

Navigating the World of Work

Spring 2020

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LECTURES POSTED ONLINE: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30 am

OFFICE: Email me to set a Zoom appointment

OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays, 2:30-3:30 pm

Table of Contents

Course Description & Format.....	2
Course Learning Objectives	3
Required Materials and Texts.....	3
Course Evaluation Breakdown & Due Dates	3
Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings	4
Class 1: May 5	4
Introduction to the Course: Working in Precarious Times	4
Class 2: May 7	5
Working and Living in Today’s Canada: Continuity and Change	5
Class 3: May 12	5
Understanding Work and Inequality I: Locating Classes: Workers, Employers, and Everyone in Between.....	5
Class 4: May 14	5
Understanding Work and Inequality II: Gender, Paid and Unpaid Work	5
Class 5: May 19	5
Understanding Work and Inequality III: Racism at Work	5
Class 6: May 21	6
The Challenges of Finding, Keeping and Leaving Work	6
Class 7: May 26	6
Bodies and Minds at Work	6
Class 8: May 28	6
Working in a Global Economy: Making Workers Flexible.....	6
Class 9: June 2	6
Labour Rights and Employment Standards: Do They Protect Workers’ Rights and Livelihoods?	6
Class 10: June 4	7
Voices of Resistance I: Unions: Organizing, Bargaining, Political Action	7

Class 11: June 9	7
Voices of Resistance II: The Alternative Labour Movement	7
Class 12: June 11	7
What is the Future of Work? Review of the Course.....	7
Class 13: June 16	7
No Class – Independent Study for Exam	7
Course Policies.....	8
Submission of Assignments	8
Grades.....	8
Late Assignments	8
Avenue to Learn	8
Academic Dishonesty:	9
Department/University Policies:.....	9
Absence Reporting:	9
Code of Conduct:	9
Computer Use:	10
Course Modifications:	10
Email Communication Policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences:.....	10
Evaluations (Online):	10
Student Accessibility Services:	10
Location: MUSC - B107	10
Contact: 905-525-9140 x 28652	10
McMaster University Policy on Academic Accommodation	11
Student Success Centre:	11
Student Wellness Centre:	11

Course Description & Format

Work is central to our quality of life, identities and well-being. However, finding and keeping work that is meaningful, fair, safe and sustainable is becoming more challenging. This course explores the changing nature of today’s increasingly global workplaces and labour markets, the way that class, ‘race’, gender and ability shape our access to work, the laws and regulations that define workplace rights and obligations, and the strategies workers use to navigate these relationships.

The course consists of:

- **two three hour-long classes a week**, in which the major themes and debates from the readings will be highlighted and elaborated upon. Note that classes will discuss

more than the readings, and so are not interchangeable. It must be emphasized that students are expected to view all lecture materials and participate in online discussions within the deadlines set within the syllabus.

It is also important to keep in mind that knowledge in the course is cumulative – you will need to have read the material for earlier weeks to fully understand that in the later weeks. In other words, it is very important to keep up on a week-to-week basis.

Course Learning Objectives

This course addresses several University Graduate Degree Level Expectations. In this class, you will have a chance to:

- learn the key foundational concepts in Labour Studies related to the contemporary organization of work in Canada and within a global economy;
- develop your ability to collaborate with and learn from other students equally and respectfully;
- work on articulating and refining your own ideas, in both speaking and in writing;
- read carefully, critically and deeply;
- make links between the classroom, the readings, and the world; and
- enhance your research and writing abilities, including your ability to find relevant material and assess sources, to construct and support own argument out of a variety of sources, and to appreciate different positions on an issue.

Required Materials and Texts

- Andrew Jackson and Mark Thomas (2017). *Work and Labour in Canada: Critical Issues*, 3rd ed. Canadian Scholars' Press (referred to as J&T in the Class Schedule) E-Book version available online from the McMaster University Bookstore
- All other required course readings will be made available electronically on Avenue to Learn or online via the McMaster University library.

