

PLACE AND POWER

YEAR IN REVIEW

— Highlights and Lessons from the 2024 Academic Year

Faculty of Arts, UBC
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Letter from the co-chairs

Dear colleagues,

Since last September, all incoming BA students at UBC Vancouver are required to complete at least three credits of designated Place and Power courses. The successful launch of the P&P requirement is the result of years of careful planning, consultation, staff support, and hard work from instructors and departments across the Faculty of Arts. Together, the P&P community has explored and piloted diverse ways to orient our teaching and learning towards the histories, relationships, and communities that have formed this place: our campus, our city, and our province. If you are new to P&P or would like to learn more about this initiative, we encourage you to visit our new website. There, you will find an annual report that summarizes what we accomplished this past year as well as information about best practices for P&P based on conversations with the P&P community.

For the upcoming academic year, we will be implementing a streamlined course approval process that focuses on receiving Expressions of Interest (EOIs) in the fall term. Accordingly, we will be accepting EOIs for small-to-medium sized courses until October 15th, 2025. Based on the EOIs we receive, we will be inviting faculty to submit full proposals in the second term with the aim of having courses approved in time for Fall 2026. For instructors who have already submitted Expressions of Interest and/or are at the full proposal stage, we will continue to work with you on an ad hoc basis to complete the course review process. We encourage interested instructors and departments to reach out to us as early as possible if they have any questions about the course approval process or P&P more generally.

We understand that we are currently in a time of institutional uncertainty as units face significant budgetary pressures that have wide ranging impacts on course enrolments and delivery. As with previous years, the Co-ordinating Committee (CC) continues to prioritize small-to-medium sized courses, with the understanding that class sizes vary by department and discipline. We continue to find that smaller sized classes are the most conducive to developing students' capacity to engage in productive conversations about potentially contentious and difficult subjects while providing instructors the space to hold space for discomfort and safety during the learning process. For similar reasons, the P&P Co-ordinating Committee continues to prioritize courses directly taught by experienced instructors. At the same time, the CC is cautiously expanding the scope of P&P courses without compromising the basic values of the requirement. For example, the CC has approved course proposals where TAs act solely as graders or where experienced graduate instructors are closely mentored by a senior faculty member. We would welcome exploratory conversations with instructors or departments to discuss these questions and explore possible areas of innovation.

Over the past year, we repeatedly heard from members of the P&P community about how current events and crises in Canada and elsewhere in the world are impacting their classrooms and their lives. As a key priority in the Faculty of Arts, P&P represents a faculty-wide commitment to our stated values of decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation. As we look ahead to the new academic year, we want to express our gratitude to the many people across the Faculty of Arts who have made the launch of P&P possible. We look forward to working with many of you in the months to come.

With best wishes for the fall term,
Juanita Sundberg and Chris Lee
Co-chairs, Place and Power Coordinating Committee

Proposing a Place and Power course: What we've learned

The Coordinating Committee (CC) strongly believes that effective teaching in P&P takes place within a supportive, cross-faculty community committed to fostering instructors' professional growth and well-being. Accordingly, the course review process is instructor-centered and anchored in the values of **collegiality** and **collaboration**. Recognizing that academic review processes can create uncertainty and even anxiety, the committee approaches each proposal by, first and foremost, respecting the instructor's experience, expertise, and pedagogical objectives. Even when the review process does not result in a course designation, we hope that instructors will find the process useful for their professional development. The review process begins with an Expression of Interest, which initiates an extended conversation with the CC to explore how/if a proposed course aligns with the criteria and objectives of P&P. The CC might also ask how the course will be supported by its home department or unit; we also want to be sensitive to how teaching in P&P could affect an instructor's workload and other professional obligations.

Instructors who are invited to submit a full course proposal can expect a respectful and serious review process involving at least three members of the CC. Reviewers act as a "test audience" for a proposal. They are invited to offer detailed responses, suggestions, and questions in the spirit of constructive collaboration. While this feedback is occasionally critical, the main goal is to give a holistic, realistic assessment of each proposal while suggesting implementable changes. For example, reviewers might suggest additional readings or resources, ask questions about how material is presented, or explore how assignments can better align with P&P criteria. In light of the diverse background and experiences that students bring into a P&P classroom, the CC is especially mindful of how courses foster a respectful classroom climate that is conducive to potentially sensitive conversations. In some cases, the CC will reach out to instructors to set up a meeting to review feedback, explore possible responses, and determine next steps. For courses that need more development, instructors might be invited to work more closely with colleagues on the CC or be referred to relevant resources available through CTLT and other units. In cases where courses do not receive designation, instructors are invited to stay in touch with the CC about other courses they might want to teach for P&P.

