**McMaster University | School of Labour Studies**

**Work & Labour Studies 2M03**

**Creating and Connecting: Popular Culture, Social Media & Work**

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| **Semester & Year:** | Winter 2023 | **Instructor:** | Dr. Stephanie Ross |
| **Days and Times:** | Wednesdays  7:00-10:00pm | **Email:** | stephross@mcmaster.ca |
| **Office:** | KTH 719 |
| **Classroom:** | Virtual / Zoom  Avenue to Learn | **Office Hours:** | Wednesdays 4:00-6:00pm  or by appointment  Virtual via Zoom |

**Course Description |** Culture – the shared values, beliefs, customs and representations of a society – is everywhere in our daily lives, sometimes unnoticed like the air we breathe, but is it also contested terrain. Who decides what the dominant meanings and representations are in a given society is an important form of power that shapes people’s lives. As communication media develop, they have become a larger part of our economy, and penetrate almost every aspect of our experience of social organization. As well, more of the work that workers do involves or is related directly to what is now known as the 'creative economy.' For these reasons, it is increasingly important to consider the implications of cultural activity and cultural politics for workers, both in terms of how they work and how they are represented in cultural life.

This course explores three different aspects of the relationship between the world of work and our mediated culture. The first section explores the way that popular media culture (including music, television, film, advertising, and internet-based culture) represents work and working people, and the implications of that representation for our culture. The second section engages in a critical reflection on a variety of issues related to the creative economy and workers working in that sector, including the relationship between “digital” or “virtual” activity and the very real physical processes that make that activity possible. The final section investigates the implications of the development of social media based on digital network technologies for work and workers and looks at how social media is shaping the way workers – both in general and in the cultural industries themselves – organize for economic and social change.

**Class Format |** The course is delivered in a virtual format, meaning that all course components are delivered online. These course components include:

1. **A weekly asynchronous lecture** which will consist of Power Point slides narrated by the professor that highlight the week’s key themes and ideas, posted on the Avenue to Learn course site each week by Wednesday at 10:00am ET. Lectures can be reviewed at any time after they are posted, but you are strongly encouraged to keep up with lectures each week rather than letting them accumulate. The lectures add additional context and information that is not always included in the readings and are therefore an integral part of the course.
2. **A weekly synchronous small group discussion on Zoom,** in which students will have the opportunity to share their ideas about course themes and materials guided by teaching assistants. Students will be broken up into four 60-minute tutorial groups (two will run from 7:00 – 8:00pm and two from 8:15 – 9:15pm). The tutorials will review the lecture and reading content for the week and provide a space for students to interact and discuss what they learned. These weekly discussions will take place during the weekly scheduled class time on Wednesdays 7-10pm.

**Required Texts |** All course readings and resources will be available electronically through Avenue to Learn.

**Evaluation (In Brief)**

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| **Requirement** | **Due Date** | **Value** |
| **Lecture Study Questions** | Throughout the term | **20%** |
| **Weekly Discussion (on Zoom)** | Throughout the term | **10%** |
| **Film Review** | February 15, 2023 | **15%** |
| **Research Paper** |  | **30%** |
| Proposal and Annotated Bibliography | March 1, 2023 | 10% |
| Final Paper | March 29, 2023 | 20% |
| **Final Take-Home Exam** | April 14, 2023 (during the scheduled exam period) | **25%** |

**Evaluation (In Detail)**

**Lecture Study Questions 10 x 2% = 20%**

Students will submit 10 responses to the Lecture Study Questions (LSQs) over the course of the term. Each question will be due on the **Friday** of the week the relevant lecture was posted, by 11:59pm. Answers should be between 300-500 words, and should draw on the required readings, podcasts, videos, or playlists related to that specific lecture. The purpose of this assignment is to encourage you to keep up with the lectures and readings on a weekly basis, to reinforce comprehension, and to prepare you for the final exam. They will be graded on a pass/fail/needs improvement basis. We are looking for your ability to demonstrate knowledge of the assigned weekly materials and to integrate these into a concise answer to the question.

