Political Science Student Handbook

Stephen Buckley

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http://dgiVista.org/Education/Student.Handbook.pdf

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1. Classroom Issues

In general, to understand how this course works, refer to the course syllabus, my handouts at the start of the semester, political science department handouts on plagiarism as well as academic honesty and citations, my website at http://dgiVista.org/Education and this Student Handbook, which is also online at http://dgiVista.org/Education/Student.Handbook.pdf .

When I return written work to you, you can decipher my shorthand feedback by referring to my Marking Codes at the end of this document. My written comments on your assignment that [appear in square brackets] do not affect your grade. They are just my personal reactions, comments and tangents.

Many students lose a significant percentage of their grade because of failure to follow the requirements in this document. I wrote this because these are the items that are important, and since I'm marking your work, you really should heed these remarks.

A. Suffering is Optional

In lecture and tutorials, suffering is optional. You are not powerless victims stuck as a captive audience in a class. You have a great deal of power and the right to use it. If you are ill, distracted by complications in life, or otherwise unable to be completely present and attentive in class, strongly consider leaving or not coming in the first place. Paying attention to keeping your whole being in shape is more important that ensure you show up for every single class.

Also, if the content or structure of the class you are in is not meeting your needs in a significant way, speak up. Constructively discuss your concerns with me. While professors are not customer service agents, we are responsible for creating a constructive learning environment. If I can make it better for you, I'll do my best to do so. So suffering is optional. If you think you must endure a class that isn't working for you or a day in class when you really need to be in bed or dealing with another life issue, respect your latitude to do so.

B. Email

Email is a useful tool for getting some short and precise answers from me. If you have a question that I can answer in less than two or three sentences, feel free to email me. If your question would take me more than that to answer, please come to my office hours to discuss the issue with me. Sometimes students think the answer will be short, but if it isn't I'll let you know that you need to come in and talk about it in person.

Generally, I reply to email within 24-48 hours. If, however, you have an urgent question regarding something due [an assignment or exam] it is extremely wise to email me before 48 hours before the deadline. I will not guarantee that I can reply to emails regarding assignments that arrive too close to the due date, so try to avoid last minute work.

C. Presentations

Firstly, virtually all students at least pass their presentations when they put in sincere effort, even if they are riddled with anxiety. People seem to be able to pull off a coherent presentation of information despite their nerves. There are, however, some common errors that you should address to avoid sliding into their grip.

Avoid reading your presentation

Unless you absolutely cannot avoid it due to severe anxiety, do not read out a prepared

text for your presentation. It dilutes any substantial engagement your peers are willing to commit. It also keeps you from visually engaging with the class.

Practice

Using a timer, practice your presentation beforehand to an audience of intelligent people who need not have political science expertise. Your presentation should be engaging and accessible to those not in our field. This kind of practice can help you determine what needs to be clarified, defined, skipped or elaborated upon. This practice also lets you know—within a reasonable ballpark—how long your presentation will last. Presentations that are less than 75% of the assigned length or more than 125% of the assigned length generally lose marks.

Following instructions

Pay attention to the specific requirements of the presentation assignment. If it asks to review the thesis of a reading, explore interesting or important ideas, and evaluate the reading with an explanation of your opinion, make sure you do each element of the task. Skipping any element leads to an unfortunate loss of marks. Whenever you make an evaluatory statement, remember to explain why. Typically, when students fail to do all the elements of a presentation assignment, it is because they merely provide a summary of a reading. This happens disturbingly frequently. Beware of devoting too much presentation time to summaries if other elements are required. This is a tempting crutch that makes you think you are doing a thorough job, but in reality, it is easy for your marker and most of your alert peers to see your presentation as merely a summary. Typically, since all the other students are expected to have completed the reading you are presenting on, excessive summarization is redundant. Those students who have not done their reading should not legitimately expect you to lose presentation marks by giving them a free summary of the work they should have done.

Discussion questions

If you are asked to provide open-ended discussion questions at the end of your presentation, do not use this questioning time to wax on at length about issues. If each of your questions approaches a paragraph in length you should consider refining what you wish to ask. Open-ended questions should open up debate rather than lead to answers like “yes” or “no” that close off discussion. Questions that do not lead to engaging discussion will make your presentation lose marks.

Delivery issues

The quality of the delivery of your presentation can make the difference between a B to C range grade and an A to B range grade. Not reading from a prepared text, frequent eye contact [beyond just glances] to students all around the room, a clear voice with vibrant intonation changes to match the content of what you are saying, and a sufficiently loud voice are all essential for engaging presentations.

D. Appealing your grade

If you are confused or even enraged about your grade on a test, assignment or paper, please help yourself out by clearly writing out your questions and concerns, forget about it all for a few days, then come see me to chat about it. Taking some time to reflect on and enumerate your concerns helps you effectively ask the right questions to understand your grade. I can justify every mark I assign. If you ask me clearly crafted questions about your mark, I can answer them

all. If you are not satisfied with my answers, you have recourse by going over my head. But please give me a chance to explain my marking before you seek recourse elsewhere. Many times, your thoughtful questions indicate that I have made a mistake in your mark. When this happens I gladly fix the mistake and apologize. You must be your own best advocate for your academic career.