Our commitment to collegiality and collaboration continues even after the review process formally concludes with a final decision on P&P designation. The CC, in collaboration with CTLT-II, organizes events throughout the academic year to share resources and build a stronger sense of community among P&P instructors, with our welcome back lunch on September 23, 2025 (please contact us if you would like more information on this event). The CC keeps in touch with every P&P instructor to ensure that course registration information is updated regularly, and to discuss any concerns or questions related that arise from their teaching.



P&P course offerings and newly approved courses

As of August 2025, there are 33 courses from 18 programs on the Place and Power Approved Courses List. Over the past year, the CC added six new courses to the list with several others still in the full proposal review stage. The new courses added this past year are listed below:

- AMNE 384: Reading the Bible on Indigenous Lands
- ACAM 100: Introduction to Asian Canadian Studies
- CAP 101-E02: Introduction to Reading and Research in Literary, Cultural, and Media Studies
- CENS 104: Canadian Monuments to Central and Eastern European History
- ENGL 376: Place, Power, Poetics and Narrative Discourse
- HIST 201: History Through Photographs

In addition to those approved courses above, the CC is currently reviewing Expressions of Interest and Full Proposals received from the following departments: Theatre, Latin American Studies, Creative Writing, History, English, Psychology, Romance Studies

A full list of the approved courses can be found [here](#).

Enrollments and P&P seats

In 2024/25, the Faculty of Arts had 1561 seats available in P&P approved courses and in 2025/26, we are predicting 1780 P&P approved seats available. By the 2026/27 we will need an estimated 2800 available seats to ensure we are on track to graduating our first cohort by 2028. This coming year the P&P committee will be actively strategizing about how to balance enrollment needs with approved seats.

Strengthening Institutional Infrastructure for P&P Instructors: Input from current instructors

Over the last academic year, we interviewed current instructors to better understand what was working well and where challenges remained in terms of teaching and preparing for P&P courses. The following summarizes key insights and takeaways from these conversations.

1. Strengthening the Instructor Network

A recurring theme across interviews was the desire for connection among instructors teaching P&P courses. Because these courses are offered across a wide range of departments, many instructors have few, if any, opportunities to engage with colleagues in other units doing similar work. The lack of connection limits the potential for shared reflection, the exchange of strategies, and a sense of participating in a broader initiative. Those we spoke with highlighted a need for intentional efforts to build a stronger network. Suggestions included informal gatherings, peer dialogue groups, and resource-sharing spaces that could help surface cross-disciplinary insights and make the work of P&P feel more connected and collective.

Actions taken to address this feedback: P&P organized an end of term lunch in April 2025 to bring instructors together and foster connections. Over 30 instructors attended this event, and feedback was very positive. Moving forward, P&P will host a welcome back lunch and an end of year lunch so that P&P instructors have a chance to be recognized by senior leadership and to network with one another.

2. Targeted Instructional Support Through TA Integration

Instructors emphasized that P&P courses often demand additional pedagogical care due to the sensitive and sometimes challenging material they engage with. Given these complexities, many welcomed additional instructional support. While teaching assistants (TAs) could be part of this support, the content of P&P courses often involves material that may be unfamiliar to many TAs (especially students unfamiliar with the BC context) and, as a consequence, they may not have the knowledge or experience needed to navigate sensitive and nuanced topics. Instructors voiced a desire for *guidance from P&P leadership on how to approach instructional support in collaboration with departments*. This might include TA responsibilities with limited student interaction (i.e. marking only), clear boundaries around content facilitation, and suggestions for how TAs could contribute to classroom climate, logistics, or student reflection—*without being placed in roles they may not be equipped to manage*.

Actions taken to address this feedback: P&P leadership has chosen “TA integration” as one of its strategic priorities for this upcoming year, with a goal of having TA related structure and supports in place by 2026/27.