**Participation in Weekly Discussions 10%**

Over the term, students will participate in 10 weekly discussion sessions, the first starting **January 18, 2023**. There will not be a discussion session on **February 15**. The class will be broken into four groups, with each group meeting for an hour between 7-10pm (two groups at 7-8pm, and two groups 8:15-9:15pm). The purpose of these discussions is to: review the lectures and assigned readings for that week; provide students with a space to discuss course content or get clarity on anything you might be having trouble with; and undertake some collective learning (through breakout groups, group activities, etc.). Students are expected to attend and participate in these discussions and activities. 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 in-class discussion each class. However, see the last page of this syllabus for detailed expectations and how to excel in your participation.

**Film Review 15%**

Students will choose two movies and write a film review comparing the representations of class, work, and labour movements (if relevant) in both films. Each review should include one movie from Film List 1 and one from Film List 2. After watching both films, students will prepare a 1,000-word film review that addresses the following questions: How are working-class lives are portrayed in the two films? What is similar in these representations and what is different? What are the most significant shifts in the nature of work in the two eras represented? How do issues like race, gender, class, sexuality, or ability play into the different experiences of characters in both films?

**Research Paper Two Components = 40%**

All students will prepare a research paper on a topic drawn from the readings and lectures, going deeper into an issue you are interested in. A list of suggested topics will be posted on Avenue to Learn by the end of January. This assignment consists of two parts: 1) a proposal and annotated bibliography, and 2) the final paper. You must complete the proposal to complete the final paper.

**Proposal and Annotated Bibliography 10%**

A good research paper depends upon defining a clear and manageable topic, articulating specific research questions and finding good sources – relevant, up-to-date and reliable. This assignment will help you focus your thinking and get you started on preliminary research, so that you will have sufficient time to develop your research paper. The assignment is **due on March 1, 2023** by 11:59pm, should be 2-3 pages, typed, with 1-inch margins and a title page.You may single space this assignment. Your proposal should include a brief research question, a preliminary thesis, and an annotated bibliography of 5 sources not found on the course list.

**Final Paper 30%**

Your research paper is due on **March 29, 2023** by 11:59pm. The paper should be between 2,000-2,500 words, typed and double-spaced, and submitted in Word. In addition to the sources you’ve found through your own research, you must use five relevant sources from the course in your final paper.

**Final Take-Home Exam 25%**

The final exam will be a take home, posted on Avenue to Learn on the last day of class (**April 5, 2023**). You will have nine (9) days to complete the exam, which is due **April 14, 2023** by 11:59pm. The first section, worth 30% of the exam, will present a list of concepts, from which you will choose six (6) to define and explain their significance to the understanding of popular culture and work. The second section, also worth 30%, will present a series of short-answer questions, of which you will do two (2). The third section, worth 40% of the exam, will consist of essay questions, of which you will do one (1). In each section, you will have ample choice. All exams will be uploaded to Avenue to Learn.

**Learning Objectives |** This course addresses several University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations. In this class, you will have a chance to:

* become familiar with the interdisciplinary literatures that examine the relationship between culture, media and work, as well as the diverse perspectives in those literatures;
* develop assessments of the strengths and limitations of these various perspectives as well as one’s own knowledge and assumptions;
* apply the theories, concepts and histories explored in the course to cultural representations you enjoy and connect with;
* develop tools for interpreting and critically analyzing media representations of work and workers beyond the level of enjoyment and with the view to understanding how cultural representations shape the environment in which political and economic relationships take place;
* work on articulating and refining your own ideas, in both speaking and in writing;
* read more 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.

