

POLI 1100
Introduction to Political Science
Mondays and Wednesdays, 8:30-9:50 a.m.
Braun Building 1021

Open the Navigation Pane for easy navigation (under the View menu).

I General Information

Instructor: Elsa Piersig
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.
Email: elsa.piersig@lakeheadu.ca
Office: Ryan Building 2039
Phone number: 647.515.6080

II Course Description

The course introduces the scope, concepts, and methods of Political Science. Over the course of two semesters, we will examine the role of political ideas and the institutional and social framework of political activity in Canada and other political systems. The scope of the discipline will take us from political theories and ideas that cross borders to core political institutions that serve as the arena for political activity and exist within borders or across borders. Concepts are rooted in political theory and address ideas about power, equity and diversity, and the state or governance structure. One core concept, the political institution, is at the heart of political science and this course: institutions are designed to reflect a community's ideas and political theories, members work within institutions to create political change, and their rules shape members behaviour and the political and policy outcomes.

III Course Format

The course is synchronous, in-person, and combines lectures and in-class group discussion.

IV Learning Outcomes

1. **Critical-Thinking:** By the end of this course, you will be able to identify and apply all five components of critical thinking, namely explain an issue, assess and organize evidence, identify underlying assumptions, generate a perspective or argument, and develop conclusions flowing from the argument.
2. **Argumentative Essay:** By the end of this course, you will be able to produce an argumentative essay that critically assesses a contemporary public policy issue and core political institutions.

3. **Research Basics:** By the end of this course, you will be able to demonstrate how to find, cite, and recognize reputable source.
4. **Institutions and Power:** By the end of this course, you will be able to explain the concepts of power and political institutions and illustrate their importance for political science.
5. **Field Survey:** By the end of this course, you will be able to describe the four main fields of political science and the main topics of study.
6. **Groupwork:** By the end of this course, you will be able to practice positive and constructive groupwork and initiate facilitating group discussion.
7. **Examination Writing:** By the end of this course, you will be able to assess and interpret multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

V Texts

- Brodie, Janine, Sandra Rein, and Malinda Smith. *Critical Concepts*. 6th Edition. Toronto: Oxford University Press. (Available online from [Vital Source](#).) \$47.30.
 - NOTE: This is the same textbook used in the fall semester.
- Additional material as listed in on Brightspace.

VI Evaluation at a Glance

<i>Assignment/Course Component</i>	<i>Assignment Due Date</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Total</i>
Participation	Throughout the semester	10%	10%
Syllabus Quiz	Friday, January 23, 2026	1%	1%
Worksheets	Throughout the semester	5%	16%
Pop Quizzes	Throughout the semester	10%	26%
Essay: Topic Selection	Friday, January 23, 2026	2%	28%
Essay: Annotated Bibliography	Friday, February 6, 2026	3%	31%
Essay: Outline and Key Points	Friday, February 13, 2026	2%	33%
Essay: Introduction	Friday, March 6, 2026	3%	36%
Argumentative Essay	Friday, March 27, 2026	25%	61%
Reflection Assignment	Friday, April 3, 2026	4%	65%
Activity Bingo Sheet	Monday, December 1, 2026	15%	80%
Final Exam	During the exam period	20%	100%

This course is designed to foster engagement and dialogue between learners and the course instructor in three ways:

1. Learners connect with the course instructor and each other through lecture, worksheets, and the activity bingo sheet.
2. The worksheets and Argumentative Essay submissions build off each other, providing learners/groups with constructive feedback for upcoming submissions.
3. Learners can critically review their work from each Argumentative Essay submission and the Reflection Assignment.

Remember, the course instructor is here to help! Please reach out through email, office hours, the Course Questions discussion forum, or schedule a meeting.

VII Course Evaluation in Detail

Participation – 10% of Final Grade – Ongoing (Weeks 1-12)

Learners earn participation by attending class and engaging with the lectures, discussions, and activities. All classes will include time for completing the worksheets and peer feedback sessions. Questions on course material and assignments are also welcome during lecture and group activities.