E. Current events

It is important to stay up on current political, economic and social events because they will often relate to the work we are doing in class: locally, provincially, regionally, bioregionally, nationally, contintentally, hemispherically, OECD world, and majority world. Reading, listening to or watching the news daily is essential. You should pick some hegemonic [establishment] and counter-hegemonic [anti-establishment] media to get a solid mix of viewpoints about issues. I recommend these:

<u>Corporate media that usually has hegemonic biases:</u>

Canada:
- CanWest Global: Vancouver Sun, National Post, Vancouver Province, Canada.com
- Bell GlobeMedia: Globe and Mail, CTV.ca
- Magazines: Time, Macleans

UK: The Economist

USA: Time, Newsweek, CNN.com, MSNBC.com

<u>Critical/independent media that sometimes/often has counter-hegemonic biases:</u>

Canada: The Republic of East Vancouver, Regina Leader-Post [despite being a CanWest paper], CBC.ca, Rabble.ca, TheTyee.ca

UK: The Guardian, The Independent, New Internationalist

USA: Washington Post, New York Times, LA Times, Alternet.org, HuffingtonPost.com, AirAmericaRadio.com, Mother Jones, The Nation, Harpers, National Public Radio, ZNet

Others: Guerilla News Network, Indymedia.org,

<u>Satirical media that is having increasing social importance:</u>

Canada: This Hour Has 22 Minutes, The Mercer Report, The Royal Canadian Air Farce

USA: Daily Show, Colbert Report, Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip, The Onion.com

<u>Creative media with political elements:</u>

Canada: Little Mosque on the Prairie, Intelligence

USA: Alias, The West Wing, Battlestar Galactica [not the original, yikes]

<u>2. Exams</u>

A. Organization

Please make sure you put your FULL name, student number, tutorial section, TA's name and professor's name, and the question numbers [in order] you address on EACH exam booklet you use. Not doing so can be tragic for you if a booklet gets lost. Less tragic, it can make it very difficult for me to figure out what is yours and what questions I should be answering. Annoying your marker in this way cannot be a positive thing. Also, obviously, do not leave multiple choice questions blank.

Also, please write in dark blue or black ink, write legibly or print if your handwriting is not easy to read. Double spacing your answer allows you to go back and fix small error neatly and helps me read your work better. Write on both sides of the paper unless your pen bleeds horrible. Save a tree.

B. Conceptual Tips

When preparing paragraph or essay answers, spend one-quarter to one-third of the time you allocate for each of these questions on designing an outline before embarking on writing out your answer. Do all these outlines before you begin any of these long answers. This allows you to dump everything in your head onto paper and organize it before writing. This also allows you to go back and add ideas that pop into your head as you are working on other questions. And most obviously, an outline allows you to write well-organized answers without the tragic ramble that often happens when students answer a question by just starting in without reflection.

3. Researching Your Paper

If you are just beginning to write your paper, especially if your topic is interesting to you but largely or completely new to you [which perhaps should be the case], you likely have a valid question: how do I go about gathering information I know nothing or almost nothing about? The answer is to embrace your curiosity and inject some structure to it. I think it helps to imagine that you grew up in Saskatchewan and have never seen the seashore. If you arrive in Vancouver to visit a beach you will see many types of rocks. And since seashore stones have fascinated you or at least interested you, you can go about learning about them, starting with very little knowledge. You can stroll around the beach and collect 100 different stones. Then in analyzing them to figure out what they are like in general, you can group them into flat, round, sharp, glassy groups. Then you can describe what each group is like and how it is similar to or different from the others. You can even use individual specific rocks as examples that represent a feature of that group. Then you can write a 10-page essay about it.

Writing a political science works the same way. You start with a topic that interests you to some degree [perhaps like electoral reform in Canada], you gather a great deal of research with clear, point-form paraphrased or direct quote notes. These are your rocks. You then examine all your information and arrange it into groups that reflect how you are going to make sense of your topic. You may find you need to do more specific research about various topics to flesh out each group or what you are going to say about them and their relationships to other groups. Once you have organized your information in however many groups make sense, you can begin writing your paper, by describing each of the groups and how they relate to other groups. Throughout all this process, you should figure out what you have concluded about your topic; this becomes your thesis statement. I would suggest that after you have written the body of your essay [the groups], you write an introduction and conclusion that accurately reflects your topic, thesis statement and each section of your essay. More on this later.

A not-so-constructive way of writing this essay is to gather your 100 rocks and begin describing various of them. Then if you have time or the inclination, make some generalizations about them and explain what you may have noticed about them. This would be a rather poorly organized essay.