**Class Schedule and Readings**

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| **Week 1 Introduction to the Course:**  **Jan. 11 Understanding Work and Labour through Popular Culture** |
| This lecture provides a general introduction to the course, key concepts that will be used in the course, and an outline of expectations/assignments.  **Readings / Resources |**   * Reading: Dennis Soron, “A Crisis of Representation: Anti-Unionism, Media and Popular Culture,” in Stephanie Ross and Larry Savage, (eds.), *Labour Under Attack: Anti-Unionism in Canada* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2020). * Film: *Class Dismissed: How TV Frames the Working Class*, dir. Loretta Alper, 2005. * Podcast: “Simpsons Did It! How Unions are Portrayed in Pop Culture” (*CUPE Cast*, 31 August 2021) https://tinyurl.com/4mywfesr   **Letter of Introduction |** Write us a letter of introduction. Tell us a bit about yourself, your programme and why you chose it, your interests, and especially your goals in this class: 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 submit this letter to Avenue to Learn by **January 18, 2023**. |
| Week 2 Class and Work in Popular Music and Visual Culture I:  Jan. 18 Music and Social Movements, from the Great Depression to the Civil Rights Movement (1930s – 1960s) |
| This week we explore the role of music in representing the reality of oppressed people and sustaining oppositional social movements. We look specifically at the explosion of socially conscious popular music across North America from the 1930s to the 1960s. This music reflected critically on themes of work, class, and racial inequality. Musicians in this period were often intimately involved with significant social movements, including the labour and civil rights movements.  **Lecture Study Question |** With reference to the readings and this week’s playlist, does the music from this period speak in any way to our lives today? Why do you believe it does or doesn’t?  **Playlist 1 |** This playlist includes some of the songs referenced in this week’s readings and lecture. Try to listen to the playlist while doing the readings and working on your LSQ.  Required Readings |   * “Foreword” (by John Steinbeck) and “Introduction” (by Woody Guthrie) from *Hard Hitting Songs for Hard-Hit People* (Oak Publications, 1967).   Plus 3 of the following   * “This Machine Kills Fascists: The Life and Music of Woody Guthrie” (*US History Scene)* <https://tinyurl.com/5ymxx9jv>). * “Spokane Wobblies Create First IWW Songbook” (HistoryLink.org, 2005) <http://historylink.org/File/7338>. * “Which Side Are You On?”: The Life and Travels of a Working-Class Song – *Working Class Perspectives* (9 April 2012) – <https://tinyurl.com/2p8erxem>. * “Lead Belly, Folk-Music Giant, Has a Smithsonian Moment” (*New York Times*, 22 February 2015) - <https://tinyurl.com/3tds93ax>. * “Birth of a Freedom Anthem” (*New York Times*, 14 March 2015) – <https://tinyurl.com/ycy35x2p>. |
| Week 3 Class and Work in Popular Music and Visual Culture II:  Jan. 25 Picturing Work: Visual Culture and Film in the mid-20th Century |
| This week we explore early visual representations of work. We will look at the evolution of the film industry in the early to mid-twentieth century, the contested representation of workers on film, and how work was re-imagined for the silver screen up to the early 1960s. We will pay particular attention to how workers and unions were represented, as well as attempts to build alternative representations of working-class life in film.  **Lecture Study Question |** According to Puette, how did early Hollywood productions ‘frame’ the labour movement? Do you agree with these portrayals of unions? Why do you agree/disagree?  **Film List 1 |** These are some of the films mentioned in the readings and lecture for this week. You are encouraged to watch at least one of these films before reviewing the lecture.  Required Readings |   * William Puette, “The Movies: Labour Framed” in *Through Jaundiced Eyes: How the Media View Organized Labor* (Cornell University 1992), pp. 12-31. * “Salt of the Earth: Made of labour, by labour, for labour” (*The Guardian*, 10 March 2014) https://tinyurl.com/mvztpfp7. |
