

# Political Science 224: Canada in Comparative Perspective

TA: Milan Ilnyckyj (milan.ilnyckyj@mail.utoronto.ca)

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**Office hours:** Wednesdays 10am–11am (location to be agreed upon in advance by email)

I check my email once daily, Monday to Friday

## **Abstract**

This document explains how my tutorials will operate and how students will be graded for tutorial participation



# IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

This message brought to you by every instructor that ever lived.

WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

Figure 1: If you have a question, please check whether the answer is in the syllabus or in this document before emailing me or Dr. Rheault.

**Read it once, read it twice, it's: [the syllabus](#).**

Students are expected to attend lectures and tutorials, complete all readings and assignments, and be able to participate in the debates and exam preparation sessions in an intelligent and respectful manner. Your class participation grade will be based on your attendance and the quality of your contributions to classroom debates and discussion.

## Contents

1	<b>Land recognition</b>	3
2	<b>Grading</b>	3
3	<b>Reading Summary Club</b>	5
4	<b>Name cards</b>	5
5	<b>Debates</b>	6
6	<b>Computers</b>	6

<b>7 Amendment</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8 Plagiarism</b>	<b>8</b>

## **1 Land recognition**

I acknowledge that the University of Toronto is built upon traditional territories. The territories include the Wendat, Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, and the Métis Nation. I also recognize the enduring presence of Aboriginal peoples on this land.

The treaty that was signed for much of what is now urban Toronto is collectively referred to as the Toronto Purchase and applies to lands east of Brown's Line to Woodbine Avenue and north toward Newmarket.

## **2 Grading**

Tutorials are worth 10% of your final course grade. Students will be graded on the basis of their attendance and participation, as well as on their performance as an official debater in at least one in-class debate.

Grades will be assigned in keeping with the University of Toronto's grade scale:

<b>Grade meaning</b>	<b>Refined letter grade scale</b>	<b>Numerical scale of marks</b>
Excellent	A +	90–100%
	A	85–89%
	A-	80–84%
Good	B +	77–79%
	B	73–76%
	B-	70–72%
Adequate	C +	67–69%
	C	63–66%
	C-	60–62%
	D +	57–59%
	D	53–56%
Inadequate	D-	50–52%
	F	0–49%

1

Simple attendance of the tutorials may be sufficient to earn an adequate grade, but will not result in a good or excellent one. Preparation and active participation in the discussion is expected from each of you. Attendance will be recorded using a sign-in sheet each week.

There are several reasons why attendance and active participation in tutorials are in your interest. For 2014, undergraduate tuition fees for Arts & Science at the University of Toronto were \$6,040.<sup>2</sup> If you take five classes per term, each term has about fourteen weeks of instruction, and you have a two-hour lecture and one-hour tutorial for each course each week, you are paying about \$14.50 an hour for the 420 hours in the fall and winter terms.

It can be demonstrated convincingly with statistical data that attending tutorials and being actively involved is correlated with strong performance in essays and exams.

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<sup>1</sup>Source: “University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy”, 26-Jan-2012. <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/grading.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Source: [http://www.provost.utoronto.ca/link/students/fees15/dom\\_as.htm](http://www.provost.utoronto.ca/link/students/fees15/dom_as.htm)

### 3 Reading Summary Club

In past years, my focus in tutorials has largely been on discussing the assigned readings and helping students prepare for essays and exams which require understanding them. For previous classes, I have advised students to answer three questions while doing academic reading:

1. What was the main **argument** (more fun) made in the reading?
2. What logic or evidence is used to support the argument? Is the text convincing?
3. What questions does the reading raise for group discussion?

I recommend that students prepare the equivalent of one 3” by 5” index card worth of notes per reading. One of the key skills this class will help you practice — and which is essential for success in university — is to commit the ideas from an academic source to memory and to be able to think about their conclusions critically.

Since this year’s tutorials will be debates with limited direct discussion of the readings, I am setting up a ‘Reading Summary Club’. For each assigned reading, you may choose to submit a summary which answers the three questions above. If you submit a summary, I will send you the summaries written by everyone else for that source before the next paper or exam is due.

This activity will have nothing to do with your tutorial grade. Instead, it’s a chance to learn an important skill and receive excellent study notes which will help you with tests and assignments. This is a new method for me, so exactly how it will work is something which will evolve over time with student input.

To begin with, I will create a Google Form where students can submit summaries, and will share access to the resulting spreadsheet with students who have made a submission.

### 4 Name cards

At the first tutorial, we will all write our names on paper cards which we will sit behind at all subsequent tutorials. I will collect the cards at the end of each tutorial, and bring them back for the next session.

In part, your tutorial grade will be an assessment of your active participation in the tutorials. I can't guarantee that I will be able to mark you down as an active participant in the discussion if you do not use a name card.

Don't trust your grade to my memory!

## **5 Debates**

As described in the syllabus, most of this year's tutorials will consist of debates on set topics. You have already received an email with a link to a Google spreadsheet where you can sign up to argue in favour of or against the subject of each tutorial's debate.