A. Indexes and databases

Just because we are in political science doesn't mean you must use only political science library indexes and databases to do academic research. Depending on the nature of your topic for

the paper you may find searching in economics, history, business, sociology, women's studies and anthropology databases to be useful. Don't be afraid to be creative in your approach to research.

B. Keyword searches and librarians

Unless you have a masters degree in library sciences, the keyword terms you come up with to do research in indexes and databases can probably be improved. The subtleties of synonyms sometimes make a large difference. Using a few search terms with one including "war" may give you better results if you used "strife" or "conflict" instead. How would you know this? You may not, so you plug away with what you can come up with. I sometimes get stumped with lame, pathetic search terms that are getting me nowhere, or virtually nowhere. What can we do about this? Grab your search terms that you've used in indexes and databases, bring them to the librarians in the library who are dying to help you with your research, show them what terms you've used in which databases/indexes and ask if they have suggestions for improving your terms. If they have none you may have a future in library sciences graduate work. Make sure you seek out the history/political science library specialists who'll provide the most help for you.

C. Research tips

When you find an academic article or book chapter that really fits your paper's thesis, carefully examine **its** bibliography/references for other articles or book chapters that the author quotes and refers to. These may be useful articles/chapters for you to look up and use. Just because you don't do index/database research to discover these additional sources doesn't mean you shouldn't use them. This initial useful author may have already done the research you can use by getting those other authors for you.

When researching, if you find a book on your topic edited by 1-4 academic professors that has chapters written by a dozen or more authors [professors], this book can be gold. Chances are that all chapters won't apply to your topic but if a few do, you've quickly cut down the legwork of some of your research. Remember, that citing such chapters lets you cite the chapter author, the chapter title **in** this other book, so each chapter counts as equivalent to a journal article: a separate source.

D. How much research you should do for papers

Amount of research

In general 1-2 different academic sources per page of your paper is a valuable extent of research to do. This means 10-20 different academic sources for a 10 page paper. Remember, the number of sources required is the minimum you need to **pass**. Double the minimum if you seek an A. Most failing papers fail because of far too few research sources.

Academic sources

What are academic sources, exactly? Scholarly/academic/peer-reviewed journal articles, books or book chapters. Peer reviewed, academic references matter in university because these journal articles were published because they passed the scholarly review process whereby anywhere from a few up to a dozen working academic professors anonymously evaluate and approve for publication these works. That's where the idea of "peer reviewed" comes from. Not that other kinds of information aren't legitimate, it's just that academic ones are academically

credible.

Periodicals

What about periodicals: newspapers and magazines? By all means use these, but they do not usually count towards the number of academic citations you need. Most newspapers and magazines are credible and have useful information for your academic writing, especially if your topic has a current events element to it. Scholarly writing often has a 6-18 month lag time for publishing so when there are contemporary events relating to your thesis, periodicals can be essential in your thesis, but not in an analytical, scholarly sense: they provide essential facts and contemporary opinions about issues. If your topic deals with recent or current issues you will likely have more periodical sources than other students. Don't dread that, but still, avoid having more periodical sources than academic ones.

Credibility

Periodicals vary widely in academic credibility. The *Vancouver Province* is on the low end of credibility. The *Washington Post* is more credible. Email or see me if you doubt a specific periodical's academic credibility. Ultimately, many of your facts and simple information come from periodicals. Feel free to use them, but don't make them the core of your research. Ultimately, academic journals are important because that's where scholars analyze the events of the day—that you find in periodicals—in a political science context. I'll offer one exception to the periodical rule, *The Economist* is a weekly magazine, but its quality is substantially higher than most other periodicals available and has a reputation for accuracy to a scholarly level. Citing *The Economist*, therefore counts as an academic source.

Policy documents

Government policy documents deserve a special note. These are primary source documents from the White House, US State Department, the EU, the UN, the Canadian Prime Minister or Foreign Affairs department, StatsCan: essentially, the people who actually run the political world. These documents are extremely useful. They provide official policy positions on many issues relevant to your topics. By all means, use them...however, they do not count towards your 10-15 scholarly articles...not because they're merely media journalism, for instance...but because they're not academic analyses of political events/issues.

Think tank and research institute policy documents are secondary source documents from groups usually with strong political, social or economic biases that analyze primary source documents for ideological gain. It is very important when including these policy documents in your research that you seek balance in what you include. If you incorporate too much hegemonic or counter-hegemonic sources without significant presence of the opposite viewpoints, your paper can be dangerously biased. Hegemonic groups include the Fraser Institute, the CD Howe Institute, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives [formerly known as the Business Council on National Issues] in Canada as well as the Cato Institute, American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation and the Project for a New American Century [who may have almost single-handedly brought us the Iraqi invasion/occupation] in the USA. Counter-hegemonic groups include the Council of Canadians, the Polaris Institute, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Aurora Institute, in Canada, as well as Corporate Watch, the Institute for Policy Studies, the Nuclear Policy Research Institute and Public Citizen in the USA.