Syllabus Quiz – 1% of Final Grade – Due Friday, January 23, 2026 (Week 3)

The syllabus is a contract between the course instructor and learners that spells out what the course will cover, assessment, and course policies. Completing the Syllabus Quiz expresses the learner's acceptance of the course contract. Quizzes completed on time will receive 1% and late submissions will result in a grade of 0.

Worksheets – 5% of Final Grade – Throughout the Semester

There are ten worksheets and exercises over the course. We will take time in class to work on the worksheets and exercises. The worksheets and exercises address lecture material, critical thinking and other transferable skills, and build towards the summative project. The worksheet schedule is listed in the [Course Schedule](#) below. Learners are expected to complete each worksheet. However, if unable to attend a class, learners can still submit an attempt on Brightspace.

Learners are asked to submit the completed worksheet in class or post it to the related Brightspace discussion forum within 24 hours of the class in which the worksheet was completed.

The worksheets and exercises are assessed out of 1: not completed (0) and completed (1). The instructor will provide feedback as needed.

Pop Quizzes – 10% of Final Grade – Throughout the Semester

The pop quizzes are based on the reading material for the week. They may also have a question about the previous week's reading material if there was no pop quiz that week. The quizzes will be approximately 10-15 minutes and feature a mix of multiple choice and short answer questions. Learners are graded on their best 5 of 6 quizzes.

The quizzes are completed prior class:

- Monday: To respect the weekend, the pop quiz will open by 9:00am on Friday morning and be due by 5:00pm on Sunday.
- Wednesday: The quiz will open after class on Monday and be due by 5:00pm on Tuesday.

Quizzes are due prior to class to give the instructor time to review results prior to class. Results can serve as a discussion point, and learners are encouraged to raise questions about the quiz in class.

Activity Bingo Sheet – 15% of Final Grade – All Activities due by March 20, 2026

The activity bingo sheet is designed to get learners trying things inside and outside of the classroom. Learners will have a choice of several activities and need to complete a row, column, or diagonal line on the bingo sheet. The activities include:

- Attend a research talk

- Visit office hours
- Meet a librarian (preferably the political science librarian!)
- Attend a political science society event
- Facilitate groupwork discussion
- Contribute a point in class
- Present groupwork to class
- Ask a question during a research talk

These activities help learners work on their groupwork, oral communication, and research skills. Absorbing information, asking questions, and presenting material is an important part of doing research and communicating findings in an academic or professional setting.

Learners are asked to keep a journal of their activities over the course of the semester. Journal entries should briefly describe the activity/what happened and the learner's experience or thoughts on doing the activity. This might include whether the activity entailed trying something new or introduced a new perspective.

Argumentative Essay – 35% of Final Grade – Ongoing throughout the Semester

The argumentative essay identifies and explains an important issue and addresses a possible reform or strategy to remedy the problem. The essay can argue *for or against* the reform option depending on how the benefits and risks. The suggested issues/topics are listed below; however, learners are welcome to write on another issue that is within the scope of the course and approved by the instructor. Suggested issues:

1. Electoral systems: is majoritarian or proportional representation better?
2. Parliamentary reform: are quotas to increase diversity (gender, ethno-cultural, etc.) in legislatures a good idea?
3. Digital democracy: is social media a pharmakon for liberal democracy?
4. Globalization and political economy: has globalization been a good thing? What are its main effects?
5. International relations: is the United Nations Security Council still relevant?
6. Political economy and dependency theory: Is Canada a metropole or satellite in the global economy?
7. Borders, migration, and citizenship: what is *the major* force driving migration today?

The Essay must include *3 relevant academic sources* beyond the textbook, feature a thesis statement that ties the entire paper together, and demonstrate a strong understanding of the chosen topic. The paper will be evaluated based on balance and the appreciation of the appropriate counterarguments, clear organization and coherence, and spelling and grammar. To help with organization, papers should answer these 3 questions:

1. What is the main issue and what is the case for reform?
2. What is the recommended reform, and should it be adopted? Why or why not?
3. What are the implications of the reform or avoiding the reform?

