

POL470 – Media & Politics

Date/Time: Wednesday, 9-11AM

Instructor: Prof. Eric Merkley

Email: eric.merkley@utoronto.ca

Office: Room 3121, Sidney Smith Hall

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:00am-12:00pm

1. Overview and Objectives

News media have long played an enormous role in democratic politics by shaping the behaviour of citizens and political elites alike. Technological changes over the past several decades have radically transformed the way politics is reported by journalists and discussed by citizens. This course will introduce students to important debates at the intersection of media and politics in Canada and other Western democracies. Topics include the historical development of news media, framing and priming effects, agenda setting, the rise of social media and the changing media landscape, echo chambers and partisan media, media bias, and problems of misinformation.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Identify key changes in the news media environment over the 20th and 21st centuries in Canada, the U.S., and other western democracies, and their consequences.
- Understand key debates surrounding the relationship between soft news, media effects, media biases, social media, partisan media, and misinformation and democratic politics.
- Identify gaps in understanding in current literature and generate research questions on topics related to media & politics
- Synthesize existing research on media & politics to draw lessons for future research and for democratic societies

2. Course Format

The class is conducted in a seminar format on Wednesdays from 9-11am. Attendance is mandatory. Class participation and in-class presentations together constitute a sizable amount of your grade. Seminars will be conducted in-person.

3. Required Texts and Materials:

- **Readings.** As listed below in the detailed syllabus, most required readings for the course are electronically available through the library. Readings that are not available online through the library are indicated with a (*) and will be available to download through Quercus.

- **Course webpage and emails.** There is a course webpage on Quercus. I will use this page to post important course documents (readings, syllabus, assessment instructions, etc.), post announcements and send emails to you throughout the term. It is your responsibility to regularly check Quercus for updates.
- **Google account.** I will be using Google Docs in a Google Drive folder for presenters to post their discussion questions

4. Grading and Assessed Coursework

Assignment	Date/Due Date	Percentage of Overall Grade
Participation	Assessed for each week	15%
In-class essay	February 25th	15%
Presentation	During your assigned class	15%
Literature review outline	March 4, 11:59pm	5%
Literature Review	April 3, 11:59pm	20%
Final Exam	TBD	30%

4.1 Participation (15%)

The success of a seminar course depends on the active and thoughtful participation of all students. There is significant weight placed on this aspect of your work. I will not only, or even mostly, judge this grade based on the quantity of speaking that you do, but rather the quality of your comments. I will be looking for evidence that you are thoughtfully and respectfully engaged with the course readings. I will also reward students for engaging directly with the perspective of their classmates. Failing to attend seminar will guarantee a grade of zero for a particular session unless prior accommodation is made.

I do understand that participating actively in class can sometimes be intimidating. I will allow you to supplement your participation grade with online comments on discussion questions posted by myself and presenters on the Monday in advance of class using the comment and reply features in Google docs. You will be graded on the quantity and especially quality of your comments much like with in-class participation. It is your responsibility to ensure your posts are associated with your name.

The comment period will be closed for grading purposes for a given week by Friday at 11:59pm *after* the related class. Online participation, however, cannot be used to make up for missed absences. If you miss a class, you still receive a 0 for that week without prior accommodation.

4.2 In-class essay (15%)

You will respond to a written prompt related to the material covered in Weeks 1–6. The goal of the assignment is to assess your ability to think critically under time constraints, construct a clear argument, and apply course concepts to empirical or theoretical examples. You will be allowed to use notes, readings, and class materials when writing this essay, but you will want to balance your use of these resources. You want to have enough time to write a comprehensive response to the prompt. This essay will be submitted on Quercus at the end of class.

Your essay should have a clear thesis statement, and organized body paragraphs. While formal citations are not required in-text during the writing, you should reference authors, theories, or empirical examples to support your claims. You do not need to provide a reference list.

I value depth over breadth: define key concepts, engage *directly* with course material, back up your argument with evidence, and anticipate potential counterarguments. You will be evaluated on your use of relevant course material, the strength of your argument, the clarity of writing, and the overall organization of the essay..

4.3 Presentation (15%)

Approximately two to three students will lead off discussion in each class with a short 8-10 minute presentation about the week's readings. You will sign up for a week to give a presentation in our first class and I will split the readings between the listed presenters.

The presentation should accomplish three tasks: 1) *briefly* remind students of the research questions and main arguments/findings for each reading (1-2 minutes); 2) discuss how the weekly readings speak to one another in their perspectives/findings (and/or to other readings in the course – 2-3 minutes); and 3) give your take on the readings (3-5 minutes). For the final component, you may talk about what you think the implications of the author's argument/findings are for politics and democracy, and the extent to which you agree with their analysis (which shouldn't be confused with excessive or unfounded criticism!).