Analyzing scholarly work

The research and writing you do for political science courses is largely concerned with how you understand and use analysis by academics. That's what undergraduate research is meant to be. Your analysis of information in periodicals and policy documents may be interesting and insightful, but if that's all your paper is, you haven't shown the requirement of doing academic research of academics' analyses of political issues. If you enjoy doing your own analysis, you should absolutely write for the school newspaper, an alternative campus paper, a political blog or a community or online paper. And then when you begin your MA and PhD work, then you get to do that kind of analysis in your courses. But don't let all that discourage you. If you have the bug to analyze and comment and editorialize, pursue it, but try to keep it to an entertaining minimum in your academic papers.

E. The CBC

The CBC news website has a great deal of quite accessible information about many political topics. Their alphabetical index of topics may be a great start to get some general information about topics that fit inside your thesis. The link to the CBC background website is here: http://www.cbc.ca/news/background

F. Wikipedia

There is considerable valid debate about the legitimacy of Wikipedia as an academic source. As encyclopedias go, you should ultimately avoid them when you're doing academic work. Encyclopedias are a simplified compilation of general knowledge. For post-secondary work, they are generally not specific and academic enough to use as references, despite the fact that they are often compilations of articles written by academics.

This isn't to say that encyclopedias are not useful. I find them very useful to get a general introduction to a topic I'm unfamiliar with. Their value in an academic sense lies in introducing you to the nature of the issue you're looking up. From there, you can take a framework of understanding to your research. You may get some terms/phrases to use for academic searching from encyclopedia articles. You may find some data and statistics that can be useful once you research the encyclopedia's sources of that data; those sources would be useful in your academic research more than their presence in an encyclopedia.

Wikipedia.org, however, is less of an academically credible encyclopedia than any of the "real" ones you'll find in the library building itself. An insightful, humourous illustration of this is TheOnion.com's clever article "Wikipedia Celebrates 750 Years Of American Independence;" Google it and enjoy. Wikipedia is a user-compiled encyclopedia in an open source model where virtually anyone can post information that is then vetted and evaluated by other users and open to be edited by other contributors. As a value to human knowledge, it is profound and empowering to "normal" people who can now contribute to a base of knowledge. Wikipedia is useful in the same way that other encyclopedias can help you find a way into a topic, giving you insight into academic research ideas and terms.

In terms of academic credibility for sources, Wikipedia does not count as academic at all, since peer review from practicing scholars is lacking. Also, in an academic sense, it has less credibility than even the popular press periodicals which are at least vetted by editorial bodies who are often more skilled than the normal folk who evaluate and edit Wikipedia. So, use Wikipedia for introductory ideas, but don't quote from it, paraphrase from it or cite it. Use the information in Wikipedia articles to point you to related academic sources that are valid in your academic writing.

4. Writing Your Paper

A. The concept of your paper

Thesis

Visit me in office hours to discuss your thesis and outline before you spend too much time on research. If a formal written essay proposal is required for this course, I will insist that you visit me to discuss your topic before you write your proposal.

Purpose and audience

Be aware of purpose and audience. I am your audience, your political science instructor. Your purpose is to demonstrate the best thinking, research and analysis of your thesis that you can produce. Occasionally, I mark papers that are rants, editorials, op-ed pieces, elaborate journal entries or sometimes just slightly drunken babbles. A formal academic research paper cannot look, sound or feel like these other formats, which typically can earn a bare pass at best, but usually just fail, despite whatever quality of ideas are contained in the paper.

Intelligent but uniformed markers

If you assume the person marking your work is competent and intelligent but merely unfamiliar with the topic you are writing about, you will take care to define jargon and discipline-specific terminology. You will also explicitly describe ideas you found elsewhere. If you assume I win the lottery and someone else with just a superficial understanding of the content of this course must mark my papers, this would be an intelligent but uninformed marker. Knowing that I am informed about the course contents may let you subconsciously cut corners on how explicit you actually need to be in explaining your ideas. Keep the intelligent but uninformed marker idea in your head for all your academic writing.

Section Headings

Many professors are intensely opposed to section headings as you move from your introduction to each major section of your paper, to your conclusion. I'm not. One thing I have found is that when I mark poorly organized papers it would be impossible to write section headings for them, largely because there are no distinct sections. If you have organized your research material well, you should be able to not write a 10-page paper, but three or four 2-3 page papers [each major section] with a 1-2 page introduction and conclusion. If you have completed writing your paper and when you read it over, you cannot easily insert sections headings, you likely have a rather disorganized paper that may need significant revision. So ten pages may look something like this:

Paragraphs	Pages	Content
1 or 2	1-1.5	Introduction
3-5	2-3	Section 1
3-5	2-3	Section 2
3-5	2-3	Section 3
1 or 2	1-1.5	Conclusion

Or, maybe like this:

Paragraphs	Pages	Content
1 or 2	1-1.5	Introduction
3-4	2-2.5	Section 1
3-4	2-2.5	Section 2
3-4	2-2.5	Section 3
3-4	2-2.5	Section 4
1 or 2	1-1.5	Conclusion

So don't write 10-page papers. Write your papers in small sections

B. Plagiarism

Self-preservation

Here is a quick, important self-preservation reminder: keep all draft copies of your paper [in hard copy format, preferably] and all of your research notes. You may need them to defend the academic integrity of your work. It can be a nasty business, but you should protect yourself with evidence of your whole writing process: research, outlines, multiple drafts.

Hired plagiarists

Proofreaders and editors for hire can be a threat to your academic honesty and a plagiarism-free paper. These people often advertise on campus as people with extensive academic experience and degrees. They offer services that can merely be tutorial in nature, allowing you to better understand how to write and present information effectively. However, many offer more services that skate well past the plagiarism/academic honesty line. When they offer to do research, refine your topic, help your writing or do editing that goes beyond instructing you in how to use grammar effectively, you are in dangerous territory. Essentially, the line between your work and others contributing too much to your work is vague at best. If you are unsure of what kind of services you should be receiving from paid or unpaid editors or proofreaders [or friends], please see me beforehand.

C. The paragraph level

Introductions

Your introduction needs to introduce all the topics you will explore in answering all parts of the question you're addressing. You also have to include the specific examples or cases you'll examine. Do not leave your introduction vague, lacking such examples. It's also a good idea to return to your introduction after you've finished your paper to review it so you can update it if you ended up changing the thrust of your paper. You need to ensure the introduction actually introduces what you end up writing about. I change almost all of the introductions I've ever written for all of my papers. Even if I follow an explicit outline, I usually vary it as I'm writing. Your introduction needs to have an explicit map of the topics you will explore in your paper. I can usually get this from reading your paper, but I'm grading your work based on your ability to express your thesis and all main topics in your writing. Why not demonstrate that you actually understand what your own overall argument is with an explicit and thorough introduction,

Conclusions

Include the same items in your conclusion as are in your introduction. You need to

explicitly review for me which topics you have just explored. It's not that I need the reminder, but a forceful conclusion that re-iterates all the key components of your argument will leave your marker with a clear sense of your thesis and a clear sense that you actually understand what you've just written. Don't squander this opportunity to leave a firm lasting impression; sadly, many do by constructing vague, weak and short conclusions. Like in your introductory section, in your conclusion show me again your essay map to review your main points and remind me that **you** actually know the structure of your essay's arguments.

One-sentence paragraphs

These are often disturbing. Paragraphs are complete units of thought where you introduce an idea, relate it to what came before, support it with research and your analysis, then conclude your idea leading it into the idea in your next paragraph. It is quite difficult to do all these things in a paragraph of less than 4-7 sentences. If you find yourself writing one-sentence paragraphs, your overall paragraph development will be quite weak, thereby harming your mark substantially.

Answer the question

Not actually answering the question and all its components generally lowers your grade by around 10-70%. It is a tragic situation when you spend a great deal of time on a paper that misses the assignment in a significant way. Ensure you read the instructions carefully.

Relate to your thesis

The last sentence of each of the paragraphs in the body of your essay should explicitly connect everything you've said in that paragraph to your overall thesis. It's not that I can't make that connection myself. I can. But your job in academic, scholarly writing is to continually provide me with an explicit roadmap with signposts about where you are in your overall argument. Before I started doing this in my own papers, I used to think that being so explicit would feel like I think my marker is a moron who needs hand holding. This isn't the case. Relate ideas back to your main topic. It is a good habit to be in because it shows me that you yourself know what the structure of your argument is about. Markers who encourage you to not be so "obvious" are assisting you in becoming a more vague academic writer. But I suppose that's debatable.

D. Sentences

Complete sentences

Write in complete sentences. Sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and comma spliced sentences make reading [therefore marking] your paper needlessly cumbersome. Make sure every sentence has end punctuation. Avoid starting sentences with "and" or other conjunctions. Generally, avoid writing "I think," "I feel," "I believe," "In my opinion," "My feeling is," etc. unless you are explicitly distinguishing your opinion from someone else's in your paper. I assume that subjective, opinionated statements in your writing your ideas unless you attribute them to someone else. Avoid uncertainty in your writing: maybe, probably, possibly, perhaps, might, etc. Avoid passive voice sentences; they are often rhetorically weak.

Tautologies and questions

"The sun rises because it comes up from the east every morning." That's one of my

favorite tautologies. A tautology is a circular argument when you say something exists, essentially because it exists.

Rhetorical questions are generally not considered formal writing. It is usually more powerful to write those ideas as declarative sentences. Non-rhetorical questions are valid to as a focus of your paragraph topics. Make sure you actually answer all the questions you ask, though. Not doing so is a glaring omission.