The argumentative essay is submitted in parts to help keep learners on track and receive feedback. The table below shows the component parts and their due dates. NOTE: the first and third

components are optional (Essay Topic Selection and Outline of Key Points). The weight for these submissions will be shifted to the final Argumentative Essay submission.

<i>Essay Component</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Suggested Length</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
Essay Topic Selection (OPTIONAL)	Select a topic from the list or suggest another to the instructor. Include a brief description of how the essay will tackle the topic, such as the direction or a specific aspect of the topic.	0.5 pages	Friday, January 23, 2026
Annotated Bibliography	Find 4 sources, 2 of which should be academic on the topic. Evaluate each for based on their context and assumptions and utility for the final essay. Be sure to include the essay topic.	1-1.5 pages	Friday, February 6, 2026
Outline of Key Points or Sub-Topics (OPTIONAL)	Develop an outline of the key sections of the essay. Include 1-2 supporting points per section.	1 page	Friday, February 13, 2026
Introduction and Thesis Statement	Draft an introduction. This should feature a hook, a high level overview of the topic, and the thesis. The thesis statement should indicate the main supporting arguments and paper conclusions. Include an updated outline of the paper with main sections and supporting points.	1-2 pages	Friday, March 6, 2026
Argumentative Essay	Argumentative essay on a selected topic related to the course material.	4-5 pages	Friday, March 27, 2026

Reflection Assignment – 4% of Final Grade – April 3, 2026 (Week 12)

The Reflection Assignment is due following the final Argumentative Essay submission. It is an informal journal entry for learners to reflect on their experience with the assignment process and critically review their own work and thought processes/preconceptions. The suggested length is approximately 500 words.

NOTE: The Argumentative Essay must be completed before submitting the Reflection Assignment.

Final Exam – 20% of Final Grade – Formal Exam Period (April 2026)

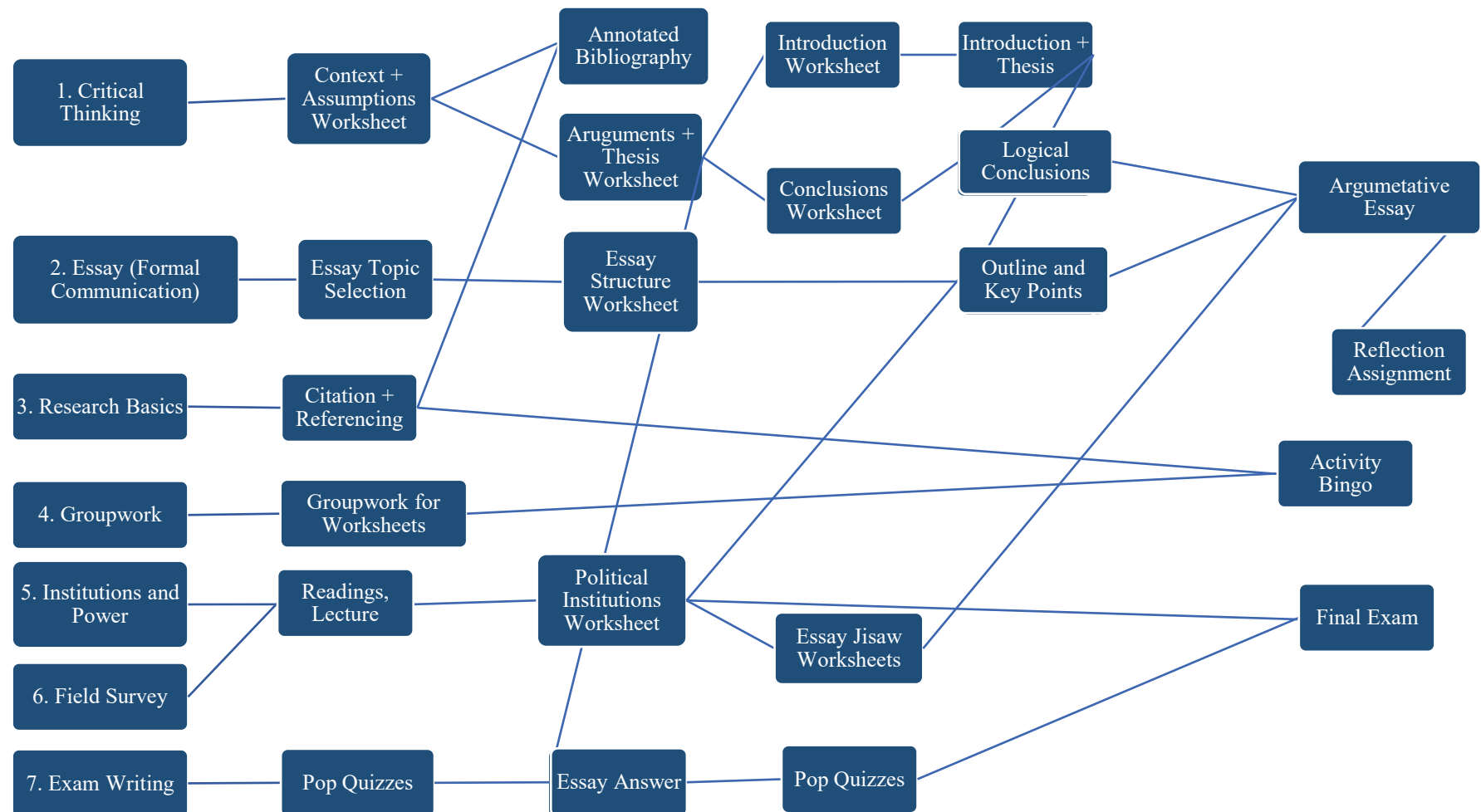
The Final Exam is made up of a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Details of the exam structure will be released closer to the exam date. The short answer and essay questions will be graded on use of course content and drawing connections between different weeks of the course. The emphasis on the winter semester, but learners are welcome to tie in material from the fall semester. Students will not be graded based on spelling and grammar.