You will be graded on the accuracy of your summaries, your ability to connect readings to one another, the quality of your analysis, and the clarity of your presentation. You are expected to stay within the time limit. Marks will be docked for going over the time limit and I will end the presentation at the 12-minute mark. Be concise!

On the Monday (6pm EST) in advance of a presentation, presenters will post discussion questions related to their assigned readings (3-4 questions each) in a Google document that I will set up in advance of the class. These can include clarification questions.

4.4 Literature review and preliminary outline (20% + 5%)

You are responsible for completing a final paper. This will take the form of a literature review—a paper that synthesizes the existing research on a topic related to course content. What does the research find? What are its limitations? What are unanswered questions? What are possible new directions for research on this topic?

This paper will be completed in two stages. The first stage is to provide an outline of your literature review. The outline can consist of detailed bullet points, but it must be properly sourced. It should

be 2-3 pages long. This is due on Quercus at 11:59PM on March 4th. It is worth 5% of your grade. The purpose of this task is to allow me to provide formal feedback on your project. It will be given one of five grades: Excellent (100); Very Good (85); Good (75); Satisfactory (65); Failure (0).

The second stage is to provide your final paper. You will be expected to address the comments I provide in your outline. The final paper should be between 10 and 12 pages (without references), or approximately 3000-3600 words. This is an approximate range. The final paper is due on Quercus at 11:59PM on April 3rd. Without documentation, late literature reviews will be penalized 2 points out of 100 per day, including weekends. More details on the final paper can be found in a handout on Quercus.

4.5 Final Exam (30%)

There is a final exam. This exam will test you on all the material covered in the seminar and readings, with an emphasis on material in the second half of the course.. The date and time of the final exam are set by the Registrar later in the term.

5. Course Schedule and Readings

Topic 1 (January 7) – Foundations

Readings:

- Course Syllabus
- Lippman, W. (1922). *Public opinion*. Ch. 1, 21-24. (*)
- Bennett, W. L. (2003). *News: The politics of illusion*, 5th ed. New York: Longman, Ch. 1 (*)
- Shoemaker, P. J., & Vos, T. P. (2009). *Gatekeeping theory*. New York: Routledge, Part 1.
https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106924594406196.
- Stromback, J. (2008). Four phases of mediatization: An analysis of the mediatization of politics. *The International Journal of Press/politics*, 13(3), 228–246.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161208319097>.
- Zaller, J. (2003). A new standard of news quality: Burglar alarms for the monitorial citizen. *Political Communication*, 20, 109–130. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600390211136>.
 - Rejoinder: Bennet, W. L. (2003). The burglar alarm that just keeps on ringing: A response to Zaller. *Political Communication*, 20, 131-138.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600390211145>.

Topic 2 (January 14) – The Changing Media Environment

Readings:

- Schudson, M. (1976). *Discovering the News: A social history of American newspapers*. New York: Basic Books, Introduction (*)

- Ladd, J. L. (2012). *Why Americans hate the media and how it matters*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, Ch. 2-3.
https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106228768006196.
- Munger, K. (2020). All the news that's fit to click: The economics of clickbait media. *Political Communication*, 37(3), 376-397. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2019.1687626>.
- Bennett, L.W., & Iyengar, S. (2008). A new era of minimal effects: The changing foundations of political communication. *Journal of Communication*, 58(4), 707–731.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.00410.x>.
 - Rejoinder: Holbert, R. L., Garrett, R. K., & Gleason, L. S. (2010). A new era of minimal effects? A response to Bennett and Iyengar. *Journal of Communication*, 60(1), 15–34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2009.01470.x>

Topic 3 (January 21) – Entertainment Media and Soft News

Readings:

- Prior, M. (2005). News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout. *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(3), 577–592.
https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/fedca1/cdi_unpaywall_primary_10_1111_j_1540_5907_2005_00143_x.
- Baum, M. A., & Jamison, A. S. (2006). The Oprah effect: How soft news helps inattentive citizens vote consistently. *The Journal of Politics*, 68(4), 946–959.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2006.00482.x>.
- Prior, M. (2003). Any good news in soft news? The impact of soft news preference on political knowledge. *Political Communication*, 20(2), 149–171.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600390211172>.
 - Rejoinder: Baum, M. A. (2003). Soft news and political knowledge: Evidence of absence or absence of evidence? *Political Communication*, 20(2), 173–190.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600390211181>.
- Feldman, L., & Young, D. G. (2008). Late-night comedy as a gateway to traditional news: An analysis of time trends in news attention among late-night comedy viewers during the 2004 presidential primaries. *Political Communication*, 25(4), 401–422.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600802427013>.
- Xenos, M. A., & Becker, A. B. (2009). Moments of Zen: Effects of The Daily Show on Information Seeking and Political Learning. *Political Communication*, 26(3), 317–332.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600903053569>

