

# TEACHING CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY/ L'ENSEIGNEMENT DE LA POLITIQUE ÉTRANGÈRE CANADIENNE

## INTRODUCTION:

### TEACHING AND LEARNING CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY

CLAIRE TURENNE SJOLANDER

Since the 1990s, interest in accountability in all sectors of society has become more prevalent. In the university sector, this interest provided fertile ground for the annual publishing of the Maclean's magazine's university rankings, the first high profile use of university performance indicators. (OCUFA 2006: 7) Many provincial governments in Canada moved in the same direction, requiring that publicly funded post-secondary institutions provide performance indicators, in some cases in order to tie funding to institutional performance. (OCUFA 2006: 8) Within the context of increased competition (fostered in part by Maclean's as well as by the growing national use of surveys, such as those of student engagement and satisfaction), university administrations naturally became preoccupied with the competitiveness of their individual institutions and the consequent need to provide better service to their clientele. Good teaching, as a contributor to rates of student satisfaction and as a potential predictor of future student employability, thus found itself the focus of renewed attention in Canadian universities. The balance, always difficult to achieve, between the teaching, research, and service responsibilities of academics was, and is, once again being examined.

Within this context, members of the editorial board of this journal thought it worthwhile to encourage reflection on the practice of teaching in Canadian foreign policy in our post-secondary institutions. While accountability and performance indicators might have defined the institutional context framing the editorial board discussions, our concerns were at once far broader and more fundamental. What and how were we teaching Canadian foreign policy, and to what effect? Co-sponsored by Canadian Foreign Policy / La politique étrangère du Canada and the Canadian region of the International Studies Association, a roundtable on teaching Canadian foreign policy was organized for the annual meeting of the ISA held in Chicago in February 2007. Participants included academics teaching Canadian foreign policy at both Canadian universities and at universities abroad. The revised contributions to this roundtable are published in the following pages, and provide a rich evaluation of the state of teaching and learning in the field.

Canadian foreign policy is – perhaps surprisingly to some – not only taught in Canadian universities. Two of the articles in this section on teaching and learning examine the challenges and rewards of teaching about Canada and Canadian foreign policy from abroad. Douglas Nord reflects on his experience of teaching Canadian foreign policy at different universities in the United States, while Duncan Wood discusses the strategies he has developed while teaching Canadian studies courses, and Canadian foreign policy, in Mexico. Both articles underscore the importance of

studying Canadian foreign policy in a comparative perspective, reflecting on differences and similarities between Canada and its NAFTA partners in order to make the study of Canada relevant to foreign students.

The remaining articles in this section start from the experience of teaching Canadian foreign policy in Canadian universities. Claire Turenne Sjolander examines Canadian foreign policy course outlines taught at different universities across the country. Viewing the teaching of foreign policy as a part of the process of citizenship or identity construction, she finds that the differences between the issues we cover in Canadian foreign policy courses across the country depends in large part on the language in which these courses are taught. Heather Smith reflects upon the content of her Canadian foreign policy course, and the way in which that content supports specific pedagogical objectives. Her article poses the questions of whether – and how – teaching Canadian foreign policy might be different when the course is offered in a more remote city (Prince George, British Columbia), rather than in one of the centres of political decision-making in Canada. For her part, Rebecca Tiessen looks at what Canada's Youth and Study Abroad programs contribute to the teaching of Canadian foreign policy, particularly with respect to the relationships between Canada and the developing world. These study/volunteer abroad programs are an element of Canadian foreign policy in action, and she questions what these experiences abroad teach participating students about Canada in the world. Together, these pieces provide a fascinating picture of the teaching of Canadian foreign policy. It is our hope that they will stimulate reflection on our teaching far beyond the quantifiable performance indicators that the current context might impose.

## REFERENCES

OCUFA (2006). "Performance Indicator Use in Canada, the U.S. and Abroad." Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, Research Paper, May.  
<<http://www.ocufa.on.ca/research/> > (August 20, 2007).

---