

**INQUIRY 1SS3 Section C03**  
**INQUIRY IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**Pop Culture and Social Media**  
**Fall 2020**  
**Wednesday 11:30 – 1:00**  
**ONLINE**

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**McMaster University**  
**Faculty of Social Sciences**

**Instructor: Dr. David Penner**  
**Email: Through Avenue Website**

### **What Do We Mean by Inquiry?**

Inquiry is the process of developing skills to arrive at understandings of a problem, an issue, or a phenomenon, through the process of asking good questions, searching out good evidence, and arriving at well reasoned conclusions. The process of critical inquiry promotes self-directed learning, helping you to develop the skills necessary to acquire and reflect on new knowledge and understanding, and that will be invaluable in your other university courses and your academic, personal, and professional lives.

### **Course Structure:**

This class has several different elements. Our aim is as follows:

- 1) Develop writing and research skills pertinent to success in the university.
- 2) Provide an understanding of, and experience with, critical thinking.
- 3) Question and consider elements of popular culture and social media that pertain to modern identity.
- 4) Create an environment for you that is supportive and encouraging through class discussion.

This class will utilize posted video lectures for you to watch before class and prepare questions. These videos will be of three sorts:

- 1) explanations of research, writing practices, and presentation of assignments
- 2) presentation of a “moment of the week” in popular culture for you to think about
- 3) a short lecture on a topic connected to our main theme for you to critically consider.

This video content will be posted early in the week and it is expected that you will have watched them by the start of class on Wednesday.

On Wednesdays, we will have a Zoom meeting at 11:30. During these meetings we will divide into subgroups to discuss the week’s material. We will then collect as a group to discuss our

findings. Ideally, this is to be the fun part of the class and is not expected to take more than ninety minutes.

### **Course Description:**

Inquiry courses are designed to teach students how to learn and how to share academic knowledge. The courses are skill-driven, rather than content-driven, with a ***focus on the skills required to perform effectively in university***. These personal, transferable skills and approaches to learning will be useful in other university courses, and beyond. Students will engage in a process to begin to learn how to formulate good academic questions, gather and interpret scholarly evidence, draw reasoned conclusions, and communicate these conclusions, using as content, topics central to research in the Social Sciences.

### **Course Objectives:**

Upon successful completion of this course you will have valuable experience in:

- developing a researchable question and refining it;
- demonstrating the ability to obtain relevant information to answer this question;
- critically evaluating the validity and relevance of academic research;
- communicating a reasoned response to the researchable questions; and
- critically reflecting on your learning process.

### **Developing Transferable Skills**

You will work on developing academic skills that are transferable to your other university courses as well as to the workforce. These skills include:

- question formulation;
- critical reading and thinking;
- communication (oral, written and visual);
- self and peer evaluation;
- research skills; and
- discussion skills

### **Theme: Popular Culture and Social Expectations**

While the focus of this course is on the ***process of inquiry***, the theme of our section is about what popular culture and social media tells young adults about what to expect in adult life. Does our culture provide false or realistic understandings of modern life, about work and success, romance, and anxiety? How do you feel about success? What does your culture tell you to desire? Do you feel doomed or entitled? What does culture tell you to be afraid of? How does popular culture inform understandings of gender and sexual relationships? The

relationship between yourself and modern popular culture will provide the content that we will use to develop analytical and critical thinking skills.

In our first class we will begin to identify what popular culture means to us, both as individuals and in the larger society. In subsequent classes and in your research paper/capstone assignment you will have the opportunity to further explore your own cultural sense of the power of music, films, the internet and television to shape its audience. What does television tell you about being adulthood, being male or female or neutral, what does it mean to be educated? Do you buy into this understanding or are you a rebel? Did popular culture teach you how to rebel?

There are many ways that people in the social sciences seek to understand the concept of popular media and its connection to identity. Is it related to entertainment or economics? Is it a systemic force or a set of personal values? Why does it matter? What all agree upon is that social, cultural and economic factors influence aspects of who we are. Social structures such as family, work environment, political structure and our health care system, to name a few, as well as our cultural practices; what we eat, and how we live all have consequences for our lives and our identity.

The theme of popular culture and social media in regard to identity, and the design of this course provide ample flexibility to enable you to engage your own ideas and interests with the topic, while demonstrating the skills of inquiry.

### Readings

Readings will be posted on the Avenue site on a week by week basis at no cost to the student.

### Evaluation Components:

Assessment Activity	% of Grade	Date Due
Library Modules Assignment	5%	TBA
Research Question	2.5 %	Sept. 16
Capstone Assignment: Proposal	7.5 %	Sept. 30
Citation Stream Assignment	10%	Oct. 28
Annotated Bibliography/ Literature Review	10 %	Nov. 4
Final Assignment	30 %	Dec. 15
Short Reflection Papers	5 x 5% = 25%	Weekly

Participation	10 %	
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**Written Assignments:** All written assignments are to be typed and double-spaced. Please include a title page with your name, student number and email address, the topic title of the assignment and the date submitted. Your research paper should be at least 6 double spaced pages in length in 12pt font with 1" margins. It is to be submitted, as are all written assignments, to the electronic dropbox on Avenue.

**Note on Last Assignment:** The last assignment is your final paper, also known as the Capstone Assignment. It is due during the exam period in December.

**Submitting Assignments Electronically:** Information as to how to submit your assignments will be provided on the Avenue to Learn course website.

**Late Submissions:** All work is due on the date and time stated, unless other arrangements have been made in advance with the instructor. A late penalty of 5 percentage points per day will apply after the due date (weekends included).