E. Diction, punctuation and mechanics

Diction

Use Canadian spelling. Use formal, academic English without slang, colloquialisms, swearing or informal, conversational words. Avoid horrible words: a lot, alot, lots, stuff, thing, basically, really, sort of, sorta, kind of, kinda, a bit, bits, little, a little, pretty much, OK, huge, major. Avoid the verb "to get." It is rarely specific, clear or interesting enough. Avoid cliches; write original ideas and expressions. Use exciting, expressive, unique, specific modifiers instead of settling for plain ones like these: great, fun, interesting, boring, nice, sad, good, bad. Avoid the pronouns "you," "your," and "yours" in formal, academic English. "Who" refers to people, "that" refers to things without identities or personalities. Text message syntax is not academic or formal: u should not rite w/ them. lol.

Semi-colons and commas

They are not interchangeable. My website has links to several Academic Writing sites that will explain how to use each properly. Semi-colons are powerful tools that impress markers when you use them correctly.

Colons

These are impressive, cool pieces of punctuation. You can all use them in your papers. Markers who themselves are weak on grammar will often be extremely impressed if they see one used correctly. So will I.

Ellipses

Three periods is called an ellipsis. You don't need them at the start or end of quotes. A quotation is by definition an excerpt from a larger work. The ellipses thus are redundant. Around 10% of papers I mark still have ellipses in quotations. I suspect those students didn't read this section of the document.

Other punctuation

Use apostrophes correctly. Make sure you are using quotation marks correctly, especially with other punctuation like colons, semi-colons, periods and commas. Avoid commas around the word "because." They are almost always grammatically incorrect. Strangely, again, around 10% of papers I mark reflect the comma-holism of commas around "because."

Mechanics

Spell out numbers under 100 except in dates, page, line and paragraph numbers. Indent the first line of your paragraph 2 centimeters or half an inch. Lists: avoid "etc.," "and so on," and similar phrases at the end of lists. If there are other important items, include them, otherwise don't refer to them. Avoid abbreviations [diff., esp., tho] and contractions [it's, it'll] in formal

academic writing. Around 10% of papers I mark are still informal because of contractions.

Homonyms and incorrect word usage

Watch for confusing words and homonyms like to/two/too, there/their/they're, your/you're, then/than. Number and amount: number refers to however many separate items. Amount refers to the proportion of a whole item. This may seem like a small point, but it should help some of you.

F. Citations and bibliographies

Direct quotations

You should write your arguments in your own words and use quotes from your research to merely prove or illustrate something you've just said. Many people fall into the crutch of using a source's words **as** your argument, thereby filling your paragraphs with quotes where your words merely introduce each one. This is to be avoided. [<--that was a passive voice sentence! "You should avoid this." is a better, active voice sentence.] Footnote numbers go **after** the closing quotation mark.

Paraphrasing, or indirect quotations

Direct quotes are in quotation marks or block quote format and are word for word [with possible amendments for clarity in square brackets]. You must cite/footnote/reference these. Another name for paraphrasing an idea is an indirect quotation. you absolutely **must** cite these as well. further, altering just a few words in a sentence is **insufficient** as paraphrasing. Summarizing a paragraph or a few sentences in a phrase or short sentence **is** paraphrasing. If you find yourself in the crazy hamster wheel of trying to change enough words so that it will "become" a paraphrased indirect quote, you should just include it as a direct quote. If then you find your paragraphs literally filled with direct quotes, you have a larger problem that you can fix with developing a more detailed outline. Handing in a paper that is comprised of 70-90% direct quotations may just barely pass, at best. It is easy to lose 2-3 letter grades on your paper because of this kind of inadequate "paraphrasing." The effort students put into trying to cut this corner does not pay off and has a real risk attached.

Humanities style with footnotes

Use the Humanities style with footnotes or endnotes and a bibliography, but not in-text author-date citations. There are dozens of citations styles available. Many of them are useful in the Humanities in general, some are not useful at all [including those that do not require page numbers in citations]. Check the department's handouts for how to use this citation style. Use footnotes instead of endnotes. While endnotes are acceptable, I personally prefer to view the footnote at the bottom of the page I'm reading instead of flipping to the back of your paper to see the citation.

Properly formatting your endnotes/footnotes and bibliography is essential. While there may not be many "right" answers to difficult questions in political science, getting citations perfect is quite possible. It is difficult, however to accurately craft footnotes and bibliographies when you finish your paper at 4:00am on the day a paper is due. It may feel cumbersome, but it is likely far more effective to correctly format citations and bibliography entries as you write your paper. At the very least, this process means you don't have to do it all once you finish the text of your paper.

Citation plagiarism

On my website under the Plagiarism section I write, “Plagiarism is either intentional, or it comes from carelessness or ignorance”. Then I list about a dozen ways to plagiarize. A handful of them include citation problems. If you have no citations, you are saying that the contents of the entire essay came from your brain. If you're careless [or lazy] and don't bother citing everything you should [or anything at all], that is technically plagiarism. In introductory courses, however, we call this a learning curve; thus, we will not be failing you all for citation errors, unless they are criminally rampant. Sometimes it takes a while to figure out just how much to cite. It may take several university courses to get it right. You have some latitude in figuring this out. You must strive to cite all non-general knowledge ideas that you get from other sources, ideas more precise than the fact that there are 10 provinces in Canada. Your citations must be structured properly and the footnotes and bibliographies must contain NO errors in structure. This is the goal.

