



GSSA Survival Guide

Information for New Students

This guide is for incoming graduate students at the Department of Sociology—University of Toronto. While it details many of the ‘little things’ that students will need to know to get situated, it can also give prospective students a sense of some of the services provided by our department.

Welcome New Students!

Orientation week can be a daunting experience. There’s a lot of new information to absorb, and it is not always clear who to ask – or even what to ask about. The information in this guide is intended to help bring context to the student experience, and to fill in a lot of the details. This way you can spend orientation week meeting other students and faculty rather than worry about where to store your books or how to get an email account!

You will be bombarded with orientations and gatherings your first week here. We strongly recommend that you attend them so that you can receive important information, meet faculty and students, and start to feel a part of the department! It is understandable if you feel overwhelmed by the information overload, but just know that most new students feel that way.

Orientation dates for new students are normally announced mid- to late-summer. The GSSA typically has a few hours slotted during the departmental orientation to run through some things that we think you should know.

In addition to the departmental orientation, the GSSA also holds a more informal “orientation” for new and returning students. This is separate from the department one and will be at a local restaurant/bar near the department. The GSSA hosts this, and most of the snacks and beverages will be paid for by the GSSA. This gives new students a chance to ask questions to returning students, meet returning and incoming students, and gives returning students an opportunity to catch up.

You will also be required to attend a paid TA training seminar/meeting that lasts for three hours, which includes a lunch. This training is typically held on a Friday morning, within the first few weeks of school beginning.



Some tips on socializing at the orientation:

1. **“So what are you interested in?”** – When you arrive, a lot of people, particularly the faculty, will ask questions about your sociological interests. Many people find it difficult to answer the question because often they aren't really sure – and that's good. But remember that faculty are trying to be friendly, find new research assistants, and gauge who may be interested in their courses – they are not grading you. So it's useful to give them a brief sense of what courses you've enjoyed, what ideas you've been thinking about, or what sort of skill sets you have. And they are not necessarily looking for a perfect sales pitch, or even a clear idea, just something to talk about and a way to get to know you as a new student.
2. **“I'm an impostor!”** – University of Toronto has a respected reputation in Canada and internationally. So when you hear about the accomplishments of other students, including senior students and other members of your cohort, you might be asking yourself, why did they ever select me? Have no fear, this department receives a very large number of applications, so if you're here, it's because they believe in your potential. Moreover, students who arrive here generally finish and do very well. No one is trying to weed you out and no one is expecting you to 'prove yourself' on the spot. So relax and enjoy yourself. You're about to build some of the most rewarding relationships of your life, and begin what can be the most satisfying chapter of your education.
3. **Stay Connected!** – Ways to get involved within the department include becoming an executive member of the GSSA (Graduate Sociology Student's Association), where decisions are made on behalf of the graduate students about departmental issues. The GSSA will be looking for new people to fill some of the executive positions, so keep your eyes open for the postings. Remember, in order for the GSSA to provide graduate students with social and education events, we need your participation. If you think you may like to participate, please come to the meetings and we would be happy to have you.

Important Contacts:

Graduate Coordinator: Dr. Candace Kruttschnitt (c.kruttschnitt@utoronto.ca)

Graduate Administrator: Kai-Lii Veer (sociology.graduate@utoronto.ca).

IT Administrator: John Manalo (soctech.help@utoronto.ca)

Business Officer: Anne Shipley (anne.shipley@utoronto.ca)

Current GSSA President: Jess Collins (jess.collins@utoronto.ca)

CUPE 3902 Sociology Steward: Sean Hayes (s.hayes@utoronto.ca)



GSSA website: <http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~gssa>

GSSA Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2494040861>

GSSA Twitter: www.twitter.com/uoftgssa

U of T Sociology Checklist

Things to think about over the summer or ASAP in September

- Read all of the important info/websites/mail that you receive from SGS and the department
- Look for course outlines and timetable on the internet. The course listings for the 2010-2011 school year is available on the Sociology department webpage.
- Check out some of the faculty profiles to get a sense of what teaching and research opportunities are at the department. If you attended the meet and greet in the spring, take another look at the research profiles given to you in the coiled handbook.
- Ensure that your Teaching Assistant (T.A.) application form is into Kai-Lii Veer by the application deadline
- Get your Student Card (T-Card) at Robarts library (see later in document for more on that)
- Use your new student number (on your T-card) to get your UTOR email address. You will need to forward your new U of T e-mail to John Manalo ASAP so that you can get onto SOCGRAD. You can also apply for a CHASS account if you wish (may be important for M.A. students taking introductory statistics).
- Email the GSSA president to have your email address added to Soctalk (see note on Soctalk later in this document). The 2009-2010 GSSA president is Jess Collins. The new 2010-2011 GSSA president will be elected at a GSSA meeting early in the fall term – stay tuned for an announcement of this meeting via SOCTALK.
- Get involved! Think about how you can contribute to the graduate student life by running for a GSSA position. Elections are held shortly after orientation week. Even if you don't formally run for a GSSA position, there are lots of ways you can get involved in the GSSA by helping organize events, promoting the GSSA to the department, or just by showing up to GSSA events!