**Class Participation and Engagement:** Class participation and engagement is an important component of this course (and of active learning). Therefore, I expect all students to be 'active' participants in this course. This means attending all Zoom meetings, being actively involved in class activities and thoughtful discussion, and completing all assignments.

Your participation grade will be significantly influenced by your active involvement in class, and the quality of that involvement. Lack of participation, or 'negative participation', will also significantly influence your participation grade (but in a negative way)! And so you are aware of the types of activities or behaviours that will be considered 'negative' class participation, they include the following: missing classes, general nonparticipation in or disruption of class/class activities, sleeping during class, coming to class meetings late or leaving early.

The success of this course depends on you! And students who are most successful in this course fulfill these expectations, and engage in all aspects of the course!

**Reflection Papers:** Every week you will be provided with reflection paper questions. You need to complete five papers. You can submit up to seven papers and your top five will count towards your grade. You will have one week to complete the assignment. The aim of the papers are to develop your writing and argument skills.

**Policy for Returning Assignments/Posting Grades:**

Since it is important for student learning and skills development that students receive feedback on their assignments as they progress through the course, you can expect to receive feedback (comments and a grade) on each of your assignments in a timely fashion. This will allow you

the opportunity to see how you performed on each assignment and time to discuss any questions you might have with your instructor.

The following are the methods for returning comments on student's work:

1. comments and grades made electronically on Avenue.

Grades for assignments may only be posted using the last 5 digits of the student number as the identifying data. Final grades for the course will be posted on MUGSI.

### **Objectives of the Assignments:**

- To consolidate and expand on the information students acquire in their readings and classes;
- To increase student's self-awareness and self-evaluation skills;
- To develop research skills that will assist the student in critically assessing the information they are provided;
- To improve synthesizing the information into a coherent and interesting whole;
- To develop their ability to communicate findings; and
- Most importantly, to develop your ability to care for the ideas and feelings you are exploring therefore allowing you to do honest and sincere work that matters to you.

### **Your Assignment Path**

This course is not demand heavy in terms of preparations for class-time. However, there are important tasks that you must keep up with in order to succeed. You must pay attention to the deadlines for assignments and you must take early assignments with seriousness in order to thrive in the course.

Your **research question** is due very soon. It can be a rough sketch of what you would like to think about and what you might think at this point. Because your thinking will develop and deepen, as you connect with your research, this question **will** change.

Your **research proposal** contains your improved research question and an outline of what your paper might look like. This is not a contract and you are able to change your position and your structure. However, your proposal is a combination of your inclinations, questions, and methods of structuring your approach and is not necessarily a reflection of a decided conclusion. The content of your research may alter all three of these aspects and should not be too quickly concluded.

Your **literature review** is to contain both an:

- In depth review of four (4) peer reviewed journal articles sources that will contribute to your paper, and...
- No fewer than three (3) more sources that offer potential but you have yet to examine thoroughly.

This step will confirm that the information needed to complete your assignment is available. If it does you'll proceed forward. If not, you must be prepared to both modify your research question and seek out other sources.

Your **final paper** is what we call your capstone assignment. Everything builds to produce it. It requires no fewer than five peer reviewed journal articles but may also be supported by other sources: books, films, government documents, etc. You can refer to any film(s) in your work.

After submitting each of your assignments (other than your final paper) I will get back to you with comments and suggestions and marks. I will attempt to provide this to you one week after your assignment was due.

Please don't hesitate to discuss your progress or the obstacles you encounter with me. I would be glad to meet with you at mutually acceptable appointment times. I will also respond to emails during the week on a daily basis.

### **Library Training Sessions:**

You are expected to master the McMaster library system by going through modules, interactive training sessions on computer on your own time. These should take in total, about three hours. Each session contains material essential to your success in Inquiry and every other course taken at university.

### **A NOTE ABOUT THE USE OF AVENUE TO LEARN IN THIS COURSE:**

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn for the online components of the course. 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, located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-proceduresguidelines/>

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.



**\*\*IMPORTANT\*\***

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are attending the correct section of Inquiry 1SS3. Each section of Inquiry has a specific theme chosen by the instructor so you cannot attend a section in which you are not registered.

If you do continue to attend a section of the course in which you are not registered, you will not be permitted to register in that section and so may be at risk of failing the course.

Consult your personal timetable and the Registrar's course timetable to ensure that you are attending the correct section.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

The following outline should be considered a potential map and not a contract. It is open to negotiation and change. Course materials for you to read and/or watch will be posted on Avenue in advance of the Wednesday class.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	
<b>Sept. 9</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	
<b>Sept. 15</b>	<b>Does the Internet Make Young People Dumb?</b>	
<b>Sept. 23</b>	<b>What is Technology? Is it a way of controlling the world or opening it?</b>	
<b>Sept. 30</b>	<b>Communication and Social Media</b>	
<b>Oct. 7</b>	<b>What is Success in Today's World?</b>	
<b>Oct. 21</b>	<b>Romance and Relationships</b>	
<b>Oct. 28</b>	<b>What Does It Mean To Be Civilized?</b>	
<b>Nov. 4</b>	<b>Our Relationship to Screens</b>	
<b>Nov. 11</b>	<b>Rights, Privileges and Obligations</b>	
<b>Nov. 18</b>	<b>Politeness in Culture</b>	
<b>Nov.</b>	<b>How Are We Entertained Today?</b>	

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Dec. 2	Fears	
Dec. 9	Summation	

**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 his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes**