



Daniel Béland

## Social Policy Responses to the Great Depression in the United States and Canada: Historical Institutionalism and Transnational Influence

Wednesday, November 13th 2024, 16:00 c.t. Room 124,  
Institut für Politikwissenschaft or Online via Zoom 930 8975 0663  
(Meeting ID), 142311 (Passcode)

This lecture explores the politics of social policy expansion during the Great Depression in the United States and Canada through an analytical lens that combines the insights of historical institutionalism and the analysis of transnational processes. Empirically, the paper compares these politics in two discrete social policy areas: old-age pensions and unemployment insurance. The puzzle tackled is the following: why did the U.S. federal government create new programs in these areas during the 1930s while Canada did not; and, simultaneously, how did these U.S. policy developments influence Canada during and beyond that decade alongside other transnational trends and processes? As argued, the distinct timing and pace of reform and the role of courts explain why Canada did not implement major public pension and unemployment programs during the Great Depression. This contrasts with the U.S., where the advent of the New Deal led to the creation of a federal pension program and a decentralized system of unemployment insurance. Over time, these policy innovations impacted welfare state development in Canada through transnational influence.

Daniel Béland is a political sociologist, currently Director of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada and James McGill Professor in the Department of Political Science at McGill University.

*The lecture will be held in English .*