Further, inaccuracies in footnotes and bibliographies are an often minor, but significant form of plagiarism. If you were a cheater and you were making up quotes and footnotes, as your marker, I would not be able to track down the source of your information. Similarly, if your footnote has an incorrect or missing page number for a quote from a 700 page book, you impede my ability to verify your source: an essential purpose of the whole citation process. Missing any required elements of endnote or bibliography entries impedes source verification. Check with me in class for the policy this semester, but typically, if you hand in a paper with poor, flawed or inadequate endnotes/footnotes and bibliographies I will return the paper to you and give you one chance to fix them all and hand it back in within two days so that I would actually mark your paper. Flawed or missing citations, otherwise, are failing papers, by definition, regardless of how brilliant your ideas are.

When in doubt, cite

Most students include a fairly decent number [not amount] of citations [footnotes/endnotes] in your papers. Many, however, seem to be frugal with citations. When in doubt, cite the idea. If you find that every sentence in your paragraph has a citation, the problem isn't in your citing, it is in your lack of original ideas that use quotations and paraphrased ideas as support. The solution is not to cite less, but to add more of your own academic analysis to your supporting research material. I find roughly 10% of papers I mark have demonstrated this over-reliance on quotes or cited material.

Failure to cite

Having no citations, footnotes, references or bibliography means your paper will fail automatically. Even if there is clear evidence of research, citing nothing is pure plagiarism because you credit no one else with the ideas you do not own.

G. Essay layout

Title page

Capitalize important words in your title. On your title page, also include your first and last name, your student number, the course name, the professor’s name, your TA’s name, the due date, and the question number if applicable.

Good and Bad Titles

Make sure you include an interesting descriptive title that describes your work not the topic/question you are responding to. A very bad title, then, would be "Political Science Term Paper." Your title should describe in around 4-11 words the thesis of your essay. A two-part title with a colon can be quite elegant. Ambiguous titles that do not at least hint at the direction your thesis will take keeps me from quickly being oriented to your point.

If your paper topic is electoral reform in Canada, here are some kinds of titles to avoid:

- the title should not be your topic, "Electoral Reform in Canada" because your title should reflect what you are saying about your topic;

- or worse, "Electoral Reform";

- or your research question, "Should Canada Reform its Electoral System?" because your essay should answer a research question, so your title should reflect where your thesis is going.

Here are some good titles:

- "Electoral Reform in Canada: A Dire Necessity",

- "We Are Already Democratic: Why Canadians Do Not Need Electoral Reform."

Colons are flashy and when used well allow you to convey a creative, interesting message combined with an explicit statement of what your thesis is. Usually, about 20% of papers I mark have merely the assignment or research question as the title.

Page numbers

The title page shouldn't be numbered and it isn't the first page. The first page of your essay is the first page of text; it is not numbered either. The second page of writing is the second page and is numbered 2. Each following page is numbered sequentially. Often, 20-40% of papers I mark have a number on the title page and page 1. Bibliographies are on separate sheets of paper from the essay and are not numbered.

Paper assembly

Please staple your pages IN THE CORRECT ORDER! It is not fun to solve the baffling confusion that comes from reading the end of page 2 and continuing a completely different sentence on the start of page 4 that does not follow page 3. In the end it makes me think that you can't count; I know you can, but you don't want me entertaining that notion at all. Also, do actually staple your essay; handing in unstapled sheets means if I lose any pages, it's your fault. This may seem elementary, but each semester I seem to staple about half a dozen papers. Further, some markers may accept these, but I don't: report covers, duo tangs, folders. All of these items do not belong around your academic post-secondary, scholarly essay. Just the essay please.

Double-spacing

If you double-spaced your essay I will write feedback about the mechanics of your writing and the content of your work. If you single space or 1.5 space, I'll just do only the latter at the end of your paper. 1.5 spacing can happen if you hit the wrong button in Microsoft Word, or if your paper is too long and you're trying to make it look shorter than it is: don't do that, please.

Fonts and margins

Times 12 font is fantastic. Others can be harder to read. Margins should be 1" on all sides.

Block quotes

There are many competing rules to determine when a quote should be moved into a block. I generally go by 2 lines. If your quote takes more than two lines in your paragraph, set it off as a block quote. Please consult the department guides on how to properly create block quotes. Block quotes have no quotation marks, are single-spaced, indented ½ an inch for each line of the quote and are justified flush on both sides. Make sure you include a footnote, endnote or citation at the end of the block quote.

Bibliographies

Along with your footnotes, the construction of every bibliography entry should be perfect. There are plenty of online and library resources showing you how to construct any entry. It is your responsibility to get it right. Librarians are very helpful explaining citation guides to help you with some potentially tricky entries.

