WORKING PRECARIOUSLY: LABOUR STRATEGIES, LABOUR RENEWAL
Fall 2018

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Email: akkaymag@mcmaster.ca  
Lecture: Thursdays, 2:30-5:30 pm  
Location: TSH-B126

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Course Description  
Precarious work is rising. In Canada and elsewhere, these insecure, often low-waged jobs are now becoming commonplace. How did precarious work arise and how does it affect our lives?  
How does race, gender, location and citizenship impact who is more likely to be precarious? What processes and policies enable precarious work? What strategies have workers used to challenge precarious work? How effective are they? In this course, we will explore the nature of precarious work, its effects, and the range of strategies available to workers and workers’ organizations to fight precarity including new forms of unionism and growing linkages between labour and social movements.
Course Learning Objectives
By the end of this course, students will be able to:
- Develop knowledge and critical understanding of the changing nature of employment in the 20th and 21st centuries
- Evaluate precarious employment through interdisciplinary and intersectional lens
- Apply course content to develop a policy brief on an issue relating to precarious employment
- Demonstrate an ability to present and discuss ideas clearly and articulately through effective oral and written communication

Required Materials and Texts
There is no required textbook in this course. All required readings are available online via hyperlinks in the syllabus or are posted on the course site on Avenue to Learn.

Course Evaluation Breakdown

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<tr>
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<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Due date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Reflection Papers (3 x %10)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Brief Outline</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>October 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Brief</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>November 29</td>
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<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Participation
Engaged class participation, rooted in serious engagement with the assigned readings, is a standard expectation of most courses – this course is no exception. Each student plays a large role in the creation and quality of the course. Accordingly, participation grade will be based on intelligent and informed contribution to classroom discussion. Merely attending class will not bring you points, however, not attending may result with reduction in your final grade.

Seminar Presentation
Each student is required to do one seminar presentation. Presentations may (will likely) be done in groups, depending on enrolment numbers. The presenter(s) should summarize weekly required readings, integrate additional materials related to the topic, raise questions/issues/critiques for discussion, and lead a class discussion about the weekly theme. The presenters should prepare a short presentation handout (2-page, maximum) to be distributed to the class via Avenue to Learn by midnight the night before the class.

Seminar presentations will take place in the first hour of class and should be on the order of 30 minutes in length, leaving plenty of time for questions and discussion. They will be assessed on the following basis: Organization and clarity of presentation; ability to explain, discuss, and critique the topic that is being presented; ability to lead a class discussion; and quality of presentation handout.

Critical Reflection Papers
Students are required to submit critical responses to the readings (2-3 pages each, typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt) via Avenue to Learn two times between Weeks Two and Thirteen. The critical reflection papers are not meant to be formal essays, but thoughtful reflections based on the material you have read. Do not feel you need to summarize all of the reading; rather, you should explore in depth (with specific reference to the text) one or two ideas, themes or issues raised by the readings.
These papers will be graded on mastery of the material, creative thought, and quality of writing. They should be posted by midnight the night before the class that the readings are due.

**Policy Brief and Outline**
For this assignment, students will write a policy brief on a topic (of their choosing) that is related to precarious employment. The brief may consider why the issue is important, why it is necessary to take action on the issue, the ways in which the problem can be addressed (i.e., proposed actions), and the benefits of adopting the course of action(s) that is proposed.

An outline of the policy brief must be submitted and approved by the Instructor. The outline should provide a brief description of the topic chosen and how you plan to address it in the final policy brief. The outline should be two pages (typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt), plus a preliminary bibliography. The outline is to be submitted at the beginning of the class on October 4.

The policy briefs are to be fully referenced and must demonstrate a thorough understanding of the topic through references to appropriate literature. The assignment will be graded according to the motivation for choosing the issue, the rationale for its importance (e.g., why and how is it important), the proposed action(s), and the underlying research and engagement with the wider literature. The policy brief should be no more than 3000 words (excluding bibliography or appendices) and is to be submitted (i) in hard copy at the beginning of the class on November 29 and (i) via Avenue to Learn by 2:30 pm on November 29.

A Policy Brief Development Workshop will be held in the second half of the September 13 class.

**Feedback on the Course**
You are encouraged to provide feedback to me about the course at any time during the term. Feedbacks can be anonymous and slipped under my office door. The purpose of the feedbacks is to improve teaching to help your learning.

**Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings**

**Week One – Sep 6: An Introduction to Precarious Employment**
- Introduction of students and instructor; review of syllabus, assignments, materials, and teaching philosophy.

**Part I: The Nature of Precarious Employment**

**Week Two – Sep 13: The Historical Roots of Precarious Employment and Its Contemporary Implications**
Supplementary


Note: Policy Brief Development Workshop

Week Three – Sep 20: Organization of Precarious Employment by Gender, Race, and Immigration Status


Supplementary


Week Four – Sep 27: Temp Agency Workers and the Rise of the “Just-in-time” Workforce


Supplementary


Part II: Hidden Costs of Precarious Employment

Week Five – Oct 4: Social and Health Effects of Precarious Employment


**Supplementary**


**Note:** Policy Brief Outline Due

**Week Six – Oct 11: Reading Week Break**

**Part III: Regulating Precarious Employment**

**Week Seven – Oct 18: The Fissured Workplace**


**Supplementary**


**Week Eight – Oct 25: Labour Law and the Regulation of Precarious Employment**

**Supplementary**


**Week Nine – Nov 1: Enforcing Labour Standards**


**Supplementary**


**Week Ten – Nov 8: Alternative Approaches to Enforcement**


**Supplementary**

Part IV: Organizing Workers in Precarious Employment

Week Eleven – Nov 15: Is the “precariat” a class?


Supplementary

Week Twelve – Nov 22: Organizing and Resisting under Precarious Employment


Supplementary

Week Thirteen – Nov 29: The Future of Labour and Labour Movement


Note: Policy Brief Outline Due

Course Policies
Please read the following policies carefully. Guidelines and policies are meant to guide you to a successful completion of this course.

Submission of Assignments
The due dates for assignments are firm. All assignments are to be submitted via Avenue to Learn by 2:30 pm on the date they are due and handed in to the instructor at the beginning of class on the date they are due.
Grades
Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

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<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
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<tr>
<td>85-90</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-84</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>B+</td>
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Lateness Penalty
Assignments received later than due date will be penalized 10% per day (including weekends). Assignments will not be accepted after one week and you will receive a grade of zero. Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness, compassionate grounds, etc., may be considered by the Instructor but will require supporting documentation.

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.

Turnitin.com
In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

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
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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:


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