Topic 4 (January 28) – Media Effects I: Agenda-Setting and Priming

Readings:

- Boydston, A. (2013). *Making the news: Politics, the media, and agenda-setting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Ch. 1-3. (*)

- Feezell, J. T. (2018). Agenda setting through social media: The importance of incidental news exposure and social filtering in the digital era. *Political Research Quarterly*, 71(2), 482–494. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912917744895>
- Iyengar, S., & Kinder, D. (1987). *News that matters: Television and American opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Ch. 7 (*)
- Valentino, N. A., Hutchings, V. L., & White, I. K. (2002). Cues that matter: How political ads prime racial attitudes during campaigns. *The American Political Science Review*, 96(1), 75–90. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055402004240>
- Lenz, G. S. (2009). Learning and opinion change, not priming: Reconsidering the priming hypothesis. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53(4), 821–837. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2009.00403.x>.

Topic 5 (February 4) – Media Effects II: Framing

Readings:

- Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2007). Framing theory. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 10(1), 103–126. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.072805.103054>.
- Iyengar, S. (1991). *Is anyone responsible? How television frames political issues*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Ch. 2, 4. (*)
- Gilens, M. (1999). *Why Americans hate welfare: Race, media, and the politics of antipoverty policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Ch. 5. (*)
- Stecula, D. A., & Merkley, E. (2019). Framing climate change: Economics, ideology, and uncertainty in American news media content from 1988 to 2014. *Frontiers in Communication*, 4(6). <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fcomm.2019.00006/full>
- Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2007). Framing public opinion in competitive democracies. *The American Political Science Review*, 101(4), 637–655. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055407070554>.

Topic 6 (February 11) – Media Bias I: Newsroom Constraints and Marketplace Incentives

Readings:

- Bennett, W. L. (2003). *News: The politics of illusion*, 5th ed. New York: Longman, Ch. 2. (*)
- Dunaway, J. (2008). Markets, ownership, and the quality of campaign news coverage. *The Journal of Politics*, 70(4), 1193–1202. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381608081140>
- Soroka, S. (2014). *Negativity in democratic politics: Causes and consequences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Ch. 5, 6. https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106890496606196.
- Zaller, J., & Chiu, D. (1996). Government's little helper: U.S. press coverage of foreign policy crises, 1945-1991. *Political Communication*, 13(4), 385–405. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.1996.9963127>

- Merkle, E. (2020). Are experts (news)worthy? Balance, conflict, and mass media coverage of expert consensus. *Political Communication*, 37(4), 530–549. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2020.1713269>.

Winter Reading Week: No class on February 18 (and no office hours)

In-class essay – February 25

Topic 7 (March 4) – Media Bias II: Owner Interests and Partisan Slant

Final Paper Outline Due (March 4)

Readings:

- Schiffer, A. (2017). *Evaluating media bias*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Ch. 3. (*)
- Groseclose, T., & Milyo, J. (2005). A measure of media bias. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 120(4), 1191–1237. <https://doi.org/10.1162/003355305775097542>
- Rejoinder: Nyhan, B. (2012). Does the US Media Have a Liberal Bias? Perspectives on Politics, 10(3), 767–771. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592712001405>
- Gentzkow, M., & Shapiro, J. M. (2010). What drives media slant? Evidence from U.S. daily newspapers. *Econometrica*, 78(1), 35–71. <https://doi.org/10.3982/ECTA7195>
- Bailard, C. S. (2016). Corporate ownership and news bias revisited: Newspaper coverage of the Supreme Court’s citizens united ruling. *Political Communication* 33(4): 583-604. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2016.1142489>.
- Martin, G. J., & McCrain, J. (2019). Local news and national politics. *American Political Science Review*, 113(2), 372–384. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003055418000965>.

Topic 8 (March 11) – Media and Polarization I: Selective Exposure and Partisan Media

Readings:

- Iyengar, S., & Hahn, K. (2009). Red media, blue media: Evidence of ideological selectivity in media use. *Journal of Communication*, 59(1), 19–39. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.01402.x>.
- Levendusky, M. S. (2013). Why do partisan media polarize viewers? *American Journal of Political Science*, 57(3), 611–623. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12008>
- Druckman, J. N., Levendusky, M. S., & McLain, A. (2018). No need to watch: How the effects of partisan media can spread via interpersonal discussions. *American Journal of Political Science*, 62(1), 99–112. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12325>
- Arceneaux, Kevin., & Johnson, M. (2013). *Changing minds or changing channels? Partisan news in an age of choice*. The University of Chicago Press, Ch. 1, 4. (*)
- Guess, A.M. (2021). (Almost) everything in moderation: New evidence on Americans’ online media diets. *American Journal of Political Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12589>.