- See Kai-Lii Veer to get important forms, etc.
- Start OGS/SSHRC applications (more on that later)
- If applicable, fill out **tuition deferment form** and give to Kai-Lii. This is essential as tuition payments are often due in August for those who do not fill out the appropriate form (www.sgs.utoronto.ca/current/studentforms/index.asp)
- Defer student loans (ex: Schedule 2 form for those with previous OSAP loans) at the School of Graduate Studies
- Talk to Anne Shipley (Business Officer) about your key assignment, student card programming, and creating a photocopy code
- Update information on ROSI system, especially your address if you're moving, so that you can still receive important information (www.rosi.utoronto.ca). It is also important to ensure that your direct deposit banking information is added to ROSI so that there is no delay in getting your fellowship and TA money at the end of September.
- Talk to your assigned academic advisor. You should try and meet with them early so that you can plan your class schedule and they can sign your course selection forms.
- Read the sociology graduate handbook (see PDF link at www.utoronto.ca/sociology/graduate/index.html). This handbook is outdated, so always check information with the graduate chair

Academic Advisor:

New students are usually assigned an "academic advisor"—a professor whom you can ask academic- or program-related questions. Meeting with this professor can be very beneficial to help you plan your course load, choose a professor to work with as a T.A./R.A., and to help you navigate through the MA/PhD program. This advisor will not necessarily be your supervisor or committee member, and will have no hard feelings if you choose someone else.



Student Contacts:

Often you may feel alone and isolated, and even unworthy of being in grad school. You may feel that you are not smart enough to be a grad student and that you don't have what it takes to be in academia. This is NOT the case. Many students feel this. Please talk to other graduate students for support and to help you navigate your way through the program (even if they seem confident, they are most likely just as nervous as you are!). If you have any questions or concerns before you arrive in September, please feel free to contact Amy Klassen at amy.klassen@utoronto.ca, Jess Grimaldi at jess.grimaldi@utoronto.ca, or Jess Collins at jess.collins@utoronto.ca. The GSSA has a website at <http://chass.utoronto.ca/~gssa>. The GSSA has its own Facebook site (U of T Grad Sociologists: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2494040861>) as well as a Twitter account (UofTGSSA: www.twitter.com/uoftgssa).

Graduate Administrator:

Kai-Lii Veer - Room 286, (416) 978-3414, sociology.graduate@utoronto.ca. Get to know the department's administrative coordinator, Kai-Lii Veer. She may be the most important person you meet in your first year! She is there to help you at the beginning of the school year to help get you organized. She will give you your course selection sheet, graduate handbook, and any other important info that she has for you at the time. Do your best to make her life easier by paying attention to deadlines!

Classes/Timetables:

Tentative course offerings are currently available on the department's website. A timetable is usually available, and the course outlines/syllabi will be posted on the sociology website (where available). You have three weeks or so before you need to officially register for courses with Kai-Lii, which gives you an opportunity to explore available courses and figure out which ones interest you. Do not worry if you do not have a clear class schedule before classes start. Many of us have not made our final decisions before classes start.

Classes usually run until the beginning of December, meeting once a week for two hours. There is often a major paper due at the end of each course (although, some courses have projects/essays due throughout the semester). Many students find themselves swamped in December finishing essays, projects, and marking exams if they have a T.A. position. It is a good idea to get started on your major papers early in the term to avoid having several due at the end of December right before you go on holidays.

Workload:

Many students find that they are only able to take 3 courses at a time because the workload can be heavy - especially if they are T.A.ing/R.A.ing as well. Students who are ambitious and/or have relatively few other commitments can take 4 courses at once. In reality, many students, particularly in the PhD program, only take 2 classes per term, in order to juggle the other demands placed on our time. Talking to current grad students is a good way to find out what to expect, which will help with your decision. One approach is to look at combining courses that have different course requirements (for example, mixing courses that require a final essay with courses that require weekly essays or response papers). Note, however, that MA students need to take the required statistics, classical theory, and qualitative methods courses (the first two of which are typically offered in the fall term), so you may be constrained by the timetable of required courses to some extent.

Ideally, grad students take 3 courses in each semester and then 2 courses in the summer. However, course offerings in the summer are very limited, which is a very important consideration. You may be able to arrange a "reading course" from a professor; we would suggest that you don't leave this sort of arrangement to the last minute, and that when you contact a professor to discuss the possibility of a reading course, you already have an idea of what you'd like to get out of the reading course, what a particular focus might be, etc. Alternatively, you can take a course at another department.

Tip: Professors do not get any financial compensation for running a reading course, and are not obligated to accept one. However, under most circumstances, any faculty member will agree to host a reading/independent study course. The best way to ensure they accept is to clearly show your enthusiasm for the course material, be interested in engaging the professor's own research, and to highlight your ability to work independently and meet your deadline.

