

# C anada under Study

Canada is emerging as an increasingly popular focus for academic study around the world. Co-ordinated by an international council, courses, research and publications on all aspects of Canada have multiplied in the last decade, providing new insights into topics as diverse as the Canadian short story, Canada's peaceable nature and national economic development.

Imaginative and original literary works by Canadian authors such as Atwood, Munro, Davies, Maillet, Miron, Laurence and Hébert are acting as a magnet for foreign academics. Studies are examining the unusually powerful creative force of female writers in Canadian literature, as well as noted Canadian literary critic Northrop Frye's influence on the country's writers. Others focus on the unique short stories of Alice Munro, which are developing and expanding the short story form itself.

The successful Canadian experience with bilingualism and multiculturalism also fascinates academics around the world. Both China and Spain are studying Canadian methods of promoting linguistic and cultural distinctiveness while preserving national unity. Canada's official bilingualism policies are of interest to Arab countries like Algeria and Egypt. And Chinese educators have studied and adopted second-language training methods developed by Canada.

In the study of politics, Brazilian and Indian academics are focusing on the practicalities of the Canadian adaptation of the British parliamentary system to a highly decentralized federal state.

Economists have traced Canada's development from a staples-based economy to the world's seventh-largest industrial nation with a record of solid scientific and technological achievements. The Canadian model of encouraging foreign investment while retaining domestic political and economic control remains a focal point of study for countries such as Australia and Argentina which face similar challenges.

Sociologists are intrigued by Canada's peaceable nature. It is a society noted for its tolerance, where diverse linguistic, cultural and racial groups live together peacefully. The country's low crime rate and its governing tradition, which is non-confrontational and compromise-oriented, form the subjects of such research.

Korean anthropologists examining Canada's ancestral indigenous roots have noted similar bone structure between Koreans and Canada's west coast Indians. German and British studies focus on the traditional aboriginal culture and way of life, while the distinct languages of Canada's northern indigenous peoples are studied by linguists in many countries.

Environmentalists are also actively studying Canada for many reasons. Canada's environmental policy, land-management strategies, and pollution legislation are all drawing the attention of numerous academics.

This range of international activity is co-ordinated by the International Council for Canadian Studies (ICSS) headquartered in Ottawa. Founded in 1981, its membership includes Canada, the United States, Britain, France, Japan, Italy, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, the Nordic countries, China, the Netherlands, Israel and India.

Academic interest in Canada is not restricted simply to those countries belonging to the ICSS. Centres and professors of Canadian studies can be found as far afield as Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand, and the University of Tenerife in the Canary Islands. And programs such as the Commonwealth Scholarship Program are also promoting Canadian studies.

Canada is now frequently used as a model society by and for others. In 1980, Dr. Richard Preston, a pioneer of Canadian studies in the United States, suggested: "Learning more about Canada could be a first American step to really understanding the kaleidoscope that makes up a world that is not all cast in the American image."

Similarly, in a recent issue of *Saturday Night*, a major Canadian monthly magazine, Dr. Rainer-Olaf Schultze, founding president of the Association for Canadian Studies in German-speaking Countries, argued:

"Europeans should be seeking more pluralistic, less universalistic answers to their situation than those suggested by the American experience. In this regard, Canada, not the U.S., is a more useful model for us."



Interest in Canadian studies is burgeoning in countries around the world.