

Our Post Meeting Talk

Dennis Pilon

Introduced by Fred Fletcher



Dennis Pilon, the author of the widely-praised *Wrestling with Democracy* (2013), is Associate Professor of Political Science at York University and Director of Undergraduate Studies. After completing degrees in Sociology and History at Simon Fraser University, he received his PhD in Political Science from York and was awarded the university-wide dissertation prize. James Tully, Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the University of Victoria, described *Wrestling with Democracy* as “a remarkable achievement that casts the historical struggles over voting systems in a new light and changes the way we study democratic participation.”

Dr. Pilon’s published work has focused primarily on issues of democratization and democratic reform but he also has a broad understanding of federal and provincial politics in Canada and the working of democratic systems in western countries. He has published extensively on these subjects in a wide range of journals and has prepared reports for the Law Commission of Canada, the Centre for Social Justice, and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. In 2007 he published *The Politics of Voting: Reforming Canada’s Electoral System*, in 2009 co-edited (with Michael Howlett and Tracy Summerville) *British Columbia Politics and Government*, and in 2013 published *Wrestling with Democracy: Voting Systems as Politics in the Twentieth Century West*.

Professor Pilon is a frequent public speaker and media commentator, mostly on topics related to elections, political parties and current affairs. He is a member of the National Advisory Board of Fair Vote Canada, a citizens’

group focused on gaining more proportional methods of voting for Canadian elections, and of the editorial board of *Canadian Dimension* magazine. He has also acted as a consultant on election issues for various legal firms, political parties, trade unions, community groups, and the Auditor General of Canada.

The Talk: *‘The kids are alright’: Why the media and political science are getting youth politics wrong”.*

The media is regularly peppered with concern about young people and politics. Political scientists regularly blame young people for declining voter turnout in elections. It is claimed that today’s youth are either callow self-indulgent post-adolescents, too pampered to take life seriously. Or some claim that everything is fine and youth are just expressing themselves politically in new and novel ways. Both views are wrong, and wrong in politically damaging ways. This talk will set out different framework for understanding youth politics and the decline of youth political participation, one that makes sense of the economic and social factors influencing what is happening with them. It will also offer some concrete proposals to redress this state of affairs.