

## ***Guides, Guardrails, and Good Behaviour: Canada's Liberal Democratic System***

Liberal democratic systems are arguably the best in the world for preserving political freedom, equality of political rights, and promoting political participation. They tend to have strong institutions, the trust of citizens, and leaders who act in good faith. If they are ever to be toppled, it would be in some violent uprising or coup d'état, right? Not so anymore. Democratic systems, even liberal democratic systems, can be fragile. Without respected guides, strong guardrails, and good behaviour, their foundations can be slowly eroded and, steadily over time, they morph into something else altogether - generally not for the better. This lecture will provide an overview of liberal democracy in Canada and identify areas where we need to be vigilant to ensure our political system remains robust.

**Dr. Anna Lennox Esselment** (Ph.D. Western University) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Waterloo and Associate Dean of Graduate Studies in the Faculty of Arts. Her broad areas of research include political parties, campaigns and elections, political marketing, and Canadian institutions. Anna's commentary has been featured in national and local news, both on television and in print. She's also managed to be a guest on *The Agenda* with Steve Paikin several times (making her parents very proud). When not teaching, researching, or administering, Anna enjoys time at home raising three children (technically two now that one is at university?) with her husband, and walking her two big dogs (a Newf, and a Newf-Shepherd). Needless to say, Anna and her family are not house proud.

Suggested readings for those interested in learning more:

*How Democracies Die* (2018) by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt

*Whipped: Party Discipline in Canada* (2020) by Alex Marland

*The Motivation to Vote: Explaining Electoral Participation* (2020) By André Blais and Jean-François Daoust).

*Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit and Authoritarian Populism* (2019) by Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart

*Democracy in Canada: The Disintegration of Our Institutions* (2019) by Donald Savoie