3. Collaborating with Departmental Leadership to Embed P&P Priorities

Instructors highlighted the importance of stronger relationships between P&P leadership and their departmental or program infrastructure (e.g., undergraduate chairs, heads, and directors). While instructors are often the primary carriers of P&P values, they shouldn’t be the only ones navigating the pedagogical and structural complexities involved in teaching these courses. Undergraduate chairs and departmental leaders play a critical key role in supporting instructors, especially in managing pressures around enrollment caps, classroom climate, and departmental expectations. Interviewees expressed a desire for P&P leadership to work more closely with departmental leaders so that the initiative’s values and needs are more fully integrated into departmental decision-making. Building these relationships could help ensure that instructors don’t feel they’re advocating for P&P priorities alone and could create more sustainable, informed, and aligned support structures at the departmental level.

Actions taken to address this feedback: In Spring 2025, P&P began engaging directly with Undergraduate Chairs and will continue these meetings on a semi-annual basis to ensure this group is informed of P&P priorities and has open lines of communication with P&P leadership. In addition, P&P will liaise with Heads and Directors through the Associate Dean, Academic, to provide up-to-date information on reporting requirements, governance processes, course proposal deadlines, and instructor resources.

4. A Centralized Website for Instructor Resources

Instructors identified the need for a centralized, well-organized website that offers clear, accessible support for those teaching P&P courses. Many interviewees called for a web-based hub featuring practical tools and reference points. Ideas include a password-protected collection of P&P-designated syllabi and sample assignments; a “starter kit” highlighting high-quality, accessible resources of relevance to P&P courses (i.e. campus-specific archives); and an infographic mapping out the network of supports available to instructors such as departmental contacts, policies, relevant campus services, and P&P deadlines and events. Such a site would lower barriers for new instructors, provide quick reference points for returning ones, and reinforce the broader values and priorities of the initiative.

Actions taken to address this feedback: In the early Winter of 2025, P&P began working with Arts Communications to develop a public facing website with instructor tools being featured. It is on track to be launched by September 2025.

5. Workload issues

Our interviews with instructors shed light on the additional preparation and emotional labor required when teaching P&P courses. Given their attention to power relations, contestations over place, and learning on unceded Indigenous land, P&P courses potentially address contentious and difficult subjects. Hence, instructors need to hold space for discomfort and safety while developing students' capacity to engage in dialogue. Furthermore, the P&P requirement means students enrolled in a designated P&P course may be unfamiliar with or even averse to course content and dynamics. Instructors have shared concerns about workload management.

Actions taken to address this feedback: We have discussed these concerns with Associate deans and are developing strategies to address them. This coming academic year, we plan to discuss these concerns with the Undergraduate Chair Committee and Heads & Directors. We have built these considerations into the course review process. And, we have drafted guiding principles for administering P&P courses (see below).

Insights from the administration of P&P

Over the first year of implementing P&P, several key insights have emerged around administering courses. Two situations came to our attention and, although neither was directly related to the P&P initiative, both highlighted the need for additional care in administering P&P courses. In both cases, the originally approved P&P instructors were no longer available to teach, requiring departments to find replacements. In one instance, a PhD student with limited instructional experience was assigned to teach the course. After a conversation with P&P co-leads, the host department chose to temporarily delist the course from the approved P&P offerings. In the other case, a sessional instructor was assigned to teach the course. During the semester, several critical incidents occurred, which required active intervention from several units. While these incidents are always difficult to manage, the sessional instructor's precarious position and heavy teaching load may have adversely affected their capacity to manage emergent conflicts. In addition to these cases, instructors across departments have noted that enrollments in their P&P courses have increased significantly, which adds to the intensity and complexity of their teaching experiences. Together, these examples point to the need for departmental leadership to be attentive to and aware of the pedagogical and emotional labor involved in teaching P&P courses and exercise additional care and discernment when making course assignments. We offer the following five principles to help departments make thoughtful, sustainable, and values-aligned decisions in relation to P&P courses.