The essay must feature a formal structure, including an introduction, body paragraphs (one for each supporting argument), and a conclusion. The introduction and conclusions should be streamlined and leave most of the essay for the supporting body paragraphs. A good introduction avoids

general statements about the world and lays out the essay's main question or issue followed by a thesis that answers the selected essay prompt. The thesis statement should feature the main justifications for the argument and may list some possible consequences flowing from the thesis.

VIII Learning Outcomes and Assessments Concept Map

This concept map lists the 7 course-level learning outcomes in the left column and the connected activities and assessments. The activities and assessments move from left to right in chronological order, based on working towards the learning outcome. The dates for all of the weekly topics and assessments (minus pop quizzes) are provided in the next section ([IX Course Schedule and Topics](#)).



VIII Course Schedule and Topics

Week	Topic	Field	Description	Readings	Worksheets and Assignments
Part I: Introductory Week					
Week 1 Jan. 5, 7	Course Overview		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the winter course and syllabus • Fall semester re-cap and four fields • Political Institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus • Critical Thinking Skills Rubric 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worksheet 1 – Political Institutions • Syllabus Quiz due Friday, Jan. 23
Part II: Constitutions and Institutions					
Week 2 Jan. 12, 14	Constitutions and Institutions	Comparative, Canadian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are constitutions important for politics and political science? • Key regime types and institutional organization • Transferable Skills: References and annotated bibliographies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilton. 2023. “Constitutions and Institutions.” In Brodie et al., Chapter 11 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worksheet 2 – Annotated Bibliography
Week 3 Jan. 19, 21	Legislatures	Comparative, Canadian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are legislatures and what do they do? • Regime types and legislatures • Transferable Skills: Critical Thinking Skills – Influence of Context and Assumptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garner et al. 2020. “Legislatures and Legislators.” Chapter 10 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worksheet 3 – Context and Assumptions • Syllabus Quiz Due (Friday, Jan. 23) • Argumentative Essay Topic Selection (Friday, Jan. 23)