Topic 9 (March 18) – Media and Polarization II: Social Media

Readings:

- Settle, J. E. (2018). *Frenemies: How social media polarizes America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Ch. 3, 4.
https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106937896106196.
- Bail, C. A., Argyle, L. P., Brown, T. W., Bumpus, J. P., Chen, H., Fallin Hunzaker, M., Lee, J., Mann, M., Merhout, F., & Volfovsky, A. (2018). Exposure to opposing views on social media can increase political polarization. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(37), 9216–9221. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1804840115>
- Allcott, H., Braghieri, L., Eichmeyer, S., & Gentzkow, M. (2020). The welfare effects of social media. *The American Economic Review*, 110(3), 629–676.
<https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20190658>
- Nyhan, B., Settle, J., Thorson, E., Wojcieszak, M., Barberá, P., Chen, A. Y., Allcott, H., Brown, T., Crespo-Tenorio, A., Dimmery, D., Freelon, D., Gentzkow, M., González-Bailón, S., Guess, A. M., Kennedy, E., Kim, Y. M., Lazer, D., Malhotra, N., Moehler, D., ... Tucker, J. A. (2023). Like-minded sources on Facebook are prevalent but not polarizing. *Nature*, 620(7972), 137–144. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-023-06297-w>
- Bor, A., & Petersen, M. B. (2022). The Psychology of Online Political Hostility: A Comprehensive, Cross-National Test of the Mismatch Hypothesis. *The American Political Science Review*, 116(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055421000885>

Topic 10 (March 25) – Media and Polarization III: Fake News and Misinformation

Readings:

- Flynn, D., Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2017). The nature and origins of misperceptions: understanding false and unsupported beliefs about politics. *Political Psychology*, 38, 127–150.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12394>.
- Pennycook, G., & Rand, D.G. (2021). The psychology of fake news. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 25(5), 388–402. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2021.02.007>.
- Osmundsen, M., Bor, A., Vahlstrup, P. B., Bechmann, A., & Petersen, M. (2021). Partisan polarization is the primary psychological motivation behind political fake news sharing on Twitter. *American Political Science Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055421000290>
- Guess, A.M., Nagler, J., & Tucker, J. (2019). Less than you think: Prevalence and predictors of fake news dissemination on Facebook. *Science Advances*, 5(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aau4586>.
- Bridgman, A., Merkley, E., Zhilin, O., Loewen, P.J., Owen, T., & Ruths, D. (2021). Infodemic pathways: evaluating the role that traditional and social media play in cross-national information transfer. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 3.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.648646>.

- Wood, T., & Porter, E. (2019). The elusive backfire effect: Mass attitudes' steadfast factual adherence. *Political Behavior*, 41(1), 135–163. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-018-9443-y>.

Topic 11 (April 1) – Future Directions

- Jamieson, K. H., & Kenski, K. (2017). Looking ahead. In K. Kenski & K. H. Jamieson (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political communication* (pp. 3-12). New York: Oxford University Press.
https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106933678306196
- Kosicki G. M., McLeod, D. M., & McLeod, J. M. (2011). Looking back and looking forward: Observations on the role of research methods in the rapidly evolving field of political communication. In Bucy, E. P., & Holbert, R. L. (Eds.). *Sourcebook for political communication research: Methods, measures, and analytical techniques* (1st ed.). Routledge, Ch. 28
https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/fedca1/cdi_as_kewsholts_vlebooks_9780203938669
- Rojas, H., & Valenzuela, S. (2019). A Call to Contextualize Public Opinion-Based Research in Political Communication. *Political Communication*, 36(4), 652–659.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2019.1670897>
- Althaus, S. (2012). What's good and bad in political communication research? Normative standards for evaluating media and citizen performance. In Semetko, H. A., & Scammell, M. (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Political Communication*. SAGE Publications, Ch. 8.
https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/fedca1/cdi_openaire_primary_doi_7a922fe3e571d9f2a89ced8efa7dfbf9

6. Course Policies

6.1 Contacting Course Instructor

I strongly recommend asking substantive questions about course content and requirements during class (for the benefit of everyone) or in my scheduled office hours. Email should be reserved strictly for time sensitive questions or quick points of clarification. I will try to respond within 24 hours, but emails received during the weekend will be answered on Monday. I will not respond to emails related to assessments on their due date.