For Ph.D. students, four years might seem like a long time to write a dissertation (note: four years is according to the SGS website; see www.sgs.utoronto.ca/current/progress/index.asp). The average time to completion in this department is 6.5 to 7 years. SGS and Arts and Science are currently reviewing the number of extensions PhD students can apply for. Yet, it's frequently not enough – and for good reason. You are required to do much more than the dissertation: requisite courses, comprehensive exams, the dissertation proposal, etc – in addition to Teaching Assistantships, Research Assistantships, attending professional conferences, and so forth. One way to use your time efficiently but beneficially is to try to aim your coursework toward your dissertation. Each comprehensive exam has a fixed reading list and a pre-determined committee. There is not a lot of flexibility to tailor the comps to meet your interests, so use your courses as an opportunity to explore your research interests. MA students are expected to complete their program within 1 year.

You must make sure that you remain in “good academic standing” through out your program. PhD students are required to maintain an A- average during their course work to remain in good academic standing. Please check the SGS handbook or website (see above link) to ensure that you are where you should be. SGS has policies in place which aim to ensure timely progress through the PhD program. You can find out about these policies in the SGS calendar (www.sgs.utoronto.ca/current/calendar) or you can always ask the graduate chair of the sociology department for more information.

Funding:

Guaranteed graduate student funding packages are offered to all incoming students and many present students. The current guaranteed minimum funding package is tuition plus \$15,000 per year for the first year of your Master’s program or for the first four years of your PhD program. These funding packages are composed of Teaching Assistantships, Research Assistantships, and fellowships. Your specific funding package will be clearly detailed in a letter from the graduate office. It is possible to receive more funding by applying for additional TAs, RAs and fellowships. By collective agreement, no more than 210 hours of Teaching Assistant work may be counted towards the guaranteed minimum funding package. The 2010/2011 wage rate for graduate student TAs is \$39.92/hour plus 4% vacation pay. Extra teaching assistantships are an excellent way to improve your funding.

Unlike the Teaching Assistant contract, there is no standard contract for Research Assistants. While some RA positions pay as low as \$15/hr, others pay up to \$25/hr. Usually RA positions pay \$20/hr. Make sure you negotiate your work right from the beginning, and don’t settle for less than what you are comfortable with! We anticipate that most graduate students will work an average of at least 10 hrs/week over 8 months. In a worst-case scenario, graduate students may have to work up to 25 hours per week, over 8 months, as a Research Assistant. These hours are in addition to the approximately 10 hours per week graduate students work as Teaching Assistants. Although there is no formal agreement on the maximum amount of RA work that is counted towards the guaranteed funding package, recent practice has been to count approximately \$1500 of RA work towards the funding package.

You are paid once a month (on the 28th, or the weekday immediately preceding the 28th – when in doubt check the schedule posted outside Anne Shipley’s office). Payroll is done through direct deposit. Therefore you must have a Canadian bank account and you must give the graduate administrator a void check so that your pay can be deposited into your account. Paydays are posted outside of Anne Shipley’s office; they take place during the last week of every month. Your fellowship money comes in three instalments: September, January, and May.

Pay stubs are distributed electronically. Login to view your pay stub for casual employees at:

http://www.ams.utoronto.ca/Services/Campus_Business_Connect/Services/Human_Resources/casual.htm

SSHRC, CIHR, and OGS

In addition to the internal university of Toronto fellowships, there are also a number of external awards that students should apply for. The three most prominent are the SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) fellowship, CIHR doctoral fellowship, and the Ontario Graduate Scholarship. If you have an open fellowship, Connaught Fellowship, or any other internal (U of T) fellowship/scholarship you **MUST** apply for an OGS in order to renew the internal award. In addition, students must apply for SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada) and CIHR (Canadian Institutes for Health Research) funding as well. These deadlines are in early October; check details with Kai-Lii and watch for postings on Soctalk.

The SSHRC and CIHR processes are very time consuming and the program of study will likely require several drafts before it is ready for submission. It is important for you to be thinking carefully over the summer about your SSHRC or CIHR application. It is advisable for you to come with a preliminary draft ready in September. The faculty and successful student applicants are very helpful with SSHRC and CIHR applications, but in order for you to benefit the most from this assistance, you need to have a draft ready for them to look at.

This department has had quite a bit of success with SSHRC applications; however, there is a quota in place for the number of applications that can be referred onto SGS. For example, for the 2009-2010 competition, only 6 applications were forwarded onto SGS. The quota for 2010-2011 will be announced in September and is determined based on the number of successful SSHRC applications in the 2009-2010 competition. The SSHRC application process is a 3 stage process. Students in the department are initially ranked and the top ranked students (depending on the quota number) are then forwarded to SGS. Those applications forwarded to SGS will be re-ranked by a multi-disciplinary committee and the top ranked applications are then forwarded to the national competition. The final decision on who wins a SSHRC funding is determined by a multi-disciplinary committee. All completed SSHRC applications are to be handed into Kai-Lii and she will forward them onto the awards committee. Results of the SSHRC competition are often not released until the beginning of May.

Please be advised that SSHRC no longer funds health-related projects. Students proposing health-related projects must apply to CIHR. If you are unsure whether your proposal is health-related or not, please see the graduate chair or Kai-Lii Veer for more information.

As some of you may know, there are 3 scholarship routes available from SSHRC: Vanier (\$50,000/yr for 3 yrs), Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship

(\$35,000/yr for 3 yrs), and SSHRC doctoral fellowships (\$20,000 for up to 4 years depending on your eligibility). You can apply up to your third year (meaning you would get funded for one year, which would be your fourth PhD year).

