

Political Science 4211G
Version Date: 8 October 2025¹

Course Title:	Challenging the Nation-State: The Politics of Multilevel Governance
Day:	Mondays
Time:	11:30am to 1:30pm
Location:	TBA

Instructor:	Dr. Chris Alcantara
Office Hours:	Mondays 2pm to 3pm or by Appointment
Office Location:	TBA
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Telephone:	Ext. 85171

Prerequisite(s):

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Description

This course introduces students to the concept of multilevel governance. Over the last 30 years, a variety of forces have challenged the dominance and hierarchical nature of the modern state. As a result, states from around the world have shifted and transformed themselves to reflect three new trends: i) the emergence of new forms of cooperation, coordination and interdependency between governments at different levels; ii) the resurgence of territorial politics; and iii) the inclusion of civil society actors and individuals in new forms of public decision-making. These trends have had serious implications for how collective decisions are made and public goods are produced in North America and beyond. Over the course of the term, students will come to grips with the concept of multilevel governance by assessing its impact on the processes and outcomes of policy-making and governance in advanced democratic contexts.

Student Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Identify the main elements of what constitutes multilevel governance and the various points of disagreement among scholars who use this term in their work;
- Articulate the forces that have generated the emergence and proliferation of multilevel governance in a variety of advanced democratic countries;
- Apply the concept of multilevel governance and other related concepts to a wide range of political phenomena across time and space;
- Synthesize and assess scholarly and non-scholarly information as they relate to the concept of multilevel governance;
- Communicate ideas regarding the emergence, practice, and outcomes of multilevel governance in a variety of written and oral mediums to a diverse set of audiences.

Course Materials

All readings are available electronically on the Brightspace page and through the library.

¹ This draft syllabus is subject to change so check in January 2026 on the political science website and Brightspace page to ensure you have the latest version!

Methods of Evaluation

Perusall Annotations	10%	<u>Due each Saturday by 11:55pm</u>
Country/Regional Snapshot	10%	<u>Due Feb. 13 by 11:55pm</u>
Simulation Assignments	15%	<u>Due Mar. 6 and 13 by 11:55pm</u>
MLG Policy Autopsy	20%	<u>Due Apr. 1 by 11:55pm</u>
Final Exam	25%	<u>Apr. 6 In-Class</u>
Seminar Participation	20%	<u>Continuous</u>
Total	100%	

Necessary Condition for Passing this Course

To receive a passing grade in this course, you must attend at least 9 full classes beginning in week 2. Failure to attend the minimum number of classes will result in an automatic failure in the course regardless of the grades received on the written and oral assignments.

Written Assignments

- For all written assignments (with the exception of the op ed column), please use the formatting (double spaced, headings, etc) and referencing style (Harvard, in-text) of the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*.
- All in-text citations MUST INCLUDE PAGE NUMBERS for all materials quoted, paraphrased, or summarized.
- The CJPS guidelines are available online at <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/canadian-journal-of-political-science-revue-canadienne-de-science-politique/information/author-instructions/preparing-your-materials> (scroll down to “style guide” and “referencing style”).
- Students are expected to create ORIGINAL WORK for all course assignments. According to Dr. Ethan Mollick, “Experts thus have many advantages. They are better able to see through LLM errors and hallucinations; they are better judges of AI output in their area of interest; they are better able to instruct the AI to do the required job; and they have the opportunity for more trial and error. That lets them unlock the latent expertise within LLMs in ways that others could not.” (See <https://tinyurl.com/2b7vetk6>). Use this course to become an expert! If you decide to use ChatGPT or any other AI tool, you should only do so sparingly; use it to refine your research question or help you write transitions between paragraphs, for instance.

1. Perusall Reading Annotations (15%)

To encourage active engagement with the course readings, students will use Perusall.com to annotate assigned texts each week. This platform allows you to comment directly on the readings and respond to your peers, creating a collaborative learning environment.

Weekly Requirements:

- Write at least one original comment on ONE assigned reading each week that is marked by two asterisks (**).
- Comments should demonstrate thoughtful engagement, raise questions, connect ideas, or offer critiques. They can link to readings from previous weeks or other readings assigned that week.

