

PoliSci 100: Assimilation made easy

by Marg Bezanson and Jim Tesoriere

This is the second in a continuing series of analysis of the first year courses offered at Dalhousie.

This week we feature Political Science 100, Section 1 under the guiding hand of Professor J. M. Beck.

With an enrollment of approximately 200 students, this class can be called overcrowded. But Beck does not entirely agree. He told the GAZETTE that once a class surpassed fifty members the final figure was unimportant; although he did state that he felt in courses above the 100 level a smaller class was essential.

Beck's opinion of 100 level courses is further emphasized by his classroom method. This consists of endless repetitions of facts, enabling his students to diligently scribe down these vital pieces of information.

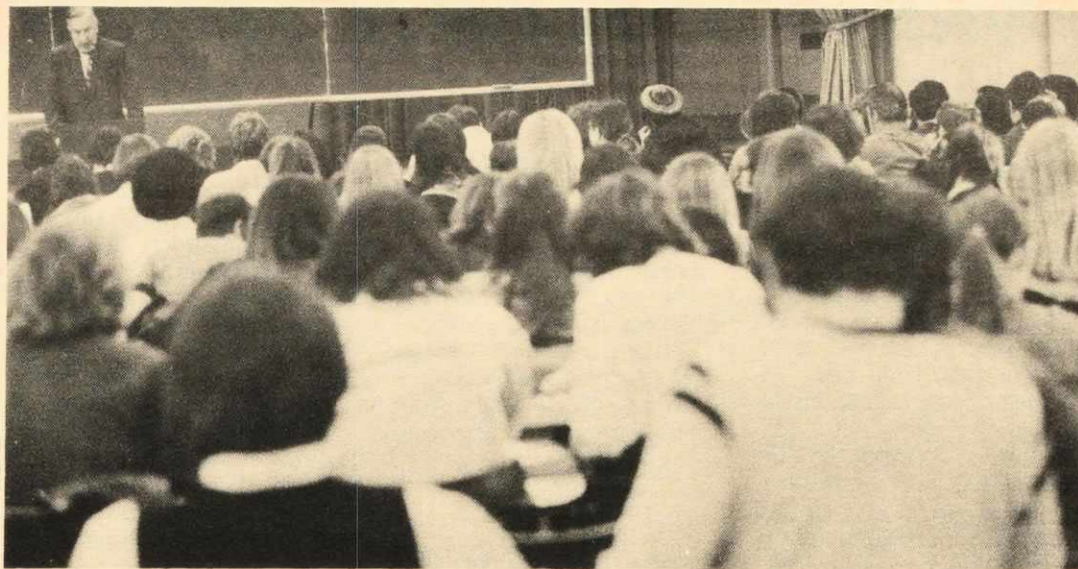
Though during the interview, he emphasized his desire to cultivate individual thought, this classroom method persists, indicating to the students that duplication of these ideas on an exam would warrant a reasonable mark.

A new format, including completely different text books is being implemented this year. This is a long needed change and hopefully an improvement over the past when the same material was used year after year. This extended to the notes given in class.

However, the present lectures consist almost entirely of material taken directly from the texts.

Attending classes therefore seems useless.

It is most unusual that Beck feels it unnecessary to include in his format tutorials that would generate student discussion, and thereby development of individual



(jack novack/ dal)

Always room for one more.

ideas. He defends his position by stating there are limited resources for payment of assistant professors to lead these tutorials.

The prime purpose of 100 level

courses was the assimilation of facts, he asserted. The assignment of term essays should be sufficient to facilitate individual student expression, Beck added.

Remember that these students, like those in Sociology 100, are paying \$139.50 to attend this class. Is their money well spent?

PhD's not necessarily needed — Dean

Rumours are flying around the university that the teaching staff must be actively working on PhD's or have one before their contracts will be renewed. These were recently denied by

Guy MacLean, Dean of Arts and Science.

"No person will be recommended for non-renewal because they are not actively pursuing a PhD or don't have one," he said. Departments are expected to make recommendations based on competence. Everything is tentative so far, he added.

A "wholesale housecleaning" is not anticipated, according to MacLean.

Teaching staff will be retained on special conditions. If they expect to qualify for tenure here, they will normally need a PhD. Contracts, however, can be constantly renewed. If someone wants to advance in the department though, they should have their PhD.

The tenure committee, composed of elected faculty members, review departmental recommendations for tenure. These are transmitted to the Dean of Arts and Science and then to the President.

The committee is clearly leaning toward the PhD standard as a very easy qualification to obtain tenure, according to MacLean. They

think it is important, but do not exclude non-PhD's, he added.

"This PhD requirement is kind of an amateur's view of Dal," he said. "We're more subtle and sophisticated here. But it's always in relation to specific cases."

"I don't even think you need to go to university to be a scholar," the Dean added. In fact one Dal professor has no degree at all.

Career professors should actively better their education, in MacLean's view. Research and publication are two

methods. Another is doing what one professor has done — attempting to make first year classes as good as possible.

A career professor should also be a good teacher, MacLean added. A student survey of professors' teaching abilities is one way to ascertain this, he said. The Dean attempted to do a student survey of this type two years ago, but the Faculty Council turned it down.

"In these matters, I'm a servant of the faculty," he said. He does hope that departments

are sampling student opinion before making their recommendations about staff members.

"All I can do is attempt to see that the departments hire good people, and don't fire good people or keep on bad ones."

According to MacLean, Dal wants to stay in the top ten Canadian universities. To accomplish this, they must have the best teachers and the best students, he said.

Recommendations about contract renewal are expected this month.



G. R. MacLean — Dean of Arts and Science.

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