Students thinking of applying to CIHR must send their application directly to CIHR. There is not formal vetting process within the department for CIHR like that of SSHRC. Please refer to CIHR's web site for more details on eligibility and deadlines.

OGS is awarded for one year and is currently worth \$15,000. Like the SSHRC, OGS works in lieu of the Open Fellowship, for the year that it is awarded. If you have not had either OGS or SSHRC for four years, you can apply for an OGS in your fifth year of Ph.D. study. In addition to the financial benefits, these awards are considered prestigious and it is worth taking the application seriously. All OGS applications are submitted to Kai-Lii Veer and will all be forwarded to OGS. Keep in mind that the deadline to apply for scholarships may differ between the website guidelines and the departmental guidelines. In other words, the departmental deadline to apply for funding is much earlier than the OGS and SSHRC deadlines. Please refer to OGS's website for more detail.

All three applications are done online (but paper copies must also be submitted to Kai-Lii by the designated deadline dates). You will need to order transcripts from your old school for these awards, and that might take some time—so get on it! You'll also need two letters or reference for each application – if you are incoming, these letters should come from professors at your previous department, or managers at your most recent workplace (if it was research/academic related). These references will want to read your statement of interest before they finish your letter, so it is a good idea to have a draft ready for them so that they have a reasonable time for turnaround – and while you can email your statement to them, remember they need time to mail their reference letter to Toronto.

There are usually workshops on the SSHRC applications and OGS applications, so watch out for them over the summer and in September. It is strongly recommended that you attend these. Additionally, our department has a collection of past SSHRC winning applications that you can use as inspiration.

Related websites:

OGS: http://osap.gov.on.ca/eng/not_secure/OGS.htm

SSHRC: http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/students_e.asp

CIHR: www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca

Teaching Assistant Positions:

You should have already received an e-mail about the TA applications in early July. TA applications are done on-line and they are time sensitive. Please ensure that you apply for TAs before the deadline to ensure that you have a TA position for the 2010-2011 year.

If you are a Ph.D. student and secure a T.A. job, you are entitled to three consecutive terms of at least the same number of hours (the maximum 8 month appointment is 280 hours; our department usually hires T.A.'s for the full 280 hour appointment). M.A. students can also secure T.A. jobs. A T.A. job can be held on the downtown St. George campus or at either of the suburban campuses (UTM or UTSC). T.A. positions at the suburban campuses require separate applications. Watch out for deadlines!

Official interviews usually take place in September, and T.A. positions are assigned up until early October. Note that jobs are not official until contracts are signed in September.

Please note that the department is under no obligation to offer TA positions over the summer. While there is often some TA hours available over the summer, they are greatly reduced compared to the fall and winter terms. It is essential that you budget you money wisely so that you are prepared for the potential decrease in TA money over the summer.

Teaching Assistants' Union:

Once you are hired as a T.A., you are automatically a bargaining unit member of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 3902 Unit 1. The union provides support and information about all aspects of the collective agreement (the legal document that outlines our rights and privileges as teaching assistants) and your working relationship with the University of Toronto. Make sure you look over your copy of the collective agreement which you will receive at the T.A. training day. Keep a record of your T.A. hours; the collective agreement booklet contains a timesheet for this purpose. If you have questions or concerns about any aspect of your employment relationship, consult your departmental steward or the Union office. You can contact the departmental steward about union information, the collective agreement, benefits, problems, or concerns etc. The union is here to help you and should be consulted if you are facing any work related problems.

Here is some information on CUPE:

CUPE local 3902 (www.cupe3902.org); info@cupe3902.org; 416-593-7057

Subsequent Appointments:

Graduate student members of CUPE 3902 are guaranteed subsequent appointments equal to the TA appointment they received in the first academic session (September to April or May to August) in which they were first hired. Master's students are guaranteed one year of subsequent appointment and PhD students are guaranteed three. For example, a PhD student who receives 280 hours of work in their first academic session must be hired for at least 280 hours in the next three years of their program. Subsequent appointments must be assigned in the same academic session as the original appointment. If you do not want to undertake your subsequent appointment in a given year, it may be deferred for future use.

Research Assistant Positions:

Research Assistants (R.A.'s) do work for their professors - writing, filing, reading, going to the library, transcribing, running data, etc. These positions are often not advertised. If you want to work as an R.A. you should keep your ears open and apply for jobs you hear about and that interest you. Also, introduce yourself to the faculty and let them know your area of interest. If they are acquainted with you and know your work they will be more likely to hire you without advertising the position. RA hours are considered part of the funding package but are often not officially designated until January.

During orientation week, you will have the opportunity to listen to professors during an info session who have research positions available (either immediate positions or future opportunities). It is important to attend this session, as it gives you the chance to see what kind of research is happening in the department, as well as to hear about research that may match your interests. You will be given an R.A. handbook during this time, which outlines professor's research projects based on the department's core areas. Professors are available during this time to discuss R.A. positions that you might be interested in.

Keep in mind that some students may experience complications in their R.A. work, so it is important to talk with others about your working situation, be open with the professor that you are working for, and write down arrangements that you've made with the professor (such as hours, job description, authorship, etc).