Course Evaluation Breakdown & Due Dates

- Course Readings Commentary: 10%, selected class
- Participation (Class Discussion Forum): 20%, throughout the term
- Reflection Paper on Precarious Work: 20%, May 21, 2020
- Editorial Writing Assignment **OR** Film Analysis: 20%, June 11, 2020
- Final Exam: 20%, June 18 (online)

Course Readings Commentary 10%

Students will sign up to write a 400 to 500 word commentary discussing that classes' assigned readings (maximum of three students per class). For each reading: Identify the thesis/key argument, summarize the evidence, and analyze on your own terms the relevance/significance of the information in the reading. Submit in the Class Discussion forum by the end of the day before the selected class (Eg. 11:59pm on May 6).

Participation 20%

Students will participate in the Class Discussion forums on Avenue, from the class on May 7 through June 9. For each class, write a paragraph response to one of the posted commentaries (not your own!). Comments are due by the end of the day of the scheduled class (Eg. 11:59pm on May 7). You are encouraged to respond to previously made comments by other students.

Reflection Paper on Precarious Work 20%

Are Jackson and Thomas right to say that we are “working in precarious times?” In what ways is work today precarious? In what way does your own work experience support or disprove the claim that precarious work is the “new normal”? Using the course materials and concrete examples from one’s own experience, each student will write a 1500-word reflection paper addressing the above questions. The reflection paper is due at midnight on May 21, 2020 via Avenue to Learn.

Editorial Writing Assignment OR Film Analysis 20%

Choose **ONE** of the following assignment options:

OPTION A): What policies should governments adopt to govern, shape, or improve the world of work? Each student will choose a policy initiative currently being debated or put forward by government, and will write a 1500 word editorial that makes the case for or against that initiative. A list of suggested policies and more detailed guidelines for the assignment will be provided separately. The editorial is due at midnight on June 11, 2020 via Avenue to Learn.

OPTION B): Write an analysis of a film (fiction or non-fiction) that explores the topic of workers acting collectively to transform their workplaces or policies that govern work. A list of suggested films and more detailed guidelines for the assignment will be provided separately. Students may choose a film that is not on the list provided they receive approval from their professor. The analysis should be 1500 words in length and is due at midnight on June 11, 2020 via Avenue to Learn.

Final Exam 30%

There will be a final exam online on June 18. The exam will be 2 hours in length, and will consist of concepts and an essay question. Students will be expected to demonstrate an ability to make connections between the various topics covered in the entire course. An exam study guide will be distributed in lecture before the exam period. As a result, the expectations will be slightly higher than for a regular exam, especially in terms of the structure and organization of answers.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Class 1: May 5

Introduction to the Course: Working in Precarious Times

- PEPSO, *It's More than Poverty: Employment Precarity and Household Well-being* (February 2013). Read the summary, background and key findings for each section. [Available on Avenue to Learn]

For Next Week:

- **Letter of Introduction:** Write a letter of introduction to your professor. Tell me a bit about yourself, your programme and why you chose it, your interests, and especially your goals in this class: Why did you take this course? What are your experiences at work and with the labour movement? What is at least one thing you want to learn in this class? What would you say are your strengths as a student, and what areas would you like to improve? Are there any circumstances that might affect your performance in this class that you'd like us to be aware of? Please upload this letter to Avenue to Learn by May 12, 2020.

Class 2: May 7

Working and Living in Today's Canada: Continuity and Change

- J&T Chapters 1 & 2
- Baines, Donna et al (2017). "Filling the gaps: Unpaid (and precarious) work in the non-profit social services," *Critical Social Policy*. 37(4): 625-645.

Class 3: May 12

Understanding Work and Inequality I: Locating Classes: Workers, Employers, and Everyone in Between

- Kazan, Olga (2020). "How the Coronavirus Could Create a New Working Class: Experts predict the outbreak will lead to a rise in populism. But will workers turn their rage toward corporate CEOs, or middle-class "elites"?" *The Atlantic*. April 15. <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2020/04/coronavirus-class-war-just-beginning/609919/?>
- Naiman, Joanne (2009). "Analyzing Social Class" in *How Societies Work: Class, Power and Change in a Canadian Context*. Halifax: Fernwood.
- Zweig, Michael (2012). "The Class Structure in the United States" and "What We Think about When We Think about Class" in *The Working Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. [Available online via McMaster University Library]

Class 4: May 14

Understanding Work and Inequality II: Gender, Paid and Unpaid Work

- J&T, Chapter 5
- Vosko, Leah (2007). "Gendered labour market insecurities: manifestations of precarious employment in different locations" in V. Shalla & W. Clement (eds.) *Work in Tumultuous Times: Critical Perspectives*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP., pp. 52-97.