Grading Criteria:

- Meeting the weekly minimum (one comment per reading + one response to a comment) consistently will earn a B (75–79%)
- Exceeding the minimum with insightful, well-developed contributions will result in a higher grade
- Superficial or infrequent participation will result in a lower grade

Guidelines:

- Comments must be posted by Saturday at 11:55pm before class

- Use respectful, constructive language
- Refer to course concepts and readings where appropriate
- No formal referencing is required, but clarity and relevance matter

2. MLG Country/Regional Snapshots (10%)

Each student will create a 2-page snapshot of a federal country or a subnational region (e.g., Germany, Australia, Quebec, Bavaria, Nunatsiavut, the GTA, etc.) to help build a collective toolkit for understanding multilevel governance across contexts.

Your snapshot must include the following sections:

- **Federal Structure:** Briefly describe the constitutional or institutional setup (e.g., number of levels/orders, division of financial and non-financial powers and infrastructure ownership, role of courts, etc.).
- **Notable MLG Features:** Highlight key characteristics of multilevel governance in this context (e.g., intergovernmental councils, asymmetric federalism, decentralization trends).
- **Policy Examples:** Provide 1–2 illustrative examples of how MLG operates in practice in areas such as health, education, or environmental policy.

Snapshot Requirements:

- 2 page maximum (excluding references)
- Include at least 2 scholarly sources (beyond the course readings)
- Use the Canadian Journal of Political Science referencing style (Harvard, in-text with page numbers)
- Submit your snapshot to the “assignments” section on Brightspace
- Students may be asked to briefly present their snapshot during class discussion.

3. In-Class Simulation: Managing the Urban Green Transition (15%)

This assignment involves a multilevel governance simulation focused on green infrastructure investment in the City of London, Ontario. Students will assume the roles of key stakeholders and negotiate a strategic plan for urban sustainability. The simulation highlights:

- Vertical dynamics (federal, provincial, municipal)
- Horizontal coordination (across agencies and sectors)
- The role of non-state actors (e.g., Indigenous governments, NGOs, developers)

Stakeholder Roles (assigned to individuals or teams of 2–3):

- Federal Environment Ministry
- Provincial Infrastructure Ministry
- Municipal Mayor’s Office (City of London)
- Indigenous Nation Government (e.g., Chippewas of the Thames First Nation)
- Environmental NGO (e.g., Thames Riverkeepers Coalition)
- Real Estate Developers' Association
- Local Transit Authority (London Transit Commission)
- Public Health Agency (Middlesex-London Health Unit)

Each team will receive:

- A background brief on the policy context
- A list of goals and constraints
- Confidential information (e.g., political pressures, funding limits, strategic interests)

Assignment Components:

A) Pre-Simulation Strategy Memo (5%)

Each team must submit a 1-2 page memo outlining:

- Their stakeholder’s goals and priorities
- Preferred allies or partners
- Red lines (non-negotiables)

- Initial proposal ideas

Submit your memo to the “assignments” section on OWL before the simulation day.

B) Simulation Day (In-Class)

The simulation will run over 1.5–2 hours and include three rounds:

- Round 1: Negotiations over process and roles (who will Chair) before Opening statements
- Round 2: Proposal development in working groups
- Round 3: Final negotiation and resolution

Students will be evaluated on participation, strategic engagement, and ability to apply course concepts.

3. Post-Simulation Reflection Paper (10%)

Each student will write a 4–6-page reflection analyzing:

- How intergovernmental coordination unfolded
- What trade-offs were made and why
- What the simulation revealed about multilevel governance in practice

Reflection Paper Requirements:

- 6 pages maximum
- Use headings and clear structure
- Reference course readings and simulation experience
- Use the Canadian Journal of Political Science referencing style (Harvard, in-text with page numbers)
- Submit your paper to the “assignments” section on OWL

4. Multilevel Governance Policy Autopsy (“Post-Mortem”) (20%)

This assignment asks you to conduct a **policy autopsy**—a critical analysis of a failed or stalled policy initiative in Canada or another federal system. Your task is to identify how multilevel governance structures contributed to the policy’s breakdown or stagnation. Examples of possible cases include:

- High-speed rail in Canada
- The prevalence of Indigenous boil water advisories
- Housing affordability efforts
- Climate adaptation strategies
- Regional transit integration

Your analysis should focus on how MLG dynamics shaped the outcome. Consider the following diagnostic questions:

- Was there **fragmentation of authority** across levels of government?
- Were lines of **accountability blurred** or contested?
- Was there a **mismatch between jurisdictional boundaries and the scale of the problem**?

Deliverables:

- A policy brief (8-10 pages) that outlines the case, identifies key governance challenges, and proposes lessons for future coordination. The brief may include at least one annotated diagram that visually maps the failure points (e.g., actor relationships, bottlenecks, veto players).

Requirements:

- 10 pages maximum for the brief, excluding title page, diagram, and bibliography
- Use headings and subheadings to organize your analysis
- Include at least 5 scholarly sources, beyond the course readings
- Use the Canadian Journal of Political Science referencing style (Harvard, in-text with page numbers)
- Submit both the brief to the “assignments” section on OWL

Evaluation Criteria:

- Clarity and depth of analysis
- Use of MLG concepts and course materials
- Quality and insightfulness of the diagram

- Writing style and proper referencing

5. Final Exam (25%)

Each student will write a two-hour final exam in-class on Monday April 6.

Oral Assignments

- **Seminar Participation (20%):** Each week, students will be expected to PARTICIPATE in class discussion on the readings. **There is no grade for attendance.** Effective participation requires careful preparation (reading and thinking critically about the readings) and actively contributing to class exercises and discussions by responding to the conversations generated by the instructor and classmates. Participation will be evaluated according to whether students:
 1. demonstrated that they have read, understood, and thought critically about the course materials and themes;
 2. participated in discussions in a civil, respectful, and thoughtful manner, avoiding personal attacks and offensive language;
 3. showed a willingness to take decisive stands on issues in a way that fostered intelligent conversation;
 4. demonstrated that they are open to changing their opinions as a result of debate and discussion.

Class and Reading Schedule

Week 1: Introductions, Administivia and do we need to change how we make decisions? (Jan. 5)

Read the syllabus and the following articles and be prepared to answer: Should we include citizens in government decision-making or does it cause more harm then good?

Beauvais, Edana. 2018. "The Grandview-Woodland Citizens' Assembly: An experiment in municipal planning." *Canadian Public Administration* 61 (3): 341-360.

**Lafont, Cristina. 2015. "Deliberation, Participation, and Democratic Legitimacy: Should Deliberate Mini-publics Shape Public Policy?" *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 23 (1): 40-63.

PART 1: CONCEPTUAL BASICS

Week 2: The (Canadian) State (Jan. 12)

What is the State? What is the nature of the Canadian State? Is it a neutral, unified and autonomous actor?

**Mann, Michael. 2003. "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results." In *State/Space*. Edited by N. Brenner, B. Jessop, M. Jones and G. MacLeod. <https://doi-org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/10.1002/9780470755686.ch3>

McRoberts, Kenneth. 2001. "Canada and the Multinational State." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 34 (4): 683-713.

Henderson, Phil. 2024. "Federalism and Settler Imperialism: Racial Regimes, Whiteness, and Conquest in Canadian Constitutionalism." *Canadian Journal of Political Science*. 57 (2): 466-487.

Bhagat, Ali and Rachel Phillips. 2025. "Financing the border: racial capitalism, migration, and the practices of the Canadian state." *Review of International Political Economy*, 1–32.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2025.2549090>

Week 3: The (Canadian) Public (Jan. 19)

What is the nature of Canadian society? What does it want? Can the Canadian State deliver what it wants?

Gidengil, Elisabeth et al. 2010. "Citizens." In *Auditing Canadian Democracy*. Edited by William Cross. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Stephenson, Laura et al. 2025. *Understanding and Advancing Youth Civic Engagement in Canada: Executive Summary*. Max Bell Foundation: <https://www.maxbell.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Summary-Report-Understanding-and-Advancing-Youth-Civic-Engagement-English.pdf>

Baker, Melissa N et al. 2025. "Affective Language in the Most Important Issues of the 2019 and 2021 Canadian Elections." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 37 (2): 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edaf012>

**Walgrave, Stefaan et al. 2023. "Inaccurate Politicians: Elected Representatives' Estimations of Public Opinion in Four Countries." *The Journal of Politics* 85 (1): 209-222.

Orsini, Michael. 2020. "Of Pots and Pans and Radical Handmaids: Social Movements and Civil Society." In *Canadian Politics*. Edited by James Bickerton and Alain-G. Gagnon. Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 373-395.

Week 4: Defining Multilevel Governance (Jan. 26)

What is multilevel governance? What are its implications for the Canadian State?

**Tortola, Pier Domenico. 2017. "Clarifying multilevel governance." *European Journal of Political Research* 56 (2): 234-250.

Alcantara, Christopher and Jorg Broschek and Jen Nelles. 2016. "Rethinking multilevel governance as an instance of multilevel politics: A conceptual strategy." *Territory, Politics, Governance* 4 (1): 33-51.