Tip: Some RAships are the start of a long-term working/research relationship, whereas others are simply work for pay. Both students and professors have different expectations about what sort of RA they are getting into, so be aware of the distinction. RAs that offer mentorship opportunities are often rewarding, but they are also frequently more demanding. RAs where tasks are clearly delineated are often more straightforward and the hours are much more easily accounted for.

Tip: Email communication about your RA work is still RA work - remember to keep track of time spent on email as well as time on other tasks.

Finding a Supervisor or Course Instructor:

With more than 50 faculty members on three campuses, the sociology department can be difficult to get a handle on. Asking other students what their experiences have been with professors in your area of interest is one way to try to find a compatible professor. Know that professors vary in their willingness to be a mentor for new students, and even if they really enjoy taking in graduate students, some already have a number of students from other recent cohorts. Make sure you keep an open mind, and that you meet faculty members for yourselves and sit in on courses before you form any fixed judgments.

Tip: There is no perfect professor, but some professors fit some students better than others - both in terms of academic interest and personality. Get a diversity of opinions and decide for yourself. When looking around, here are some things to consider: how available is this professor, what fast is the turnaround on reading your work and giving feedback, are they active in professional associations, do they expect you to RA for them, are they up for tenure in the next couple years, do you feel good/empowered after having a discussion with them.

Introduce yourself to faculty members and ask their areas of interest. (There are plenty of parties at the beginning of the year to help facilitate meeting them, or you could just email them and ask about them or tell them about yourself.) Some professors keep regular office hours, some are in their offices (on the third floor) all the time, and others work better by making appointments with students. Professors cannot know about you unless you tell them what you are interested in. In some cases, you can actually get involved with their research projects and earn some extra money as a research assistant.

Offices:

Office assignments are usually made at the beginning of September. It should be noted that, as the number of admitted graduate students expands, the space available for graduate students decreases. Space issues will continue to arise in the future.

Ph.D. students are often assigned shared offices with 3 or 5 other students. These offices are equipped with desks, bookshelves, and filing cabinets. Each office also has outlets for the internet, and one phone. Offices typically hold 3 to 5 students; however, you will find that some of your office mates do not use their office space on a regular basis. It is up to you to talk with your office mates when you arrive to work out space issues (for bookshelves and desk space) and to find a common ground for sharing an office. It is perfectly fine for you to bring in additional shelving, but you cannot mount it on the wall, and you cannot remove any of the furniture that is currently there.

The M.A. students currently share a space with each other on the third floor. Desks and shelves are to be shared.

There are telephones in the offices for your use - dial 9 first to make an outside call.



Health Insurance:

As a graduate student you are automatically enrolled in the GSU's health insurance program. See the GSU's website for details (www.gsu.utoronto.ca). You must pay out of pocket first and get reimbursed later. UHIP (health insurance for international students) is available. Check it out at the International Students' Centre, 33 St. George St.; www.isc.utoronto.ca; 416-978-2564.

In addition, as members of CUPE 3902 Unit 1 you have access to an Health Care Spending Account which provides up to an additional \$800 (with \$300 of this amount reserved for dental expenses) per year to cover out of pocket health and dental expenses. Partners and dependent children of CUPE 3902 Unit 1 members are each entitled to an additional \$800 HSCA of their own. For information on the HSCA consult the departmental steward or the union website directly (<http://www.cupe3902.org/benefits/unit-1/>).

GSU Handbook:

The Graduate Students' Union (GSU) Survival Handbook will be available at the department after you register. You can pick up the handbook from Kai-Lii Veer. It's an excellent resource. You'll find information about GSU services (there's a pub and gym for instance), housing, health services, barriers to completion, supervision, procedures for dealing with human rights complaints, and other campus resources for graduate students.

Benefit Funds:

CUPE 3902 Unit 1 members are eligible to apply to a number of benefit funds that are administered by the union. Funds are available for student parents; international students who have to pay UHIP premiums for themselves, partners or dependent children; students who are not in the funded cohort; students in professional masters programs and new graduate student TAs at the U of T. For information on fund eligibility and deadlines, consult the departmental steward, the union office or <http://www.cupe3902.org/benefits/unit-1/financial-assistance/>.

Leave and Other Benefits:

The CUPE 3902 Unit 1 Collective Agreement provides a number of other benefits. These include sick leave, maternity/parental leave, bereavement leave and compassionate leave. You are also entitled to bus tickets for work related travel to the satellite campuses as well as photocopying and other course related materials for courses you are TAing/teaching. Again if you have any questions consult the Collective Agreement, the union website or the departmental steward.



Union Dues:

As a member of the CUPE 3902 bargaining unit you are required to pay dues equal to 2.45% of your gross pay. On a 280 hour TAs hip, this is equal to approximately \$35 per month. Dues are automatically deducted from your pay as per the Collective Agreement. Because you pay dues, you have access to all union benefits and services at no extra cost. Also, union dues are tax deductible when filing your income tax return.

