

SCI 199Y, L0411, 2008–9: Probabilities Everywhere

MINOR PAPER ASSIGNMENT

Worth: 20% of your final course grade.

Due Date: Before 3:00 p.m. on **Monday December 1**, in my office (Sid Smith 6024). (You are of course welcome to hand in your paper **earlier** instead.) If I am not in when you come by, then slip your paper under my office door.

Class discussion requirement: In class on **Wednesday November 19**, come prepared to discuss your Minor Paper topic and ideas and plan with other students. (You should have made significant progress by then.)

The Assignment

You are to write a short (5–10 pages typed double-spaced) paper on a topic which is related to some aspect of the course materials. The main criteria for a successful paper are: It should show that you have thought carefully about the topic; it should add something new to the course (not just repeating what we've already said, not just copying from what we have read or from some other source); it should be interesting; it should be well organised; and it should be well written.

The topic and style of the paper are quite flexible, provided that it is clearly linked to topics that have been discussed in class. It could be mathematical or non-mathematical in nature. It could present a particular opinion or “thesis”, or it could present a topic in a balanced or neutral way. It could be written in the first person or not. The precise formatting of such things as references, footnotes, headings, etc. is up to you, provided you make it clear which parts of your paper are taken from which other sources, and that you make your paper easy to read and to follow.

Possible ways that your paper could add to the course include: library research into your topic; critical analysis of class or outside readings; extending and/or explaining the mathematical ideas studied in class; considering how ideas discussed in class might apply to some historical or world or personal event(s); describing the results of some experiment you perform (on your friends?) related to probabilities. Your paper does not have to include all of these aspects, but it should include at least one of them. Try to be creative.

Notes:

1. You may discuss the general ideas of your paper with others, and you may have others proofread your work. But the main ideas and writing of the paper should be done entirely by you.

2. For best results, do not write a paper which only presents your own opinions, without any research or evidence to back them up. Similarly, do not write a paper which only summarises outside readings, without any analysis or discussion or insight of your own. Ideally, your paper should combine various aspects of your own thinking and analysis, with additional research or experimentation.
3. Be sure to indicate what aspects of your paper are taken from which references and other sources. The precise *format* of your citations is up to you (as long as it is clear); what is most important is that you precisely explain which ideas come from which other sources. For guidelines see e.g.:

<http://www.utoronto.ca/ucwriting/paraphrase.html>
4. Please include your surname and the page number at the top or bottom of each page (not including the cover page, if any).
5. U of T has loads of writing centres and library assistance to help you research and write your essay; see the links at the bottom of the course web page (probability.ca/sci199). It is best if you consult them early, i.e. several weeks before your essay is due.
6. If you are having trouble choosing a topic, or finding the information that you need, then you may ask me for assistance.
7. The Major Paper (worth 30% of your final course grade) will be due in March/April. It will also be flexible regarding the choice of topic. Details to be announced later.