6.2 Possible Changes to the Syllabus

I reserve the right to make adjustments to the course syllabus. I will give notice to students in the event of any changes, and amended syllabi will be posted on Quercus.

6.3 Missing Class and Late Assignments

Attendance and participation are required at all class sessions due to the intensive nature of this course. Missed in-class and online participation for a given week will only be excused when accommodation is made **in advance** of class for a documented serious illness or personal emergency (see section on Accommodation below). I will only reschedule missed presentations when accommodation is made **in advance** of class for a documented serious illness or personal

emergency (see section on Accommodation below). Missed in-class essays will only be rescheduled with prior accommodation. Late outlines and final papers will be penalized 2 points out of 100 per day, including weekends, except in the event of a documented serious illness or personal emergency (see section on Accommodation below).

6.4 Accommodation for Emergency Situations

Students who need additional time for their outline or final paper, or who will miss a seminar, presentation, or exam for a medical or serious personal reason, must contact me **before** the due date or seminar date and as soon as the problem arises. All requests for accommodation must be made to me in writing, via email.

Some documentation, such as a doctor's note, will usually be required to make accommodation. You may record your absence through the ACORN online absence declaration. Note that I do not receive updates from ACORN. **You must also contact me in advance of a deadline or seminar date.**

Please note that accommodations will not be made for foreseeable circumstances, such as having multiple papers due in the same week. Accommodations are reserved for unforeseeable events that are outside a student's control (e.g., illness, a death in the family).

Requests for accommodation **made on or after an assignment's due date, or after the missed seminar or exam will not be considered.** Due date extensions will not usually be granted for work lost due to computer crashes or the loss of a computer file. There are simple and free ways of regularly and automatically backing up your work. Students are strongly advised to backup copies of their essays and assignments before submitting. These backups should be kept until the marked assignments have been returned.

6.5 Other Accommodations

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible.

The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the University's courses and programs.

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the [Accessibility Services office](#).

The University provides reasonable accommodation of the needs of students who observe religious holy days other than those already accommodated by ordinary scheduling and statutory holidays. Students have a responsibility to alert members of the teaching staff in a timely fashion to upcoming religious observances and anticipated absences and instructors will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, examinations or other compulsory activities at these times. Please reach out to me as early as possible to communicate any anticipated absences related to religious observances, and to discuss any possible related implications for course work.

6.6 Equity and Harassment

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

6.7 Academic Integrity and Responsibility

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The [University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor in all relevant courses
- Making up sources or facts
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment

On tests and exams:

- Using or possessing unauthorized aids
- Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test
- Misrepresenting your identity

In academic work:

- Falsifying institutional documents or grades
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, please reach out to me. Note that you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from me or from other institutional resources (for example, the [University of Toronto website on Academic Integrity](#)).

6.8 Plagiarism Detection

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database,

where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>)

6.9 Usage of Generative Artificial Intelligence

The use of generative artificial intelligence (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, GPT-enabled Bing) is not entirely prohibited at the University of Toronto, provided it is used carefully and ethically. In this course, generative AI tools are not considered legitimate sources of information (i.e., do not use AI tools to circumvent reading the literature). These tools often produce inaccurate claims and fabricated citations. Submitting fake citations constitutes academic dishonesty and will be treated as a violation of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters.

Generative AI use in this class is entirely prohibited for in-class essays. Any unauthorized use of AI in this setting will be treated as a violation of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters.

For the various components of the final paper, however, careful and ethical use of generative AI is acceptable. The most acceptable uses of generative AI are for brainstorming and outlining. That being said, generative AI is **not** considered a legitimate source of information for the purposes of assignments in this class (akin to other non-academic sources of information). It will not be treated and rewarded as evidence of students engaging with the literature on their topic of interest. Further, failing to cite this source when its output is used in assignments constitutes academic dishonesty, just as it is for all other sources used but not cited. Generative artificial intelligence platforms also typically produce fake citations in their output. Using fake citations in an assignment also constitutes academic dishonesty. If we find evidence that generative AI was used in such a manner, we will consider it an academic offense (see 6.8).

If you use generative AI at any stage of preparing for the various components of the final paper (outline, peer review, final paper), you must include an **AI Use Appendix** to your submission. This appendix should clearly list the AI tool used and include:

- The exact prompt(s) you entered to the AI tool
- A brief explanation of how you used the output in your work

This is intended to promote academic transparency and allow instructors to provide constructive feedback on your use of the tool.