Student Cards:

It's a good idea to get your T-Card (Student ID card/library card) in the summer. There will be long line-ups in September for this process. Go to Robarts Library Room 2054A. You will need to show two pieces of ID - one with photo ID and one with your student number (your Offer of Admission letter or fee invoice will work). For hours of service check the website— www.utoronto.ca/tcard/. Email: tcard.office@utoronto.ca; 416-946-8047

Building Access and Keys:

For after hours access to the building and computer labs you will need to have your student card programmed by Anne Shipley - Business Officer, ashipley@chass.utoronto.ca (416) 978-8267.

For a deposit of \$20, Anne will also provide you with your office key (once your office has been assigned). Your office key will also allow you to open the mail room and the graduate kitchen. At 5 pm, when the administrative assistants usually leave, the building the front door to the department automatically locks. It opens again at 9 am. You need to take your student card with you to be able to get back in, even if you just leave for a coffee or go to the washroom. The men's washroom inside the department can be locked from the inside and is used as a unisex washroom after 5 pm (so lock it behind you!) so no one has to leave the security of the locked doors at night. After hours or on weekends you need to use your student card to get back into the building by swiping it at the Spadina/Bloor entrance. Make sure you close the door firmly behind you.

Mailroom:

The mailroom is room #234. Inside you will find mailboxes in alphabetical order (currently shared with all other students of the same first letter of their last name). There is also a photocopier for departmental use, fax machine, and fine paper recycling bin. The faculty and staff also have mailboxes here, and you may be requested to use them to hand in assignments to your professors throughout the year. Due to the nature of some of the information in this room, undergrads are not permitted.

Photocopy Account:

Anne Shipley can provide you with a photocopy account code. You pay the bill for your copying when Anne puts an invoice in your mailbox. The copies are 3 cents each. You can pay the bill by writing a cheque to the University of Toronto and giving it to Anne, or by seeing her in her office and providing cash to settle the account. The billing is not monthly, but when Anne finds it to be an appropriate time to settle the accounts.

ROSI (Repository of Student Information):

ROSI has a number of important services for students. You can use it to access your academic history, personal timetable, financial account, tax forms, transcripts, and more.

Ensure that your address is changed on ROSI so you will get your mail from the university - including cheques or tuition information. www.rosi.utoronto.ca

It is important to update your bank information on ROSI before you come to U of T in the fall. This is because your funding, as well as your pay from T.A.ships/R.A.ships is sent to you via direct deposit. Sometimes funding is released in the last week of August if you have received scholarships, for example. However, the funds cannot be sent unless your direct deposit information is updated on ROSI.

E-Mail Accounts:

Email communication is very common at the University of Toronto. For most professors and working relationships, it is actually the primary way of keeping in contact and sharing documents. As such, you should get into the habit of checking your email everyday, even if you don't mail very frequently. In general, people feel that it is inappropriate to wait longer than 2 days to answer a message.

The University of Toronto offers two types of accounts to sociology students. The first is your UTOR account, which you are guaranteed as a student at the University of Toronto. Information about how to get a UTOR account is here: <https://www.utorid.utoronto.ca/>. Once you have it, you can check it from an email client (recommended), or through the web at <http://my.utoronto.ca/> (it's a pop-up). Our system administrator and computer committee representative are both in the know about this stuff.

The second is a CHASS (Computing in the Humanities and Social Sciences) account. These accounts are only available to humanities and social sciences students. This account can be set up at Information Commons (in Robarts Library) when you register. This account will let you access the "mainframe" where data sets are placed, so you can do your SAS runs for the M.A. stats class both at home and at school without installing the software or downloading data sets. Ann Sorenson, the M.A. stats professor, also

prefers that people learn to use the "mainframe" for their statistics projects - as this is how she does all her work and she is also familiar with it.

Both accounts have space limits, and UTOR is actually quite stingy. Some students have taken to forwarding all UTOR mail to a Google mail account (gmail.com) as it has very large storage. Others simply download messages to a personal computer and delete them from the server. If you don't delete them, the administrators will delete them for you, so stay ahead. You can check your quota at the utorid.utoronto.ca web address.

Computer Labs:

All graduate students have access to the computer labs. You need a valid student card to gain entry. The basement computer lab needs valid student card access to get onto the hallway as well as the lab. Anne Shipley will take care of this when she programs your student card for off-hours access to the department. Currently the most used graduate computing lab is on the second floor. There is also a lab downstairs, near the multi-media classroom. The second floor lab is a secured space with an alarm system and has 11 PC's, 1 Mac as well as a laser printer, scanner, and two CD burners. Printing is also available in the lab. By September, an account should be set up for you in the lab; contact John Manalo (soctech.help@utoronto.ca). This account will allow you to save information to your personal hard drive space on the server, and it will keep track of your printing. If you need more hard drive space or a greater printing allotment contact John Manalo to discuss this.

There are two additional computer labs in the basement of the building. One is the teaching lab, which is inaccessible to graduate students most of the time. The second is the graduate statistics lab. The computers in this lab are generally faster and more powerful than the ones upstairs. It is often used by students in both the introductory and intermediate stats classes during the year.

Soctalk:

The sociology grad student list-serve is called Soctalk and will probably become an invaluable source of information and a good way to get a feel for the department. You will be given information on how to set up the Soctalk list-serve when you arrive in the fall.