Guiding Principles for P&P Instructor Teaching Assignments and Workload

Administering Place & Power courses requires careful consideration to ensure that the instructional environment reflects the initiative's commitments to inclusion, reflexivity, and groundedness in place. Attention to these principles will help prevent problems from arising. The following principles can support department leadership in making thoughtful, sustainable, and values-aligned decisions regarding P&P instructors:

- **Support from Heads and Balanced Workload:** Instructors teaching P&P courses should have the clear backing of their unit Head or Director. This support involves open dialogue with instructors about what they need to feel equipped and supported (e.g. room selection, enrollment cap, term assignment) as well as ensuring their overall teaching load is manageable. Departmental leadership should consider if and how course enrollment aligns with the

pedagogical values and practices required to teach P&P. Given the additional demands of P&P courses, department Heads or Directors should balance workload assignments by considering P&P instructors' preferences and needs when making other teaching assignments.

- **Alignment with Pedagogical Values:** Pedagogical practices best aligned with P&P attend to instructor positionality, reflective teaching practices, and strategies that center care, responsibility, and collaborative learning. Instructors best suited for P&P courses are those whose courses already address topics such as Indigenous lands, the lived experiences of marginalized peoples, and the complexity of ongoing power relations.
- **Mindfulness of Equity in Instructor Assignment:** Departments should take care not to disproportionately assign P&P courses to junior faculty, women, queer, or faculty of color. While many faculty in equity-related fields have strong pedagogical grounding for P&P, department leadership should work to avoid overburdening these colleagues and instead encourage participation from across the unit, especially senior faculty who are well-aligned and adequately resourced.
- **Open Communication:** Strong communication between P&P leadership, instructors, and departmental leadership is essential. Early conversations about expectations, resources, and challenges can help align everyone's efforts and avoid surprises.
- **Tangible Supports and Incentives:** Where possible, departments should consider offering meaningful supports—such as TA assistance, course buyouts, or access to peer consultation—to help instructors meet the unique demands of P&P courses.

Priorities for the 2025-2026 Academic Year

Looking ahead, our priorities for the next academic year will focus on deepening the supports and structures needed to make P&P courses sustainable and effective. First, we will develop more guidance on how departments can thoughtfully integrate TAs into the broader P&P ecosystem. While TAs should not be responsible for facilitating sensitive P&P content, they can play a valuable role in marking or supporting logistical aspects of the course. In addition, we are interested in exploring alternative TA assignment models—for example, assigning TAs to support an instructor's other courses—so that their overall workload is more manageable when teaching a P&P course. This broader approach to TA support recognizes the cumulative demands on instructors and seeks to make teaching P&P courses more viable across different teaching contexts.

Building on this, we will continue working with departments to better ensure that P&P courses remain manageable for instructors. This includes considerations such as managing student enrollment numbers and scheduling teaching assignments to avoid assigning more than one P&P course per instructor per term.

Finally, we aim to expand the P&P course roster by working with departments to identify instructors and courses that already resonate with P&P goals and may require minor, if any, revisions to be included on the approved course list. By supporting both new and experienced instructors—and attending to the departmental contexts that shape their teaching—we hope to grow a strong, sustainable, and well-integrated network of P&P offerings across the Faculty.

Thank you to our Coordinating Committee

Place and Power is collectively managed by the P&P Coordinating Committee, whose combined expertise, strategic insights, and commitment to our goals have been instrumental in advancing this new initiative. The Committee's careful deliberation, sustained engagement, and collaborative spirit have strengthened the initiative as a whole, ensuring its continued relevance and impact. We extend our deep appreciation to each member for their dedication and service, without which this year's progress would not have been possible.

Leadership team, 2024

- Chris Lee (ENGL)
- PJ Rayner (Dean's Office)
- Juanita Sundberg (GEOG)

Core members, 2024

- Dennis Britton (ENGL)
- Miranda Burgess (ENGL)
- Camille Georgeson-Usher (AHVA)
- Karlene Harvey (AISA)
- Laura Ishiguro (HIST)
- Janelle Kaperski (CTLT)
- Nathan Lauster (SOCI)
- Janey Lew (CTLT)
- Renisa Mawani (SOCI)
- Leslie Robertson (ANTH)
- Dylan Robinson (MUSC)
- Coll Thrush (HIST)
- Ayaka Yoshimizu (AISA)
- Henry Yu (HIST)

The committee's Terms of Reference can be found [here](#).