Week 4 Jan. 26, 28	The Electoral System	Comparative, Canadian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why do electoral systems matter? What are the key differences between electoral systems? Transferable Skills: Critical Thinking Skills – Argument and Thesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leifso and Raphael. 2023. “Elections and Electoral Systems.” In Brodie et al., Chapter 12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worksheet 4 – Argument and Thesis
Week	Topic	Field	Description	Readings	Worksheets and Assignments
Week 5 Feb. 2, 4	Political Parties	Comparative, Canadian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are political parties and how do they organize? Are political parties essential for democracy? Transferable Skills: Argumentative essay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raphael et al. 2023. “Political Parties.” In Brodie et al., Chapter 13 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worksheet 5 – Essay Structure Annotated Bibliography (Friday, Feb. 6)
Week 6 Feb. 9, 11	Digital Democracies	Comparative, Canadian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The impact of digital technologies on democracy and politics Do digital democracies promote of undermine liberal democracy? Transferable Skills: Introductions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small and McNabb. 2023. “Digital Technology and Democracy.” In Brodie et al., Chapter 14 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worksheet 6 – Introduction Inkshed Introduction and Thesis Statement (Friday, Feb. 13)
READING WEEK (October 13-17, 2026)					
Week 7 Feb. 23, 25	Bureaucracies	Comparative, Canadian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why have a professional bureaucracy? How did bureaucracy develop? What are the key characteristics of bureaucracy and why are they important? Transferable Skills: MS Word III (formatting, bullet points, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leifso. 2023. “Bureaucracies.” In Brodie et al., Chapter 15 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Essay Outline and Key Points (Friday, Feb. 27)

Part III: International Relations (IR) and International Political Economy (IPE)					
Week 8 Mar. 2. 4	International Relations	IR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is IR theory? What are its mainstream and critical variants? Transferable Skills: Critical Thinking Skills – Conclusions and Outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> McMahon. 2023. “International Relations.” In Brodie et al., Chapter 16 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worksheet 7 – Conclusions Logical Conclusions (Friday, Mar. 6)
Week 9 Mar. 9, 11	International Orders	IR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the international system structured? How has the international order been impacted by imperialism, colonialism, and neoliberalism? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shrivastava. 2023. “International Orders.” In Brodie et al., Chapter 17 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worksheet 8 – Essay Jigsaw I (Topic-based)
Week	Topic	Field	Description	Readings	Worksheets and Assignments
Week 10 Mar. 16, 18	Political Economy	IPE (IR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is IPE? How does social and economic relations shape politics? Modernization Theory, Hegemony, and Dependency Theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persaud. 2023. “International and Global Political Economy.” In Brodie et al., Chapter 18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worksheet 9 – Essay Jigsaw II (Topic connections) Activity Bingo Sheet Due (Friday, Mar. 20)
Week 11 Mar. 24, 25	Political Ecology	IR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does human society’s relationship with the environment influence politics? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adkin. 2023. “Political Ecology.” In Brodie et al., Chapter 19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Argumentative Essay (Friday, Mar. 27)
Week 12 Mar. 30, April 1	Conclusion	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transferable Skills: Concepts (vertical levels/scalar and horizontal connections) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worksheet 10 – Exam Essays Essay Reflection Assignment (Friday, April 3)

IX Course Procedures and Policies

Assignment Submission

- All assignments are due on Brightspace. Learners are responsible for ensuring that the correct file has been uploaded. Assignments should be uploaded as Microsoft Word documents (not PDFs) to the appropriate online dropbox by 11:59 p.m. on the due date.
- The recommended length for an assignment reflects both the expected effort of the learner and the time available to the course instructional team for providing feedback. Please respect the recommended length. Assignments over or under the expected length by 10% will receive a reduction in the assigned grade.
- Lakehead offers MS Office 365 (including Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneNote, etc.) for free from the Technology Services Centre: [Office 365 | Lakehead University](#).

Citation is Required!