If you have a question that no one around you seems to be able to answer, post it on the list-serve and you'll likely find out what you need to know. You are wise to check your email every day because these messages can really build up - and there might be important things posted that you need to know about right away. Generally, the list is maintained by the GSSA president. Since people often have multiple email addresses, we do not automatically add your email address, but ask that you tell us which one to use. Once you are at the department, contact the GSSA president to be added.

To send an email to everyone on the list-serve, email Soctalk-L@listserv.utoronto.ca.

Tip: Don't email anything you wouldn't want to say in a room full of 200 people that you don't know. There are over 100 people on the list (students often stay on it after they have graduated unless they ask us to take them off). Make sure your subject lines are comprehensive, and don't send junk mail around.

Graduate Student Kitchen:

The graduate student kitchen is located across from RM 240. There is a fridge, microwave, sink, cupboards and table for your use. There are some rules related to the use of the kitchen to make it friendlier for everyone. Everyone is requested to *clean up their mess*. This includes wiping any spills on the counter or in the microwave, and washing all of their own dishes promptly after use. There is usually a sponge and soap by the sink for this purpose - for the sake of cleanliness please do not leave the sponge sitting in the bottom of the sink, it will stay wet and will be more prone to grow bacteria this way. You can leave your lunch or some food in the refrigerator, but you must label it with your name and the date - otherwise it will be thrown away from time to time. There is usually a scheduled fridge clean out where everything will be thrown away unless it is not labelled—but you will have plenty of warning about this date. Lastly, if you try to boil the kettle and use the microwave at the same time you will short the circuit. Just use one appliance at a time to be safe.

Canadian Climate:

For students not acclimatized to Toronto weather, it's usually difficult to know what to wear in minus 30 conditions! Ask for tips from Canadian friends before you get sick! You'll want to dress in warm layers and purchase a good pair of boots, a jacket/coat, as well as a scarf, mitts and toque (very Canadian, eh?). You might look for Gore-Tex brand, or "Thinsulate", but some less-expensive winter wear is good too. The Eaton Centre has a wide variety of stores where you can shop for these items in many price ranges. It is at Yonge and Dundas. Take the TTC to the Dundas or Queen subway stop.

September is usually warm, but you will probably need a "fall jacket" or light jacket by the end of September through November. It is usually cold and snowy by the end of November/December. You'll need a warm winter coat and waterproof shoes/boots, as there will be snow on the ground (which quickly turns to slushy streets and sidewalks when there is a warm day). It is usually cold until the end of March.

The summer, by contrast, can get brutally hot – with highs up to 40 degrees Celsius. If you are planning on staying in Toronto over the summer, you might be interested in purchasing an air conditioner (ranging from 100-300 dollars) or finding a basement apartment.

For Toronto weather information, go to www.environmentcanada.ca.

Fitness:

There are two athletic facilities close by the department, one just south of the department at the corner of Spadina and Harbord. Access to these facilities (from September-April) is included in the student fees you pay as part of your tuition, so take advantage of this! There is a monthly fee for the use of these facilities from May-August. When you go to the athletic centre you will need to bring a combination lock to use a locker for your clothes. You can get schedules on workout classes or just use the exercise machines and equipment.

The other location is Hart House, just west of Queen's Park. It's a bit older but many of us like it for its historic architectural value (some have described it as “like working out at Hogwarts”), and it's always free for graduate students in good standing.

Public Transit:

You can usually get around quite quickly on the TTC (Toronto's public transit system) by using their subway, street cars and buses. You can look at a map of the TTC system at www.ttc.ca. Get a transfer when you get on the bus if you plan on taking more than one line within the same trip within 90 minutes (that way you don't have to pay two fares). The system is really pretty easy once you figure it out - but ask around if you have any problems. Greyhound Buses or Via Rail can take you to other cities in Ontario—just check their websites or in the phone book for more information. Starting September 1st, the TTC will be allowing post-secondary students to purchase a student metro passes at any TTC station for \$99. Metro passes can also be purchased from the GSU.

For more information on public transit in Toronto, check out the following:

Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) (for city busses, street car, and subway service):
<http://www3.ttc.ca/>

TTC fare information: http://www3.ttc.ca/Fares_and_passes/Prices/index.jsp

TTC student metropass information:
http://www3.ttc.ca/Fares_and_passes/Passes/Metropass/index.jsp

Go Transit (for train service to/from the Toronto and Hamilton Area of Southern Ontario with service extending to Niagara Falls and Kitchener-Waterloo in the west; Orangeville, Barrie, and Beaverton in the north; Stouffville, Uxbridge, and Peterborough in the northeast; and Oshawa and Newcastle in the east):
<http://www.go transit.com/publicroot/en/default.aspx>

U of T Mississauga campus to St. George campus Shuttle Bus Service:
<http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/1651.0.html>

Out-of-town Bus Services: Coach Canada:

<http://www.coachcanada.com/coachcanada/language.asp>. Greyhound Canada:
<http://www.greyhound.ca/home/>

Via Rail (out-of-city train service): <http://www.viarail.ca/en>

Parking:

Parking downtown can be a little expensive and tricky. The spots usually fill up during the day with the thousands of commuters who work downtown. You may have to search for a spot along the side streets and parallel park. If you can, it is recommended that you take the TTC to come downtown (it's better for your nerves and the environment).