| Week 4 Class and Work in Popular Music and Visual Culture III:  Feb. 1 Post-Industrial Musicscapes: Music and Working-Class Reality from the 1970s to the 2010s |
| As globalization, neoliberalism, and new technologies unsettled the old certainties of the postwar social order, an explosion of new music emerged accompanying the transformed landscape of the postindustrial era. This week we explore the evolution of popular music from the 1970s to the present, including the working-class dimensions of country, disco, funk, rock, punk, R&B, and hip hop.  **Lecture Study Question |** According to this week’s readings/podcast, how are the social realities of the post-industrial era being reflected in pop music? How have popular meanings of ‘work’ changed in recent decades?  **Playlist 2 |** This playlist includes some of the songs referenced in this week’s readings and lecture. Try to listen to the playlist while doing the readings and working on your LSQ.  **Required Readings |**   * Jefferson Cowie, “Dead Man’s Town” in *Stayin’ Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (The New Press 2010), pp. 357-369. * Robin Kelley, “Kickin’ Reality, Kickin’ Ballistics: Gangsta Rap and Postindustrial Los Angeles” in *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (The Free Press, 1994), pp. 183-209, 223-226.   AND read/listen to any 2 of the following:   * “Listen to Britney Spears – work is the new religion” (Federico Campagna, *The Guardian*, 7 October 2013) <https://tinyurl.com/mrtw67hv>. * “Why Everyone Is Obsessed With Songs About Work Right Now” (*Fader*, 28 April 2016) <https://tinyurl.com/msxwsvp9>. * "The Many Sounds of Black Lives Matter" (*The New Republic*, 23 June 2020) - <https://tinyurl.com/vrbvhw3k>. * "Why So Many Pop Stars Are Trying to Be Working Class Heroes Now" (*Pitchfork*, 8 January 2021) <https://tinyurl.com/mu4snsvf>. * Podcast: “Work It! Dance, Labour, Capitalism” (*Beholder Halfway* 2016) <https://tinyurl.com/4wfkbexy>. |
| Week 5 Class and Work in Popular Music and Visual Culture IV:  Feb. 8 The Post-Industrial Working Class in Film and TV (1970s – 2010s) |
| This week we explore postindustrial representations of work in visual media (film, TV, online). We examine the return of social realist portrayals in Hollywood film and network TV in the 1970s, as well as recent portrayals of work that reflect growing precarity. In this period, the inaccurate image of a North American ‘working class’ dominated by white, male, industrial/manual-workers was importantly disrupted.  Lecture Study Question | According to the readings, what are some of the dominant ways that the working class has been represented in popular media since the 1970s? What recent shows or films do you believe accurately represent the reality of working-class life in North America?  Film List 2 | These films are mentioned in the readings and lecture for this week. You are encouraged to watch at least one of these films before reviewing the lecture.  Required Readings |   * Jefferson Cowie, “The Important Sound of Things Falling Apart” in Stayin’ Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class (The New Press, 2010), pp. 313-337, 348-352. * Christopher Martin, “How Labor Gets Framed” in Framed! Labor and the Corporate Media (Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 1-20.   AND 3 of the following:   * “TV’s Dwindling Middle Class” (*New York Times Magazine*, 27 April 2016) – <https://tinyurl.com/nhbh25yu> * “Office lol-itics: the evolution of the workplace sitcom” (*The Guardian* – 23 Jan 2018) <https://tinyurl.com/wu4nmv3w> * “‘Duck Dynasty’ vs. ‘Modern Family’: 50 Maps of the U.S. Cultural Divide” (*New York Times*, 27 December 2016) <https://tinyurl.com/huy8rj9t> * “Roseanne was canceled. It isn’t the only sitcom tackling politics and the working class.” (*Vox*, 29 May 2018) <https://tinyurl.com/57d4vtp6> * “Queer Eye will talk about race, religion, and gender – but not about class (*Washington Post*, 27 June 2018) <https://tinyurl.com/yxc3fy58> * “Suddenly, Everyone We See on TV Is Very Rich or Very Poor. What Happened?” (*TIME Magazine*, 13 October 2021) <https://tinyurl.com/bdens5cw> |