Bibliography padding is a kind of plagiarism where there are more items in your bibliography than show us as cited research in your paper. Even if you researched these padded sources, do not include them in your bibliography unless you actually cite them in the text of your paper. Bibliography mismatches occur when footnotes/endnotes/citations do not show up in your bibliography. This is another kind of plagiarism. I see both of these in 10-20% of papers I mark.

Each bibliography entry is single-spaced and a hanging indent, but there is a blank line separating each entry. Entries are not numbered, but they are alphabetically arranged.

H. Editing and proofreading

Read your essay out loud to yourself. This will give you a fresh perspective on your work. Better yet, have someone read your essay aloud to you. Refer to the section above on hired plagiarists. In general, I find the lack of proofreading quite rampant, with sometimes up to half of the papers I mark reflecting some or a great deal of errors that students would have fixed with good proofread. Perhaps this is a function of finishing a paper at 4am on the due date. These errors take a significant toll on your grade.

5. Marking Codes

In Appendix 1 on the next two pages are images of the marking/editing codes/shorthand that I use when marking. When you receive back marked work, these pages will help you understand what I mean. Occasionally I will have marked some element of your work incorrectly; knowing what I meant to indicate with marking codes will help you explain to me how I may have screwed up in marking your work. I encourage you to learn from the feedback I provide, if only to make sure that I have not needlessly misunderstood your message.

6. Debating, Essay and Presentation Rubrics and Marking Scales

These will appear in Appendix 2 some time, as they are not required now.

Appendix 1

Marking Codes

Content:

Symbol	Meaning	Example
CL.	Avoid clichés	World leaders sometimes sit on the fence.
ex?	Be more specific	International relations can be curious.
¶	Begin a new paragraph	
ex?	Clarify what you mean	Wallerstein made Marxists think of many things.
←	Do not begin new paragraph	
H.	Horrible, plain, dull word	The United Nations Security Council can be a bad thing.
Hy.	Hyperbole/exaggeration	LDCs always see value in cooperating with each other.
Lg.	Logic error	Neoliberal free trade does not require state cooperation.
NR.	Not responsive to the question/thesis	
OT.	Off topic	
red.	Redundant	Political candidates work hard and diligently.
RT	Relate the idea to your thesis	
rep.	Repetition that isn't helpful	Contentious treaties can be contentious and ambiguous.
sig?	Significance is unclear	Celebrities, often, do not care about politics.
SL.	Slang, informal language	United Nations Security Council votes are a major pain.
Taut.	Tautology	Realism is pragmatic since it concerns actual choices.
Tr.	Trite, simplistic, obvious	The global economy is large.
ref?	Unclear reference	States seek to maximize that kind of power.
ex?	Use an example	The United Nations General Assembly is often effective.
V.	Vague	Inter-provincial economic relations are fiscally relevant.
W.	Wordy	In speaking historically, interstate war has decreased.

Mechanics:

Symbol	Meaning	Example
/	Add a space between words	Canadian premiers can contradict eachother's policies.
agr.	Agreement error	A political party must promote their platform widely.
○	Apostrophe/No apostrophe	Quebecs fear of Albertan's goal's is it's motivation.

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Marking Codes

Mechanics (continued):

awk.	Awkwardly worded	Not really was the United Nations for the Iraq invasion.
Cap.	Capitalize/Don't capitalize	The Mexican Nation is part of north america.
C.S.	Comma splice	Fear motivates voters, sometimes politicians act on this.
/	Delete	Structural Adjustment Programs can be quiete harmful.
abr.	Do not abbreviate	There are many stats that describe the growth in trade.
Id.	Incorrect idiom/word usage	The US president insisted in Iraq's stock of WMDs.
Vb.	Incorrect verb tense/form	States such as Canada prefers multilateral treaties.
→	Indent the first line	
∧	Insert	Bush and Rice walked out of UN General Assembly.
J.	Join sentences	Liberals seek personal freedom. Individuality matters.
∪	Join words together	Politicians seek exposure to every one in their riding.
Sp.	Misspelled word	Chavez voted with Iran at the OPEC comittee.
mm	Misplaced modifier	Realists can be militarily focused, like Gilpin.
//	Parallel structure needed	China contacted and was disagreeing with North Korea.
P.V.	Passive voice	Feminism is seen by many people as passé.
R.O.	Run-on sentence	Green politics is new it still concerns many theorists.
2.	Second person pronoun error	Ambassadors are secretive since you deal with secrets.
Fr.	Sentence fragment	When the neoconservatives in the USA invaded Iraq.
TS	Shift in verb tense	Cuba established farm policy then contacts Venezuela.
Spl.	Spell out	The NAFTA dispute lasted 3 months.
———	Underline/Italicize	Neoliberals base arguments in The Wealth of Nations.
○	Use/Remove quotation marks	Fukuyama has qualified his piece, The End of History.
ww.	Wrong word	Canada has signed a profound amount of treaties.

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