- Citing is important for a) giving credit where credit is due (intellectual property), b) justifying evidence, and c) avoiding plagiarism. Find more about academic integrity [here](#).
- Learners must use proper citation for all evidence and arguments derived from sources other than themselves. Citation is required for all sources beyond the course material.
- The preferred citation format is an in-text option such as MLA, Chicago Author-Date system, or the [Canadian Journal of Political Science](#) guide. Please avoid APA.

Late Penalties and Extensions

- Late assignments will lose 3% per day, inclusive of weekends and holidays.
- Learners may find an extension necessary due to extraordinary circumstances. This is understandable, and identifying how to balance all the requirements of university life is a skill in and of itself. If an extension is needed, please email the professor and *recommend a new due date before* the deadline. The professor will accept all reasonable extension requests. Please note:
 - Extensions must have a recommended new due date.
 - Extensions requested or confirmed by the professor after the deadline must come with a [Self-Declaration Form](#). If no form is submitted, a minor penalty will be imposed.
 - Learners are asked to keep in mind that many of the assignments are linked and should consider how the extension will impact other work. An appropriate schedule can be worked out if necessary.

Communication

- Please make use of email, discussion forums, lectures, and office hours to get in touch.
- All email communication must be via official Lakehead University e-mail accounts.
- Email formatting basics:
 - Please use a formal greeting, such as ‘Hi,’ ‘Hello,’ or ‘Dear’ and *include the name of the person* to whom the email is addressed.
 - Use multiple paragraphs to breakout the content – doing so improves readability and highlights information!
 - Emails that look like a quickly typed text message may not get a response.

- There is no expectation of email responses for *anyone* in the course after regular business hours – both for learners and the instructor.
- Suggested communication options for questions/comments:
 - Lakehead University email for technical concerns, course procedures,
 - Lectures and office hours, or scheduled meetings for substantive questions,
 - Submit general questions to the Course Questions discussion forum,
 - Schedule a meeting with the instructor for personal questions and issues.

X Student Mental Health

As a university student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. This can happen to any of us, and everyone can benefit from support when feeling overwhelmed or struggling to cope. If you or anyone you know needs help with difficult life events, anxiety, or depression, please reach out to Student Health and Wellness. The office offers free, confidential services to Lakehead students. You can find more information here: [Health Services | Lakehead University](#).

XII Academic Accommodations

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. An accommodation could be needed for health, religious obligations, student activities pregnancy, or (dis)abilities. For an accommodation request, please contact me as soon as the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Accommodation for Students with (Dis)Abilities

Lakehead University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities and/or medical conditions to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you are a student with a disability and think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and register as early as possible. For more information, please visit Student Accessibility here: [Support for Students with Disabilities | Lakehead University](#)

XII Sexual Violence Policy

As a community, Lakehead University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and is survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Lakehead's Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Response Policy. For more information and/or support, visit: [Sexual Violence | Lakehead University](#)

XIII Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is an essential element of a productive and successful academic career. Lakehead's [Academic Integrity Code](#) addresses academic integrity violations, including

plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, misrepresentation, impersonation, withholding of records, obstruction/interference, disruption of instruction or examinations, improper access to and/or dissemination of information, or violation of test and examination rules. It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the university's academic integrity rules.

Plagiarism

The Academic Integrity Code defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include, but are not limited to, the following: books, articles, papers, websites, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, research findings, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- Any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else;
- Using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- Using another’s data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement; and
- Failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence – Prohibited

Generative artificial intelligence (Generative AI or GenAI) is a category of AI systems capable of generating text, images, or other media in response to prompts. These systems include ChatGPT and its variants Bing (built by OpenAI) and Bard (built by Google) among several others. Other Generative AI models include artificial intelligence art systems such as Stable Diffusion, Midjourney, and DALL-E.

Any use of GenAI systems to produce assignments for this course is not permitted. All work submitted for evaluation in this course must be the student's original work. The submission of any work containing AI generated content will be considered a violation of academic integrity standards (“Use of Unauthorized Materials”).

Intellectual Property

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).