On the day when you are an official debater, I will be looking for evidence of preparation, ability to make a convincing argument based on logic and evidence, effective response to points raised by those arguing against you, and civility and good parliamentary practice (not heckling, being respectful).

Some debates are not based on 'yes' or 'no' questions. For these debates, official debaters are expected to show up with a clear and comprehensible argument based on logic and evidence.

On days when you are not an official debater, you are still required to participate. I want to see evidence that you have considered the subject matter and have something important to contribute to the discussion.

At the beginning of each debate, I will ask people who have not signed up for one side or the other to define the most important terms of discussion. What, for instance, do 'electoral system', 'privatization', or 'cultural diversity' mean in the context of Canadian political science?

Be prepared to provide a definition as an easy way to be marked down as actively involved in the discussion.

## **6 Computers**

Laptops, cellular phones, and tablet computers are not required for these tutorials, and students are encouraged not to bring or use them. Using computers during tutorials distracts both the student with the computer and everyone around them.

See: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/laptop-use-lowers-student-grades-experiment-1401860>

Studies have found that even when used entirely for class-related work, students using laptops in class understand less and earn poorer grades.

For a detailed discussion, listen to: <http://www.sindark.com/phd/teaching/2015-09-07-laptops-distracting.mp3>

If your note-taking system relies on a computer, you are free to use it. It is also OK to bring a computer because you want to be able to refer to electronic readings during the discussion without printing them.

Please do not send text messages during tutorials.

## **7 Amendment**

A debate-centred approach is a new way to run tutorials for me, and I am certainly capable of error. In the event that anything in this handout needs to be changed, I will email an updated copy to everyone enrolled in my tutorials.

## 8 Plagiarism

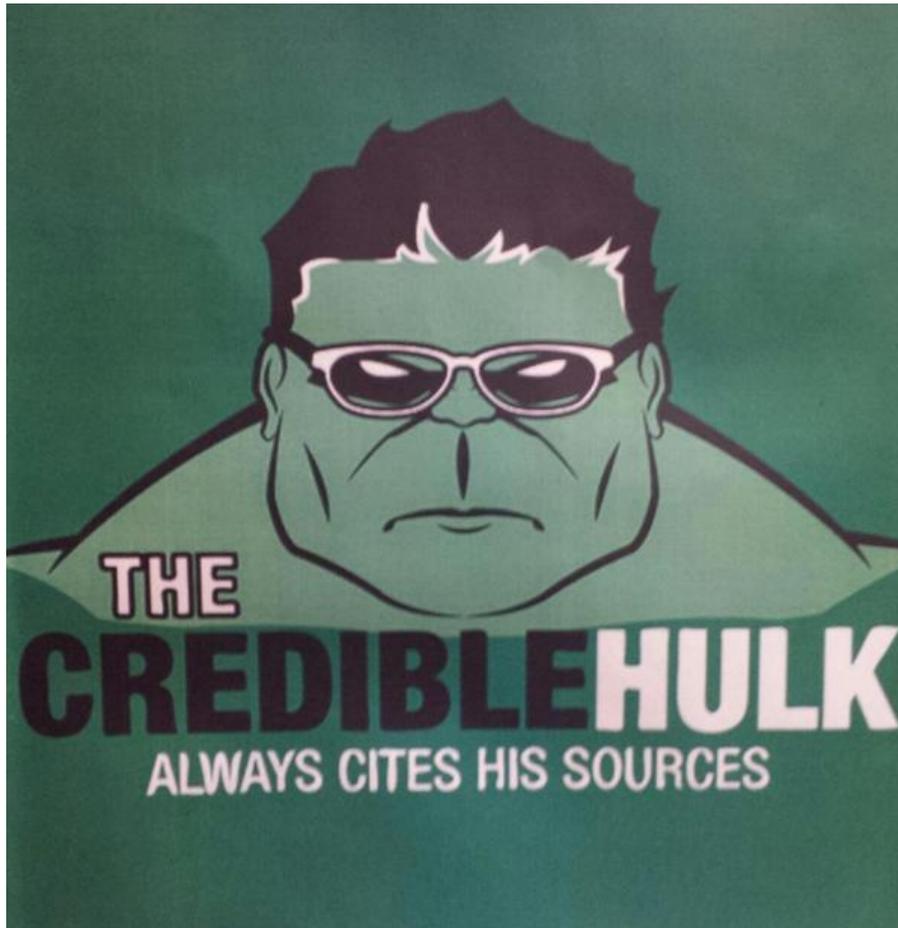


Figure 2: Be like the Credible Hulk.

Papers will be put through the TurnItIn system to detect plagiarism.

I will report all suspected cases of plagiarism to university officials for investigation.

Undergraduate students are sometimes misled into thinking that it is better to present the ideas (or even the exact words) of another scholar as their own original work. This is completely wrong. Citing relevant and convincing academic work is a mark of good scholarship. If something in somebody else's book or article or text seems important for the question

you are studying, then you should cite and acknowledge them. Failure to do so will reduce the credibility and quality of your work, and may leave you exposed to penalties for academic misconduct.