

Climate Change Essay Assignment
Value: 25% of final grade
Revised Due Date: Nov 1, 2020
4-5 pages, maximum 1,500 words

Last updated: October 14, 2020

We are in the midst of a global pandemic which has disrupted all over lives, not least of all any momentum towards significant action on climate change. And though there has been a slight reduction of CO₂ output because of reduced economic activity, it will not likely have any meaningful impact on reducing long term climate change impacts. In the meantime, Canada still faces the challenge of meeting its global commitment under the Paris Agreement targets while facing increasing provincial tensions on reaching these targets. To complicate the situation further, our largest trading partner, the United States under President Donald Trump, has largely ignored tackling climate change initiatives and has clearly stated the US will not participate in the Paris Agreement.

Under these circumstances, provide an analysis of what you think Canada's climate change strategy should be, and whether we should abandon, or continue commitment to, or even surpassing our Paris Agreement targets.

Background

After decades of negotiations and inaction on climate change, a new climate change agreement was signed in Paris in December 2015. Within this agreement, countries filed an INDC (intended nationally determined contribution) which was to clearly identify a national plan for reduction including such information as the reference point (e.g. a base year to compare reductions), time frames, and periods of implementation.

Canada submitted an INDC which stated that it “intends to achieve an economy wide target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 30% below 2005 levels by 2030”.

Almost a year later, the Paris Climate Change Accord was ratified (formal validation) on October 5, 2016 when a minimum of 55 parties accounting for at least 55% of the global emissions confirmed their commitment with specific identification of goals and timelines.

Canada announced its plan to fulfill its INDC of an economy wide target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 30% below 2005 levels by 2030, by implementing for any province without a carbon pricing scheme of their own, a basic carbon tax of \$10 a ton starting in 2018, rising by \$10 a ton per year until it reaches C\$50 a ton by 2022. This has become known as the Pan Canadian Framework.

Despite a promising beginning with 11 out of 13 provinces and territories expressing willingness to participate, we now see Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and New Brunswick, all rejecting this approach.

As a backdrop, in June 2017 Donald Trump, following through on one of his campaign promises, announced that the US would be pulling out of the Paris Agreement.

Assignment

In light of the US stated intention to pull out of the Paris Agreement, the struggles of imposing the Pan Canadian Framework among some of the provinces, as well as the strains the Covid pandemic has put on the Canadian economy and potentially shifting priorities, provide an analysis of what you think Canada's climate change strategy should be, and suggestions on how you might achieve this vision.

In your response we encourage you to tackle this from a national perspective, while exploring the relationship between provincial, national, and global interests, targets and processes.

In your analysis you may want to explore climate change policies in various provinces, as well as how other countries share or distribute their climate commitments among their various regions/provinces/states.

To help you get started on your analysis, in addition to the course readings, you may want to review the following:

- Harrison, K. July 8, 2019. The fleeting Canadian harmony on carbon pricing. Policy Options. <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/july-2019/the-fleeting-canadian-harmony-on-carbon-pricing/>
- <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/july-2019/the-evolution-of-carbon-pricing-in-the-provinces/>
- <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/july-2019/carbon-pricing-across-canada/>
- 11 ways to measure clean growth, <https://climatechoices.ca/reports/clean-growth/>
- Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, <https://cape.ca/>
- <http://www.climatenetwork.org/press-release/amidst-rising-climate-disasters-activists-lay-out-vision-worldwewant>
- <https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/maps-tools-publications/publications/climate-change-publications/canada-changing-climate-reports/canadas-changing-climate-report/21177>

Your paper should at a minimum:

- Define the climate change issue and summarize our current knowledge of it, in terms of the scientific, political and philosophical aspects, including interconnections amongst those aspects. (no more than 1 page)
- Identify and provide an analysis of Canada's commitment to tackling climate change: past and present. (1/2 - 1 page)
- Present your analysis of Canada's challenges to fulfilling its climate change initiatives: past, present and best approach moving forward (2 pages):
- Flowing from your analysis, provide one or more recommendations on the direction you think Canada should pursue in the future, whether it be to pull out of any climate initiatives, or to adopt market based strategies, or to provide further incentives to encourage provincial cooperation to promote harmony at home. Justify your chosen course of action with support from reputable sources and reference to the relevant dimension of the problem. Issues of feasibility and implementation should be considered. (1/2 - 1 page)
- Include a clear thesis statement, properly cited sources using the APA format, and be free of spelling and grammatical errors. A first person perspective is encouraged since you are being asked to develop and present your own individual analysis of this situation.

An excellent paper will demonstrate a solid grasp of the issues discussed in class, as well as a thorough understanding of the current climate change situation globally, in Canada and more regionally through independent research and analysis of a variety of readings. It will integrate this material into an analysis of the issues, demonstrate awareness of the current debates surrounding climate change and policy implementation, and include your own original thoughts.

You will be evaluated on the paper's form, writing style, structure, precision & accuracy, and analysis (see below for further details on these criteria).

You are expected to demonstrate your capacity to integrate the course readings with supporting independent research into a well-documented interdisciplinary analysis of a critical environmental problem.

Your sources for this assignment should include:

- Course readings (You must document your use of these sources as you would any others).
- A minimum of 5 other references, in addition to those used from your course readings and presented here in the essay instructions. Such sources should be

drawn from reliable professional or academic sources engaged in the public debate. We caution you to be extra vigilant in determining the validity and authority of the authors and sources before inclusion in your own analysis.

