

# Navigating the World of Work

Spring 2021

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**LECTURES ONLINE:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6:00 to 8:50 pm

**OFFICE:** Zoom links posted on Avenue

**OFFICE HOURS:** Tuesdays, 5:00 to 6:00 pm

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## 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. These classes will include tutorial-style activities, which will focus on collaborative learning and on the critical skills related to reading, writing, and research. This will allow students to engage in group dialogue, to articulate and develop their ideas on course materials, explore different perspectives, and to consult with the instructor. It must be emphasized that students are expected to attend all classes and participate in discussions.

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

- Class Participation: 10%, throughout the term
- Questions Submitted to Class: 20%, throughout the term
- Reflection Paper on Precarious Work: 20%, May 20, 2021
- Editorial Writing Assignment **OR** Film Analysis: 20%, June 10, 2021
- Final Exam: 30%, June 17, 2021

### Class Participation 10% (10 x 1 mark)

Students are expected to come to each class, well prepared, with both questions and comments about what they have read, and ready to participate actively in discussion of the issues and readings. Students will be evaluated according to both the frequency and quality of their interventions and on the extent to which they contribute to in-class group work. At a minimum, each student should strive to make at least one contribution to the class discussion. However, see the last page of this syllabus for detailed expectations and how to excel in your participation.

### Questions Submitted to Class 20% (5 x 4 marks)

Students will choose five classes (from May 6 onwards) to submit two questions, each with a paragraph-long introduction, on the day before each scheduled class (eg. by Monday at 11:59 pm), based on the assigned readings and lecture topics for that class. These questions will be submitted in the relevant Assignments folder under the 'Assessments' tab on Avenue. See the last page of this syllabus for detailed expectations and how to prepare excellent questions.

### 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 20, 2021 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 10, 2021 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 10, 2021 via Avenue to Learn.

### **Final Exam 30%**

There will be a final exam online on June 17, 2021. 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 4**

#### **Introduction to the Course: Working in Precarious Times**

- Lewchuk, Wayne (2019) "The Political Economy of Precariousness in an Era of Artificial Intelligence: Precarious Work, or None At All?" *Canadian Labour and Employment Law Journal*. 21(2), 239-266. [Available on Avenue to Learn]

For Next Week:

- **Letter of Introduction:** Write a letter of introduction to your teaching assistant and professor. Tell us 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 11, 2021.

### **Class 2: May 6**

#### **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 11**

#### **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/](http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2020/04/coronavirus-class-war-just-beginning/609919/)

- Brar, Amanpreet (2021). "Peel is facing a COVID-19 crisis. Ontario needs to prioritize health over economy now to save lives," *Toronto Star*. April 25. <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2021/04/25/peel-is-facing-a-covid-19-crisis-ontario-needs-to-prioritize-health-over-economy-now-to-save-lives.html>
- 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 13**

#### **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 18**

#### **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 20**

#### **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 25**

#### **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 27**

#### **Working in a Global Economy: Making Workers Flexible**

- J&T, Chapter 11
- Taplin Ian (2014). "Who is to blame? A re-examination of fast fashion after the 2013 factory disaster in Bangladesh," *Critical Perspectives on International Business*. 10(1/2): 72-83.

### **Class 9: June 1**

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

- Ontario Government (2017). *Changing Workplaces Review – Final Report*. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Labour. Read the first three chapters and the table of contents.
- Mirchandani, Kiran & Sheldon Bromfield (2019). "Roundabout wage theft: The limits of regulatory protections for Ontario workers in precarious jobs," *Labor and Society*. 22(3): 661-677.
- Explore the Ontario Employment Standards Act: <https://www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0>

### **Class 10: June 3**

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

- J&T, Chapter 9
- Bursey, Renee & Jonah Gindin (2020). "'No Increase? No Work!' Toronto Health Care Workers Save Pandemic Premium via Job Action," *Labor Notes*. July 24. <https://labornotes.org/blogs/2020/07/no-increase-no-work-toronto-health-care-workers-save-pandemic-premium-direct-action>
- 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 8**

#### **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 10**

### **What is the Future of Work?**

- 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?>

Note: Editorial Writing Assignment OR Film Analysis Due Today

## **Class 13: June 15**

### **Review of the Course**

- Review of course themes and exam preparation

## **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:

| <b>MARK</b> | <b>GRADE</b> |
|-------------|--------------|
| 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+           |

| <b>MARK</b> | <b>GRADE</b> |
|-------------|--------------|
| 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 Integrity**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour 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. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### **Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection**

**Some courses may** use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be

expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software.

**All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

## **Courses with an On-line Element**

**Some courses may** use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, 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 a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

## **Online Proctoring**

**Some courses may** use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

## **Conduct Expectations**

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

## **Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

## **Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work**

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): 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".

## **Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)**

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

## **Copyright and Recording**

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

## **Extreme Circumstances**

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

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