

**SDF-Net**  
**Department of Political Science, McMaster University**  
**Centre for International and Security Studies, York University**

***A Canadian (Critical) Security Studies?***

16 April 2010  
Gilmour Hall 111  
McMaster University

**Agenda**

Over the past few years, scholars across Canada have begun to discuss whether it makes sense to speak of a distinctively Canadian approach to the study of security and defence. Is there indeed a Canadian corollary to the CASE collective, the Copenhagen school, or the Welsh school? Whether one speaks of a ‘Canadian School’, a ‘Crimson School’, or simply ‘Canadian (Critical) Security Studies’, some contributors have argued that the demarcation of a specifically ‘Canadian’ approach would help to draw positive attention to a relatively coherent set of ideas shared by a growing community. For them, there is indeed something special about the work and ideas that have been shared amongst Canadian scholars – and this deserves recognition and greater consideration by peers around the world. Others have contended that trying to pin down a coherent school of thought is not an especially helpful or productive exercise. The ongoing conversation has led to interesting questions about the general significance of defined scholarly communities, the importance of disciplinary recognition, and the pressures of the academy in the contemporary Canadian context.

**10:15-10:30 Welcome and Introduction**

**10:30-12:00 Session I: Canadian?**

A part of the challenge in identifying a distinctively Canadian approach to the study of security and defence is that one must find a common thread that links and distinguishes a group of scholars and their work. What might be seen to link a distinct community of scholarship? Is it a theoretical lens or commitment? An ethico-political stance? An emphasis on particular substantive issue areas in global politics? Similar reading lists? Further, there is room for discussion about the degree to which such an emergent school of thought is exclusive to Canadian scholars, whether it is inclusive of an adequately broad spectrum of Canadian scholars, and whether it is somehow linked to familiar tropes or themes of Canadian-ness.

- Jessica Foran, McMaster University
- Caitlin Craven, McMaster University

**12:00-1:00 Lunch**

**1:00-2:30 Session II: Security?**

The scholarly understanding of the term ‘security’ has shifted enough times over the years to reinforce the oft-repeated claim that it is an “essentially contested concept”. The attempt to identify a distinctively Canadian approach to the study of security therefore raises important questions about the scope and limits of security studies. A further question is worth consideration: if there is a distinctly Canadian approach to the study of world politics, is it limited to the domain of ‘security’? Or is there reason to broaden, adjust or switch the focus of our lens?

- Chris Hendershot, York University

**2:30-2:45 Break**

**2:45-4:15 Session III: Critical?**

Part of the ongoing discussion about a Canadian perspective has centred on the question of what exactly it means to participate in ‘critical’ scholarship. For some, it remains to be seen whether criticality is indeed a defining component of a Canadian approach – and even if so, they question what sense of the term ‘critical’ applies in this instance. Others have wondered whether it might be more appropriate to speak in terms of ‘radical’ approaches that carry our theoretical discussions forward in new directions. What sorts of sensibilities and engagements are (or ought to be) characteristic of ‘Canadian’ scholarship on security?

- Jennifer Mustapha-Vanderkooy, McMaster University
- Liam Stockdale, McMaster University