McBride, Stephen. 2003 "Quiet Constitutionalism in Canada: The International Political Economy of Domestic Institutional Change" *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 36 (2): 251-273.

Rodriguez-Pose, Andres and Nicholas Gill. 2003. "The Global Trend towards Devolution and its Implications." *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 21 (3): 333-351.

Week 5: Canadian Federalism and Multilevel Governance (Feb. 2)

Is Canadian federalism designed to enact and promote MLG? Can it accommodate and empower citizens and their interests?

Sayers, Anthony, Christopher Alcantara, and David Armstrong. 2022. "Locating Federalism: Non-Financial Assets and Public Policy in Canada." *Canadian Public Administration*. 65 (2): 314-332.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/capa.12461>.

Cameron, David, and Richard Simeon. 2002. "Intergovernmental Relations in Canada: The Emergence of Collaborative Federalism." *Publius* 32, (2): 49-72.

Simmons, Julie M., and Peter Graefe. 2013. "Assessing the Collaboration That Was "Collaborative Federalism" 1996-2006." *Canadian Political Science Review* 7 (1): 25-36.

Kennedy, John, Anthony Sayers, and Christopher Alcantara. 2022. "Does Federalism Prevent Democratic Accountability? Assigning Responsibility for Rates of COVID-19 Testing." *Political Studies Review*. 20 (1): 158-165. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14789299211001690>

**Smith, Jennifer. 2010. "Federalism." In *Auditing Canadian Democracy*. Edited by William Cross. Vancouver: UBC Press, 18-39.

Week 6: Multilevel Governance and Public Policy (Feb. 9) – SNAPSHOT DUE FEB. 13

What does effective MLG look like in practice? How should we design MLG processes to ensure good governance?

Ansell, Chris and Alison Gash. 2008. "Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice." *Journal of Public Administration: Research and Theory* 18 (4): 543-571.

Doberstein, Carey and Heather Millar. 2014. "Balancing a House of Cards: Throughput Legitimacy in Canadian Governance Networks." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 47 (2): 259-280.

**Doberstein, Carey. 2016. "Designing Collaborative Governance: Decision-Making in Search of 'Collaborative Advantage'." *Public Management Review* 18 (6): 819-841.

Casula, Mattia. 2022. "How different multilevel and multi-actor arrangements impact policy implementation: evidence from EU regional policy." *Territory, Politics, Governance* 12 (7): 1048–1072. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2022.2061590>

OPTIONAL: Conteh, Charles and Brittany Harding. 2021. "Boundary-spanning in public value co-creation through the lens of multilevel governance." *Public Management Review* 25 (1): 104–128.

Week 7: READING WEEK (NO CLASSES) (Feb. 16).

PART 2: CASE STUDIES

Week 8: Toronto (Feb. 23)

How has MLG affected governance in Toronto? Has it had a positive or negative effect?

**Horak, Martin. 2013. "State rescaling in practice: urban governance reform in Toronto" *Urban Research & Practice* 6 (3): 311-328.

Martin Horak, "Success and Failure in Multilevel Governance in Toronto" in Martin Horak and Robert Young, eds., *Sites of Governance: Multilevel Governance and Policy Making in Canada's Big Cities* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), ch. 9.

Gabriel Eidelman, *Three's Company: A Review of Waterfront Toronto's Tri-governmental Approach to Revitalization* (Toronto: The Mowat Centre, 2013)

http://mowatcentre.ca/wpcontent/uploads/publications/79_threes_company.pdf

Week 9: Special Purpose Bodies (March 2) – STRATEGY MEMO DUE MAR. 6

What are special purpose bodies? Are they good examples of MLG? How can they help actors make decisions about policy?

Lucas, Jack. 2013. "Hidden in Plain View: Local Agencies, Boards, and Commissions in Canada." *IMFG Perspectives*. Toronto: Institute on Municipal Finance and Governance.

http://munkschool.utoronto.ca/imfg/uploads/253/imfg_1453hiddeninplainview_final_web.pdf

**Lyons, Joseph. 2015. "Conservation authority board composition and watershed management in Ontario", *Canadian Public Administration* 58 (2): 315-32.

Krawchenko, Tamara. 2011. "Regional special purpose bodies for transportation and transit in Canada: Case studies of Translink and Metrolinx." *Canadian Journal of Regional Science* 34 (1): 1-8.

Mullin, Megan. 2008. "The Conditional Effect of Specialized Governance on Public Policy." *American Journal of Political Science* 52: 125-41.

