the constitution**

“At the beginning of this book I introduced Burke and Locke as representing two different approaches to constitutionalism. For the Burkean, a constitution is thought of not as a single foundational document drawn up at a particular point in time containing all of a society’s rules and principles of government, but as a collection of laws, institutions, and political practices that have passed the test of time, and which have been found to serve the society’s interests tolerably well... From the Lockean perspective, however, the Constitution is understood as a foundational document expressing the will of the people, reached through a democratic agreement, on the nature of the political community they have formed and how that community is to be governed... The central argument of this book has been that up until the 1960s constitutional politics in Canada was basically Burkean, but for a generation — from the late 1960s to the mid-1990s — the prevailing constitutional aspiration in Canada and in Quebec was for a Lockean constitutional moment. That effort failed, for the now

obvious reason that in neither Canada nor Quebec was there — or is there — a population capable of acting as a sovereign people in a positive Lockean way.”

— Russell, Peter. *Constitutional Odyssey: Can Canadians Become a Sovereign People?* (Third Edition). 2004 (first edition 1992). p. 247-8

**14.2 “The era of constitutional mega-projects in Canada may be over, but important if inconspicuous constitutional changes continue to unfold.” Discuss with reference to federalism and citizen-state relations. (May 2003)**

Thesis:

Outline:

Sources:

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## 15 | Quebec

**15.1 What insights can we gain by studying Quebec through the lens of ‘identity politics’? (May 2009)**

Thesis:

Outline:

Sources:

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**15.2 What changes have occurred in the nature and political aspirations of Quebec nationalism since the Quiet Revolution? What are the implications of these changes for Quebec’s relationship with the ‘Rest of Canada’? (August 2003)**

Thesis:

Outline:

Sources:

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## 16 | The welfare state

### 16.1 Is the Canadian welfare state in retreat? If it is, what explains its decline? If it is not, what explains its persistence? (August 2008)

#### Essentially identical questions (1):

“Assertions about the decline of the welfare state in Canada are based more on ideological predispositions than on empirical evidence.” Discuss. (May 2005)

#### Thesis:

See also: [Neo-liberalism](#)

At the federal, provincial, and municipal levels the Canadian state continues to provide a wide range of social services for Canadians, including health care, education, old age security payments, and income security (employment insurance, disability benefits, earned income tax credits, etc). At the same time, there has been neoliberal retrenchment, particularly when concern about the deficit drove major budgetary restraint in the 1990s and reduced federal funding provided to the provinces.

In a few cases, government have introduced new policies tailored to bolstering support among middle class parents, at a cost to general government revenue, including tax credits for child art and fitness credits, credits for home renovation,

#### Outline:

**OED:** Welfare state — A country in which the welfare of members of the community is underwritten by means of State-run social services.

**Haddow:** This is “a very complex question”. When it comes to redistribution — income transfers, not the provision of services — Canada now redistributes about as much as it did 30 years ago. Over the same span, market inequality has risen a lot, so Canada is doing the same amount to respond to a much larger issue. Public health care is “fraying in some respects”, and these services are consumed more by wealthy Canadians. He doubts the



examiners would “ask such an unwieldy question” this time; it is an empirical question that requires a lot of nuance to answer well.

**Sources:**

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## 17 | Health care

**17.1 Many observers describe public health care as the “third rail” of Canadian politics. How politically significant is the health care dimension of the Canadian welfare state, and how convincing are claims that social policy standards generally and health care provision in particular are in steep decline? (May 2004)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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## 18 | The party system

**18.1 Do the results of the 2011 federal election suggest that Canada is entering a new party system? (May 2011)**

**Haddow:** None of the questions from the August 2013 exam will appear on the January 2014 exam.

**Essentially identical questions (1):**

Do the results of the 2011 federal election suggest that Canada is entering a new party system? (August 2013)

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Haddow:** To answer this, you would need to begin with the 1993 election, called by Kim Campbell and which produced a strong majority for Jean Chretien (177/295 seats) with the Bloc Quebecois as the official opposition (54 seats) under Lucien Bouchard and Reform under Preston Manning (52 seats). The NDP won 9 seats, and the Progressive Conservatives just 2. This either initiated a new party system, or nothing since then has been sufficiently stable to be characterized as such.

**Sources:**

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**18.2 “The Canadian party system literature consists of arbitrary, post-hoc explanations of Canadian electoral history.” Discuss. (May 2012)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**18.3 Minority government may have become the norm in Canadian politics. If so, what are the implications for the future of Canadian political parties, Parliament, and federalism? (August 2010)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**18.4 The Canadian electorate has been highly volatile for at least two or three decades yet it was only recently that the party system became destabilized. What accounts for this apparent paradox? (May 2008)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**18.5 There have been obvious and significant changes in Canadian political parties and voting behaviour over the past two or three decades, but when all is said and done, aren't the underlying continuities at least as important? (May 2003)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**18.6 What is gained and what is lost by studying Canadian political parties in a comparative framework? (May 2013)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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## **19 | Voting behaviour**

**19.1 “For all the data that have been collected and analysed on voting behaviour in Canada, we still don’t know very much about why Canadians vote the way they do.” Discuss. (May 2012)**

**Essentially identical questions (1):**

Over the past three or four decades, substantial amounts of time, energy, and money have been devoted to voting studies in Canada. For all the resulting books and articles, do we really have a good, comprehensive understanding of why Canadians vote as they do? (August 2008)

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**19.2 For decades, Canadian political scientists have been expending substantial amounts of time and money on national election studies. What has been learned from these studies? Have the gains in knowledge and understanding been worth the effort? (August 2007)**

**Essentially identical questions (1):**

“For nearly four decades, Canadian political scientists have been expending substantial amounts of time and money on national election surveys, but beyond a few broad generalizations, we really don’t know much about the voting behaviour of Canadians.” Discuss. (August 2003)

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**19.3 “Partisan identification is not a useful concept in Canadian politics.” Discuss. (May 2011)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**19.4 What social and ideological cleavages best account for Canadian voting behaviour? (May 2011)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

•

**19.5 Have Canadian political scientists been too concerned with voting behaviour at the expense of not adequately studying other forms of citizen participation? (May 2010)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**19.6 Those who approach Canadian politics through the lens of ‘identity politics’ appear to have little in common with those who study voting behaviour and related phenomena. Do analysts from these two schools of thought have anything to learn from one another? (May 2005)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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### **19.7 Which spatial or ideological dimensions best characterize Canadian federal voting behaviour? (August 2013)**

**Haddow:** None of the questions from the August 2013 exam will appear on the January 2014 exam.

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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## **20 | Miscellaneous**

### **20.1 Are the Canadian literatures on parties, elections, public attitudes and voting, on one side, and cultural diversity, social movements and interest groups, on the other, mutually reconcilable? (May 2004)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**20.2 Do the ideas and approaches of ‘New Public Management’ provide any guidance as to possible changes of the two Canadian political institutions in greatest need of reform, Parliament and federalism? (August 2003)**

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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**20.3 When it comes to learning about public policy, what are the limits to variation between provinces? (August 2013)**

**Haddow:** None of the questions from the August 2013 exam will appear on the January 2014 exam.

**Thesis:**

**Outline:**

**Sources:**

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