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| Week 6 Understanding the Creative / Knowledge Economy I:  Feb. 15 What is the Creative / Knowledge Economy? Infrastructure, Labour and Logistics |
| Before exploring the creative/knowledge economy, we need to consider the underlying physical infrastructure, human labour, and logistics that make it possible. This week we explore the material foundations underpinning our virtual worlds, examining the global supply chains that enable the digital technologies pervading our lives to emerge.  No Lecture Study Question this week  Required Readings |   * “Where Apple Gets the Tantalum for Your iPhone” (Newsweek, 4 February 2015) [**https://tinyurl.com/app/**](https://tinyurl.com/app/) * “Apple and Google named in US lawsuit over Congolese child cobalt mining deaths” (The Guardian, 16 December 2019) [**https://tinyurl.com/5dwes2uu**](https://tinyurl.com/5dwes2uu)   AND 2 of the following   * “Motion Graphic: The iPhone Economy” (New York Times, 21 January 2012) https://tinyurl.com/bdb2cxak. * “Video: Made in China” (New York Times, 26 January 2012) [**https://tinyurl.com/22jkzp68**](https://tinyurl.com/22jkzp68) * “Apple’s Retail Army, Long on Loyalty but Short on Pay” (New York Times, 23 June 2012) [**https://tinyurl.com/2p8dprnu**](https://tinyurl.com/2p8dprnu)   AND at least 1 of the following   * “Bundled, Buried & Behind Closed Doors” (Ben Mendelson, Vimeo) - [**https://vimeo.com/30642376**](https://vimeo.com/30642376) * “Internet Machine” (Timo Arnall) – [**https://tinyurl.com/ysr3csea**](https://tinyurl.com/ysr3csea) * “Where the internet lives: the artist who snooped on Google’s data farm” (The Guardian, 4 February 2015) – [**https://tinyurl.com/4rfnyzay**](https://tinyurl.com/4rfnyzay)   AND 1 of the following   * “Making and Unmaking the Digital World” (New York Times, 5 June 2015) - [**https://tinyurl.com/4r8crn73**](https://tinyurl.com/4r8crn73) * “E-waste Republic” (Al Jazeera, 2015) – [**https://tinyurl.com/hp7xabb3**](https://tinyurl.com/hp7xabb3) * “More developed countries dumping toxic e-waste in Global South, U of T researchers find” (University of Toronto, 13 April 2022) - [**https://tinyurl.com/y395e543**](https://tinyurl.com/y395e543) |
| **Reading Week**  **No Classes February 20 – 24** |
| **Week 7 Understanding the Creative / Knowledge Economy II:**  Mar. 1 Imagining Postindustrial Economies: Theory and Reality |
| This week we explore some of the leading theories that promise a ‘new’ postindustrial economy, which envision an increasing role of knowledge, innovation, and creativity in the 21st century workplace. While the mainstream literatures that address these issues are often couched in optimistic language, the underlying realities of expanding low-wage and precarious service work tell a different story. Along these lines, the emerging app-based ‘gig-economy’ – Uber, TaskRabbit, AskForTask, Fiver, Mechanical Turk, etc. – is becoming an important site of new labour market controversies.  **Lecture Study Question |** According to this week’s readings, what are the main ways in which labour is being transformed by new technologies?  **Required Readings |**   * Andre Gorz, “A New Historical Subject: The Non-Class of Post-Industrial Proletarians” in *Farewell to the Working Class* (Pluto Press 1982), pp. 66-74. * Richard Florida, “The Rise of the Creative Class” (Washington Monthly, May 2002) – <https://tinyurl.com/2457yer7>.   PLUS 2 of the following:   * David Graeber, “On the phenomenon of ‘bullsh\*t jobs’” (Strike, 17 August 2013) – <https://www.atlasofplaces.com/essays/on-the-phenomenon-of-bullshit-jobs/> * “Fallacy of the creative class: Why Richard Florida’s ‘urban renaissance’ won’t save U.S. cities” (Grist, 11 February 2013) - <https://tinyurl.com/4udey5n2>. * “The Death and Life of the Central Business District” (Bloomberg, 14 May 2021) - <https://tinyurl.com/5djcczd5>. * “In the Sharing Economy, Workers Find Both Freedom and Uncertainty” (New York Times, 16 August 2014) – <https://tinyurl.com/ymdv8zea>. * “Against Sharing” (Jacobin, 19 Sep. 2014) – <https://tinyurl.com/89m3fvbh>. |
| **Reading Week**  **No Classes February 19 – 23** |
| **Week 8 Understanding the Creative / Knowledge Economy III:**  **Mar. 8 Digital Dystopias: Labour in an Age of Social Media** |