Examples of such sources include (but are not limited to):

- Academic books and journal articles
- Government and industry websites;
- think tanks and environmental non government organizations, and
- mainstream media

Please keep in mind that this paper is a *short* paper – we expect you to stick within the set length limits, and will penalize papers that are too long. Keeping it short is challenging, but those of you who are able to cover all of the relevant points and be concise will show real mastery of the issues.

Formatting

Your paper should have:

- A representative assignment title, the course title and number, your TA's name, your name and student number;
- page numbers;
- use 12 point font, 1 inch margins, double spaced
- a separate page for references; and,
- A final word count of the body of the paper on the last page at the bottom right. Not to exceed 1500 words. Do not include your separate page of references in the word count.

Documentation of Sources

When writing an assignment or academic paper such as this one, you *must* acknowledge the sources from which you took information or ideas, specific facts which you use as evidence in your argument, and the authors of distinctive or authoritative ideas. This allows your reader to look to those sources for further information, or to confirm your information.

You should not be citing your lecture notes or instructor within this assignment. Instead you should be citing the appropriate readings or other documented sources to support your statements.

If you have questions about when and why you should be using citations, please see the handout How Not to Plagiarize from the University of Toronto Writing Centre (<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>).

In this assignment, the preference is for the **APA formatting style** which consists of an in-text citation method that consists of the surname(s) of the author(s) and the year of publication. For more information review the handout Standard Documentation Formats (<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/documentation>), which includes instructions on documenting online and digital sources.

Keep in mind, you must document *all* of your sources, including

- Course Readings
- Additional articles or policy statements
- Digital and Online Sources

This is not a group project. You are required to work independently on this assignment, and to submit your own original work. We check vigilantly for plagiarism; for assistance with any writing issues, we encourage you to use the resources of the writing centres: www.writing.utoronto.ca.

(Some information contained here is summarized from Dr. Margaret Proctor's handout *How Not to Plagiarize*, University of Toronto 2008)

Administrative Details

Submission of assignments:

We will be using Turnitin.com within the course Quercus online assignment function. With Turnitin.com normally "students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com 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 Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site".

If a student does not wish to participate in Turnitin, the student **MUST** advise the head TA (Susan Frye; s.frye@mail.utoronto.ca) immediately as alternate arrangements for screening the assignment must be arranged.

To avoid late penalties the essay assignment must be submitted to Quercus before **midnight of November 1, 2020.**

When submitting your assignment on Quercus, the file should be saved in a single Word file, with an extension of .doc or .docx. **Do not submit pdf files.** The title of your file should follow the format: "LastnameFirstname.doc". Please ensure that the file name reflects the name as registered on ACORN, and not a nickname or shorten version of your official ACORN name.

Late penalties

The late penalty will be **2.5 percent of the assignment grade per day** late, including each day of the weekend, and will only be waived with a completed Absence Declaration on ACORN.

Please note that the declaration must cover the period of time you missed, e.g. the week before the assignment/essay is due, etc.

Assignments will NOT be accepted one week past the due date even if accompanied by an Absence Declaration unless prior approval has been obtained. All such requests should be directed to the head TA: Susan Frye (s.frye@mail.utoronto.ca).

Academic Integrity

The following is taken directly from the Faculty of Arts and Science Academic Integrity website (<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/students>):

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement, and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves.

Familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto's *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>). It is the rule book for academic behaviour at the U of T, and you are expected to know the rules. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Copying material word-for-word from a source (including lecture and study group notes) and not placing the words within quotation marks.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Including references to sources that you did not use.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment including
 - working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work,
 - having someone rewrite or add material to your work while "editing".
- Lending your work to a classmate who submits it as his/her own without your permission.

On tests and exams:

- Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone.
- Looking at someone else's answers
- Letting someone else look at your answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.

- Submitting an altered test for re-grading.

Misrepresentation:

- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including doctor's notes.
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.

The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the *Code*. The consequences for academic misconduct can be severe, including a failure in the course and a notation on your transcript. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, seek out additional information from me, or from other available campus resources like the [U of T Writing Website](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca). If you are experiencing personal challenges that are having an impact on your academic work, please speak to me or seek the advice of your college registrar. See also the handout "How Not to Plagiarize," Margaret Proctor, 2009, available online at <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>

Evaluation criteria

The primary criteria used in evaluating written work are the following.

Form:

Defined as freedom from spelling and grammatical errors. Students are expected to include thorough, accurate and consistent references in any academic referencing style that includes page numbering which is included in the document "Standard Documentation Formats" available at: www.utoronto.ca/writing/document.html

Writing style:

Defined as clarity, succinctness, appropriate diction and tone.

Structure:

Defined as coherence of the organization of the paper. The logic of the structure is determined by the purpose, which is to test a hypothesis, answer a research question or defend a thesis statement.

Precision and accuracy:

Precision means saying exactly and specifically what you mean, avoiding vague generalities. Accuracy refers to absence of major factual errors.

Analysis:

Student essays are expected to include critical distance, reflection and originality of thought. The written assignments will be evaluated on the defensibility of their analysis in terms of their use of evidence and logical coherence.