Class 5: May 19

Understanding Work and Inequality III: Racism at Work

- J&T, Chapter 6

- Wilson, Ruth-Marie et al (2011). *Working rough, living poor: employment and income insecurities faced by racialized groups in the Black Creek area and their impacts on health*. Toronto: Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services. Pages 21-24 and 32-50.
- Wilson, Daniel and David Macdonald (2010). *The income gap between Aboriginal peoples and the rest of Canada*. (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives). Pgs. 3-19.

Class 6: May 21

The Challenges of Finding, Keeping and Leaving Work

- J&T, Chapter 3 and 8
- Shan, Hongxia (2013). "Skill as a relational construct: hiring practices from the standpoint of Chinese immigrant engineers in Canada," *Work, Employment & Society*. 27(6): 915-931.

Note: Reflection Paper Due Today

Class 7: May 26

Bodies and Minds at Work

- J&T, Chapters 4 and 7
- Zuberi, Dan (2013). *Cleaning up. How hospital outsourcing is hurting workers and endangering patients*. Ithaca: ILR Press. Chapter 3 (pages 36-50).

Class 8: May 28

Working in a Global Economy: Making Workers Flexible

- J&T, Chapter 11
- Harvey, David (2005). "Freedom's Just Another Word..." in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pgs. 5-38. [Available online via McMaster University Library]
- Tooze, Adam (2020). "Shockwave: Adam Tooze on the pandemic's consequences for the world economy," *London Review of Books*. 42(8). <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v42/n08/adam-tooze/shockwave>

Class 9: June 2

Labour Rights and Employment Standards: Do They Protect Workers' Rights and Livelihoods?

- Thomas, Mark (2009). "Back to the Sixty Hour Work Week: Flexible Employment Standards for the 'New Economy'" in *Regulating Flexibility: The Political Economy of Employment Standards*. Montreal / Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP: 109-137.
- Ontario Government (2017). *Changing Workplaces Review – Final Report*. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Labour. Read the first three chapters and the table of contents.
- Explore the Ontario Employment Standards Act: <https://www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0>

Class 10: June 4

Voices of Resistance I: Unions: Organizing, Bargaining, Political Action

- J&T, Chapter 9
- Ross, Stephanie and Larry Savage (2015). "Unions and Political Action," (Chapter 6) in *Building a Better World: An Introduction to the Labour Movement in Canada*. Halifax: Fernwood.

Class 11: June 9

Voices of Resistance II: The Alternative Labour Movement

- J&T, Chapter 10
- Ross, Stephanie and Larry Savage (2015). "The Future of Unions," (Chapter 10) in *Building a Better World: An Introduction to the Labour Movement in Canada*. Halifax: Fernwood.

Class 12: June 11

What is the Future of Work? Review of the Course

- J&T, Chapter 12
- Dzieza, Josh (2020). "How hard will the robots make us work?" *The Verge*. <https://www.theverge.com/2020/2/27/21155254/automation-robots-unemployment-jobs-vs-human-google-amazon?>
- Review of course themes and exam preparation

Note: Editorial Writing Assignment OR Film Analysis Due Today

Class 13: June 16

No Class — Independent Study for Exam

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

All assignments must be submitted electronically via Avenue to Learn. You must use Word or Open Office to submit your assignment, and it must appear exactly as you would submit it in paper format. Electronic submission will facilitate both academic integrity (screening for plagiarism) and the tracking of late submissions (see below).

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

Extensions for course assignments will only be granted under conditions of medical, family, or other extraordinary circumstances. All other late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 5% per day, including weekends. Late assignments will not be accepted after 7 days beyond the original deadline without appropriate documentation from the Office of the Associate Dean of Social Sciences.

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first

and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Academic Dishonesty:

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/students/index.html>

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Department/University Policies:

Labour Studies staff does not date-stamp assignments, nor do they monitor the submission or return of student papers. All papers should be submitted/returned in-class, in tutorials or during Professor/TA office hours. Instructors who utilize Avenue to Learn will provide instructions on that preference.