| Are new technologies disempowering workers? This week looks at everything from new digital surveillance technologies in the workplace, the use of algorithms to guide managerial decisions, and new forms of low-wage work in the creative / knowledge economy.  **Lecture Study Question |** According to this week’s readings how are new technologies constraining the choices of the working-class in the emerging digital economy?  **Required Readings |**   * Nick Dyer-Witherford, “Chapter 1: Proletariat” in *Cyber Proletariat: Global Labor in the Digital Vortex* (Pluto Press 2015), pp. 1-18 – <https://tinyurl.com/4ydkhcdh>. * “Justice for ‘Data Janitors’” (Public Books, 15 Jan 2015) – <https://tinyurl.com/5n6kn35h>.   PLUS 3 of the following:   * “Unblinking Eyes Track Employees: Workplace Surveillance Sees Good and Bad” (New York Times, 21 June 2014) – <https://tinyurl.com/mva5amaf>. * “Working Anything but 9 to 5: Scheduling Technology Leaves Low-Income Parents With Hours of Chaos” (New York Times, 13 August 2014) – <https://tinyurl.com/y5r2tc98>. * “Inside Amazon: Wrestling Big Ideas in a Bruising Workplace” (New York Times, 15 August 2015) – <https://tinyurl.com/ye5s632c>. * “When Your Boss is an Algorithm” (Financial Times, 8 September 2016) – <https://tinyurl.com/2p8659aw>. * "Wearables in the workplace and the dangers of staff surveillance" (Financial Times, 28 February 2017) - <https://tinyurl.com/mr24tyw8>. * "Your Boss is Watching You: Work-From-Home Boom Leads to More Surveillance" (NPR, 13 May 2020) - <https://tinyurl.com/2p9828eh>. |
| **Week 9 Social Media as Tool For Social Change?**  **Mar. 15 New Models of Labour Organizing** |
| This week we explore the growing role of social media in labour and social movement campaigning, including some of the basic building blocks that unions use to build-up successful social media campaigns. We will also explore some of the deeper social movement organizing skills necessary to move beyond ‘clicktivism’ or hashtag activism in the service of sustainable social change. We will also assess both the possibilities and limitations of using social media for positive social change.  **Lecture Study Question |** Based on this week’s readings, what are some of the strengths and limits of one of the following labour advocacy campaigns’ use of social media?   * #FightFor15 - <https://www.15andfairness.org/>. * Employees’ Walmart Canada - <http://employeswalmartcanada.ca/>. * Workers’ Action Centre – Toronto - <http://workersactioncentre.org/>. * Justicia for Migrant Workers - <https://www.facebook.com/justice4mw>. * Gig Workers Rising - <https://gigworkersrising.org/>.   **Required Readings |**   * “Having the Hard Conversations: Jane McAlevey on Fight for 15, labor’s crisis of strategy, and the difference between organizing and mobilizing” (Jacobin, 10 April 2015) - <https://tinyurl.com/k9jxk3ba>. * “Uncommon CORE” (Jacobin, 3 June 2014) – <https://tinyurl.com/w5ee3r86>. * “Fight for $15, Black Lives Matter Groups Join Forces” (VOA, 24 March 2017) - <https://tinyurl.com/3yh8pzdh>.   PLUS **2 of the following**   * “Fight for $15: Directed-network campaigning in action” (Mobilization Lab, 8 September 2016) - <https://tinyurl.com/yckpmmt2>. * “The Verizon Strike, The Virtual Picket Line, & The Labor Movement” (OnLabor, 4 May 2016) - <https://tinyurl.com/v4jd7jsm>. * “Social Media Helps Public-Sector Labor Organizing Efforts” (Government Technology, 16 March 2018) - <https://tinyurl.com/3f3mee6d>. * “A TikTok Army is Coming for Union Busters” (WIRED, 20 April 2022) - <https://tinyurl.com/5b7deaaj>. |
| **Week 10 Organizing Cultural Producers I**  **Mar. 22 Organizing Labour in the Music Industry** |
| Struggles for control over output and the distribution of profits between musicians and the major recording labels have been a feature of the industry since its beginnings. Patterns of exploitation have tended to match those in the labour market more broadly, with racialized musicians and women more likely to be undervalued and short-changed for their contributions. As technology develops and business models in the music industry shift, new opportunities and challenges are emerging for cultural producers. We will also examine the role of behind-the-scenes workers who are equally crucial to the music industry.  **Lecture Study Question |** According to the readings, what are some of the major challenges that musicians have faced historically? What are some emerging challenges confronting musicians today?  **Required Readings |**  Pick 2 of the following articles on the history of early labour organizing by musicians in the USA and Canada:   * “The Silence That Sparked New Sounds” (Wall Street Journal, 26 December 2012) – <https://tinyurl.com/2s486vvf> * “History of the American Federation of Musicians” (AFM): <http://www.afm.org/about/history-2/> * Musicians Unions (Canadian Encyclopedia) – <https://tinyurl.com/5butxsae>   Pick 3 of the following articles on the current challenges faced by musicians in light of the growing popularity of digital streaming services:   * “Revenge Of The Record Labels: How The Majors Renewed Their Grip On Music” (Forbes, 15 April 2015) – <https://tinyurl.com/38xw6jxk> * “How streaming saved the music industry” (Financial Times, 16 January 2017) - <https://tinyurl.com/5w5hcy2j> * “This Is How Many Streams a Musician Needs to Make Minimum Wage in America” (Music.Mic, 15 April 2015) - <https://tinyurl.com/mtm2ndcf> * “Music Artists Take On the Business, Calling for Change” (New York Times, 31 July 2015) - <https://tinyurl.com/3h8c55ks> * “Songwriters Are Getting Drastically Short-Changed in the Music-Streaming Economy, Study Shows” (Variety, 19 Apr 2021) - <https://tinyurl.com/2t2um6uh>   Read both articles highlighting the precarity facing Canadian musicians:   * “The average Canadian indie artist earns a whopping $7,228 a year playing music, plus some other industry stats” (National Post, 5 March 2013) – <https://tinyurl.com/bdfr84hr> * “The middle-class musicians may be a thing of the past, thanks to the pandemic” (CBC, 11 March 2021) – <https://tinyurl.com/4r9seajs> |