If you do choose to park downtown, some students have provided us with "tips" to relay to you. Some students park across the street at the Spadina Subway parking lot for \$6 a day. The fraternity houses along St. George often rent parking spaces for (comparatively) reasonable rates. The U of T permit charges are much more and you are not assured a space if you arrive after 9 or 10 am. Daily rates for U of T parking are something like \$13 per day, and the lot entrances are situated along St. George/College streets. You can also park in the lot behind the department, which is also \$10/day. Parking is cheaper after 5 pm and on weekends in these lots. FYI: parking enforcement officers are quite active in this area.

FYI for students driving to UTM: The parking is more expensive at UTM than at the St. George campus. The Daily rate is about \$12.

Parking permits are very expensive. For example, the parking lot behind the department is over \$800 + for 8 months)

Books/Research:

The official campus bookstore is located at 214 College Street (www.uoftbookstore.com). Usually when a professor assigns required readings, they will announce where the books are being sold. Most professors choose to order the books at the University Bookstore. This bookstore also sells U of T sweatshirts and other fun things that you might like to buy as gifts for your family. There can be big line-ups in the fall, so go early and come prepared with your list of required books. You may be requested to leave your backpack/bag outside the bookstore in a locker or supervised "cubby hole" for a small fee; this is to help prevent theft from the store.

There are other bookstores around the campus that you may have to locate on your own. For example, The Toronto Women's Bookstore is at 73 Harbord Street (www.womensbookstore.com; 416-922-8744). Sometimes, professors will order a "course package" to be prepared by a copy shop - and you can pick up the package of photocopied articles for a fee.

Be prepared for professors who do not provide sources for their course readings. Sometimes you will be required to go to the library (or the library website – the link on the main site to “Article Finder” will be useful!) to search for the readings and photocopy them for yourselves. You can usually work out within your classmates who will get the readings and distribute them to the others. It just means a little more preparation and organization on your part in order to ensure that you have them. If you want to search for items within the library system go to www.library.utoronto.ca. You should get familiar with their search engines and online catalogues - in many cases, the journal articles are online and you can print them out or save them on your computer to read later. There are several libraries on campus - and some are harder to find than others. Get used to walking around searching for books on campus - both within Robarts library and around campus. Leave lots of extra time for your research because our library system can be cumbersome while you're still learning how things are set up. You will need your ID card to renew books or to order items from inter-library loans. Your library card number is located on the bar code on your ID card. You need your UTORID and a password to log onto the library system.

Campus Library:

The University of Toronto has the largest library system in Canada. There are over 30 libraries throughout U of T's three campuses. As a researcher, you will find the library system to be extremely useful. To gain access to the libraries, you will need a valid student I.D.

The Humanities and Social Sciences resources are located in the Robarts Library. For more information, such as hours of operation, and late fines, go to <http://www.library.utoronto.ca/robarts/>.

To access online journal articles, go to the following link:
<http://discover.library.utoronto.ca/resources-research/articles>

Housing:

Both campus housing (such as Graduate House and other university owned apartments) as well as off campus housing (in apartments/houses around the city) can be located by going to the Housing Service website. (<http://link.library.utoronto.ca/StudentHousing>; 416-978-8045). If you are looking for a place to live/share with someone, ask around the department, keep your eye on Soctalk for listings, or you can check in the classifieds section of the newspaper. Rents are high, and accommodations can be sketchy, so ensure that you check out the place you are going to rent before you agree to take it. Ask about laundry facilities and utility payments. Air conditioning can be another big plus in the hot summer/early fall weather so you may want to consider this too. Also check for mice or other vermin - these problems can be common around the campus. (Unpleasant, but sometimes true!)

In order to try and prevent renting a place that has a history of bugs and rodents, you may want to check out www.bedbugregistry.com. You can search rental units by their address. This is not a comprehensive site, but it does register properties that have had a history of bug and rodent infestations that have been reported.

Since renting in the downtown core can be fairly competitive as September gets closer, it is really advisable to start looking early. Some students have found housing via Craigslist or kijiji. These rental spaces should be considered with caution. Some students have found that the placed ended up being substandard and infested with bugs and rodents. It is best not to sign a lease on a place without seeing it first. Some places are posting rental vacancies for September as early as July. The following are some sites that may be helpful with finding off campus housing:

www.viewit.ca

www.24hrapartments.com

www.myhood.com

Most students live along the subway line. There are many popular neighbourhoods close to the department.

FYI: Make sure that you keep all of your moving receipts (food, gas, plane fare with boarding passes, train tickets, moving trucks, furniture and other household items, etc.) because these can be used at tax time as tax deductions.

Last but not least:

Last but not least, never give up! What you are about to embark upon will be difficult, but not without its rewards! The first few months are especially difficult. One good thing is that students in this department know it's hard, so don't be shy if you're having a difficult time. Karl Marx studied in the British Library for 16 years before he wrote Capital. Your degree won't take you that long!

We are looking forward to meeting with you in the fall.

This document was last updated August 8th, 2010.