Absence Reporting:

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/> On-line self-reporting tool – illness lasting less than 3 days. Can only be used once per term. Instructors are not allowed to accept medical notes! These must be submitted to your Faculty office. In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”. Please also communicate with the course instructor.

Code of Conduct:

<http://studentaffairs.mcmaster.ca>

“McMaster University is a community dedicated to furthering learning, intellectual inquiry, the dissemination of knowledge and personal and professional development. Membership in this community implies acceptance of the principle of mutual respect for

the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study work and live within it.”

Computer Use:

Computer use in the classroom is intended to facilitate learning in that particular lecture or tutorial. At the discretion of the instructor, students using a computer for any other purpose may be required to turn the computer off for the remainder of the lecture or tutorial.

Course Modifications:

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and Avenue to Learn (if used by instructor) *regularly during the term* to note any changes.

Email Communication Policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences:

All e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor/TA receives a communication from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion. **Please always include student name, ID, course # and TA name in messages.**

Evaluations (Online):

<http://evals.mcmaster.ca>, and log in via MACID.

These help faculty and the School of Labour Studies to meet our goal of continually improving teaching effectiveness. All students in the course are invited and encouraged to complete the evaluation.

Student Accessibility Services:

<http://sas.mcmaster.ca/>

Location: MUSC – B107

Contact: 905-525-9140 x 28652

NOTE: Disclosure of disability-related information is personal and confidential.

Student Accessibility Services offers various supports for students with disabilities. We work with full time and part time students. SAS provides or assists students with their academic and disability-related needs, including: Learning Strategies, Assistive

Technologies, Test & Exam Administration, Note-Taking Programs, and Classroom Accommodations. *Please inform the instructor if there are disability needs that are not being met.

McMaster University Policy on Academic Accommodation

Please find the McMaster University policy on academic accommodation of Students with Disabilities & McMaster University Anti-Discrimination Policy at the following link:

- <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf>

Student Success Centre:

Email Address: <http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/>

Location: GH-110

Contact: 905-525-9140 x 24254

Some services include: student orientation, academic skills, volunteerism, educational planning, employment and career transition. Writing Support: <http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/students/academic-skills/writing-support-services.html>

Student Wellness Centre:

Email Address: <http://wellness.mcmaster.ca/>

Location: MUSC-B10

Contact: 905-525-9140 x 27700

Provides services in: Personal and Psychological Counselling, Mental Health Support, Medical and Health Services

Participation: Evaluation Criteria

Grade	Discussion	Reading
A+ Exceptional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -original thinking -very strong knowledge base -strong capacity for analysis / synthesis / critical evaluation, including well-thought out reasons for positions -ability to make linkages both within and outside the course material -asks interesting and relevant questions - always participating, but does not dominate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -has done all readings -demonstrates superior grasp of readings / concepts -regular and very capable use readings in discussion
A Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -strong knowledge base -frequent participation, asks questions - shows some capacity for analysis / synthesis / critical evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -has done most readings -demonstrates strong grasp of readings / concepts - frequent use of readings in discussion
B and B+ Good to Very Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -good knowledge base, with some misunderstandings -analysis / critical evaluation somewhat underdeveloped, with arguments less well supported -participation is variable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -has done most readings -does not always read readings closely -familiar with concepts and issues, but at vague level which still requires some precision -occasional use of readings in discussion
C to C+ Fairly Competent to Competent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -fair knowledge base, but with many more gaps and misunderstandings -basic level of understanding, but without much analysis or critical evaluation - reasoning behind arguments absent / poorly thought out / knee-jerk -participation / questions infrequent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -has done less than half of readings -tends to rely on outside knowledge / unsupported opinions rather than knowledge gained from readings -rare use of readings in discussion
D to D+ Barely Passing to Passing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -poor knowledge base; superficial grasp of concepts or issues -very little critical thinking or analysis - rarely participates or asks questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -does readings infrequently -shows little familiarity with concepts -almost never refers to readings in discussion
E to F Failing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -never participates -does not even show superficial understanding of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -never does readings