| **Week 11 Organizing Cultural Producers II:**  **Mar. 29 Organizing Labour in the Film and TV Industries** |
| This week we explore the long history of labour organizing in film and TV, including some of the most important strikes by actors/actresses, screenwriters, production crews, etc. in recent decades. We also look at how more recent shifts in the way film/TV content is produced, marketed, and distributed – not to mention how we acquire, consume, and watch our favorite movies and shows – is influencing new rounds of labour struggle.  **Lecture Study Question |** According to the readings, why did Hollywood become and why did it remain a ‘union town’? What are some of the emerging challenges facing film and TV workers?  **Required Readings |**  Read both articles on some of Hollywood’s early union organizing history:   * “Hollywood Is a Union Town” (The Nation, 2 April 1938) – <https://tinyurl.com/aj4v3bee> * “The Disney Artists’ Strike of 1941 (Cartoon Brew, 29 May 2016) - <https://tinyurl.com/5yjy76km>   Read 2 of the following articles providing perspectives on Hollywood as a union town:   * “Hollywood - America's Last Union Town” (Daily Kos, 14 August 2012) – <https://tinyurl.com/49u9cfjx> * “The gig economy is a disaster for workers. Hollywood’s unions can help them learn to fight back” (Quartz, 1 September 2017) - <https://tinyurl.com/ypvxexa8> * “Powerful Hollywood Women Unveil Anti-Harassment Action Plan” (The New York Times, 1 January 2018) – <https://tinyurl.com/2hcp3jn2>   Pick 2 articles about the challenges in organizing TV workers:   * “The Real World of Reality TV: Worker Exploitation” (In These Times, 14 October 2014) – <https://tinyurl.com/4znbs88e> * "WGA Deal: Extended Talks Highlight Major Shifts in Peak TV Era" (Variety, 2 May 2017) - <https://tinyurl.com/mv8c9h2v> * “What Game Workers Can Learn From Other Labor Organizations” (Variety, 22 March 2019) - <https://tinyurl.com/3htsp52u> * "Why—and How—Hollywood Unions Are Asking Streamers to Pay Up" (Backstage, 18 October 2021) - <https://tinyurl.com/5ceynv6s> |
| **Week 12 Organizing Cultural Producers III:**  **Apr. 5 Organizing Social Media and App Economy Workers / Exam Review** |
| We end with a consideration of nascent efforts to organize workers directly involved in social media content generation, as well as those who are increasingly resorting to the app-based gig economy for employment. Recent organizing drives at popular social media outlets and websites speak to an emerging terrain of struggle. We also explore the possibility of alternative digital economies that wouldn’t be based on worker exploitation.  **Lecture Study Question |** According to the readings, what are some of the new possibilities emerging for organizing workers directly involved in social media content generation and in the app-based gig economy? Is platform cooperativism a solution to these workers’ problems?  **Required Readings |**  “Platform Cooperativism vs. the Sharing Economy” (The Medium, 5 December 2014) <https://tinyurl.com/2z9juaa8>.  **Pick 1 article** examining alternative ways of organizing the digital economy:   * “Worker-owned tech cooperatives find a niche near Silicon Valley” (Al Jazeera, 26 May 2015) – <https://tinyurl.com/3nbzd6mn>. * "How workers can profit by taking control of technology” (Financial Times, 17 April 2017) - <https://tinyurl.com/4dweytax>. * "The Gig is Up: App-based Workers in Canada are Taking Things into their Own Hands" (This Magazine, 7 January 2021) - <https://tinyurl.com/3s4xmutb>.   **Pick 2 articles** on recent moves to unionize online content generators at some of the world’s largest online publications   * “Organizing New Media” (Jacobin Magazine, 17 November 2016) – <https://tinyurl.com/b6zarwyt>. * “Unions are becoming ubiquitous in digital media. Medium is the latest.” (CNN, 11 February 2021) - <https://tinyurl.com/mvxrmunk>. * “Instagram Memers are Unionizing” (The Atlantic, 17 April 2019) - <https://tinyurl.com/53tdcunm>. * “TikTok Stars and Social Media Creators Can Now Join Hollywood’s Top Union” (New York Times, 12 February 2021) – <https://tinyurl.com/3jahrxjp>. |

