

DEPARTMENT:	School of Sociological and Anthropological Studies
TERM	<input type="checkbox"/> FALL 2022 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WINTER 2023
PROFESSOR:	Scott Simon
RESEARCH TITLE:	Partners in Democracy: Parliamentary Imaginings of Canada-Taiwan Relations
NUMBER OF STUDENTS:	4
LANGUAGE:	English or French
ASSIGNMENTS CAN BE SUBMITTED IN FRENCH	X YES

RESEARCH DESCRIPTION:

Sociologist Raymond Aron (2004) made an important break-through in a sociology of international relations by showing how they are relations between people and groups of people (including nations), all with their own social and cultural background. Building up on an anthropology of the state (Abélès 1990), this project will explore how Ottawa makes policy about Canada-Taiwan relations. How do, and how have, Canadian parliamentarians and policy-makers imagined Taiwan as a partner in Canada's international relations? What regional, linguistic, and party differences are there? What does Taiwan represent to different people (e.g. we could hypothesize that it is simultaneously a multicultural and progressive democracy (for the NDP and Liberals), a common front against Communism (Conservatives), or similar case of a people with rights to self-determination and in need of international solidarity (Bloc)?

This topic is of increasing relevance, even urgency, now because of the increased tensions in the Taiwan Strait, Canada's struggle to define its place in the Indo-Pacific, and even pending legislative discussions in Ottawa on a possible Taiwan Affairs Act. The study of strategies in which unrecognized states and contested sovereignties seek a place in the world (e.g., Bryant 2021, Bouris and Fernandez-Molina 2018) provide new insights into global politics. A study of Canada's parliamentary foreign policy, as Jeremy Wildeman did for Canada-Palestine relations (Wildeman 2021) will reveal much about both Canada and the search of marginalized states for fuller recognition. Taiwan is a fascinating, but under-researched case study.

KEY LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

Students will be asked to 1) collect and examine the discourse of Canada-Taiwan relations now, as evidenced in Parliamentary discussions and debates on-line, events of the Canada-Taiwan Parliamentary Friendship Group (Hulmes 2011), as well as media and think tank coverage of Taiwan; 2) examine how different "strategic groups" (Oliver de Sardan 2020: 81) emerge, as interests in and representations of Taiwan (like everything else) will tend to coalesce around social groups, and not by hazard. This means not just reading what members of Parliament say in debates or at question hour, but looking into their background; 3) take into consideration the historical evolution of these ideas and representations as can be studied in Hansard (Parliamentary minutes), writings and memoirs of foreign ministers, and archival materials from Global Affairs and the Privy Council (mostly available at Library

and Archives Canada, and much on-line) from 1945 to the present. We will take a look at the plans that Lester Pearson drafted for peace in the Taiwan Strait; but also examine carefully how Lloyd Axworthy, trained in anthropology, used this disciplinary grounding to create his theory of “human security,” putting human needs over the exigencies of states and ideologies. We will examine this in the context of Taiwan’s para-diplomatic relations with Canada, as did anthropologist Anne-Christine Trémon (2009) in her study of Taiwan’s relations in French Polynesia. We will surely find a uniquely Canadian perspective(s), although we should be aware of the influence of the United States (Sheridan 2016, 2021).

In the first two weeks, students will read some and discuss some new theoretical on socio-anthropology of the state. We will then divide up the work between us, depending on their interests. In addition to studying the current Parliament, they could, for example, look at the evolution of different party positions or examine certain historical periods more closely. We will meet and discuss our progress weekly. We will also discuss how socio-anthropological perspectives (e.g. Aron 2004, Geertz 2004) differ or converge from those of political science. Students will assist with the research and with planning for the writing of an academic article to be submitted to *Canadian Foreign Policy*.