Week 10: In-class Simulation (March 9)

No readings this week.

Week 11: No class this week (March 16) – POST-SIM REFLECTION DUE MAR. 16

Submit your reflection and start working on your MLG policy autopsy.

Week 12: Indigenous Multilevel Governance (March 23)

Can MLG accommodate the interests and aspirations of Indigenous peoples in Canada? Or is it another state tool to undermine and marginalize Indigenous communities?

**Breen, Michael G and Anya Thomas. 2021. "Chapter 10: National Minorities and Indigenous Peoples in Multilevel Governance." In *A Research Agenda for Multilevel Governance* Edited by Arthur Benz, Jörg Broschek, and Markus Lederer. Edward Elgar: 191-207.

Alcantara, Christopher and Zac Spicer. 2016. "A New Model for Making Aboriginal Policy? Evaluating the Kelowna Accord and the Promise of Multilevel Governance in Canada." *Canadian Public Administration*. 59 (2): 183-203.

Wilson, Gary, Christopher Alcantara, and Thierry Rodon. 2015. "Multilevel Governance in the Inuit Regions of the Territorial and Provincial North." In Papillon and Juneau, eds., *Canada: The State of the Federation, Aboriginal Multilevel Governance* Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, pp. 43-64.

Do, M., Janzwood, A., & Pue, K. 2023. "Multilevel governance, climate (in)justice, and settler colonialism—evidence from First Nations disaster evacuations in so-called Canada." *Critical Policy Studies*, 18 (2), 247–270. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2023.2232863>

OPTIONAL: Alcantara, Christopher and Michael Morden. 2017. "Indigenous multilevel governance and power relations." *Territory, Politics, Governance*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2017.1360197>

Week 13: Migration and Immigration (March 30) – MLG POLICY AUTOPSY DUE APR. 1

Does MLG hinder effective immigration and migration policies?

**Fourot, A-C. 2021. "Comparing Ambiguities: Municipalities, Francophone Minority Communities and Immigration in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 54 (1):75-95.

Bazurli, Raffaele and David Kaufmann. 2022. "Insurgent Asylum Policies in European Cities: A Multi-Level Governance Perspective." *Urban Affairs Review* 59 (4): 1129- 1159.

Tiziana Caponio. 2021. "Governing Migration through Multi-Level Governance? City Networks in Europe and the United States." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 59: 1590–1606.

Week 14: Final Exam (April 6) – In-Class

COURSE POLICIES

See here for Department Policies: <https://politicalscience.uwo.ca/undergraduate/docs/outlines/2025-26/APPENDIX%20TO%20UNDERGRADUATE%20COURSE%20OUTLINES1.pdf>

Due dates and Non-medical and medical accommodation

Assignments must be submitted on the dates specified above. **Failure to turn in an assignment on time will result in a penalty of FIVE percentage points for each day or partial day it is late.**

Essays MUST be submitted online to the appropriate assignment folder in OWL. Students are also responsible for ensuring that their paper has successfully been submitted to the appropriate assignment folder on OWL. Please be aware that internet servers tend to slow down near the deadlines as dozens of students try to submit their papers at the same time so submit early. No extensions will be granted on the basis of technological failures or unexpected slowdowns with the OWL server.

Under no circumstances should assignments be physically handed in, emailed, or slipped under any door. Students should always keep a copy of any work that is handed in, at least until it is graded and returned. Students should also keep all rough and draft work.

Statement on Contact

If you have questions or concerns, or wish to meet with me in person, you can contact me via email, campus phone, or by attending posted office hours. Please expect at least a 24 hours delay in getting responses to emails, though responses may come sooner. Email contact should be for clarification purposes; more in-depth concerns should be addressed in a scheduled meeting or in office hours. **Only emails sent from a valid UWO email address will be read.**

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Laptops, iPads, smartphones and related devices are amazing tools, with remarkable capabilities. Among other things, they allow us to download PowerPoint slides, maintain a portable work station, keep neatly typed lecture notes, and stay in touch with friends through social networking sites, texting, and instant messaging. Because activities that provide entertainment for an individual (e.g., movie trailers, party photos, status updates) often prove distracting for others, there is a need to follow basic rules of electronic etiquette in a classroom setting. Whether you are sitting with friends or by yourself, please consider the impact of your electronic activities on those who are attempting to listen to lectures, watch class films, and participate in discussions. **All students are expected to comply with a simple principle: if it might distract someone sitting beside you or near you, don't do it.**

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

Statement on Turnitin:

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