**Course Policies |**

**Submitting Assignments |** All assignments must be submitted electronically via Avenue to Learn. You must use either 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 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 |** All students will have **FIVE (5) grace days** to use to submit work after scheduled due dates, as they see fit, before a late penalty will apply. So, for example, you could hand in five assignments each one day late, or you could hand in one assignment five days late, without a late penalty applying. However, after you have used your total number of grace days, the penalty for late submission of an assignment is **10% per day**, with the weekend counting as two days. For example, an assignment marked out of 20 submitted one day late will receive a deduction of 2 out of 20. All term work must be submitted by the last day of class. Electronic submission of assignments via Avenue to Learn is mandatory in order to allow us to keep track of your use of these grace days. Assignments submitted more than 5 days late will not be accepted unless you have negotiated an extension (see below).

**Extensions |** Extensions may be arranged in advance of the deadline, but, in the interests of fairness, usually only in cases of medical problems or severe personal difficulties. Please see your teaching assistant as soon as you are aware of these difficulties to discuss and negotiate alternative arrangements. Please note that workload or poor time management is not an acceptable reason for extension. If you have ongoing difficulties with managing your time, please see me about resources you can access.

**Grade Appeals |** Students are entitled to ask questions about grades, to understand the reasons behind an evaluation in order to do better next time, and to request a regrade if the situation warrants. However, students must observe the following guidelines:

1. Students must normally **wait one week** after they receive a grade before we will discuss it.
2. Students must show that they have **read and understood the feedback** given on the assignment.
3. Students must **ask specific questions** about the substance of the feedback, or **provide specific reasons** for why they believe their work has been improperly evaluated. These questions / reasons should be submitted in writing, and should address the specific nature of the assignment and the feedback given.
4. Regrades will **not** be granted for the following reasons:

* *“I didn’t understand the assignment”:* It is your responsibility to ensure you fully understand what is expected of you before you submit an assignment.
* *“I do well in other courses”:* All courses have different criteria and expectations, and rely on different skills, abilities and background preparation; students’ performance will vary as a result.
* *“I need a higher grade for grad school / law school / insert reason here”:* Assignments are evaluated on their merits alone, and not on the impact they may have on your future plans. If you need high grades, you must find out how to fulfill the criteria so as to obtain such a result.
* *“I worked really hard”:* It is expected that you will have worked hard on any assignment; this, however, doesn’t guarantee that you will have fulfilled the criteria. Sometimes, effort can be misdirected.

1. Students should speak first with the teaching assistant who originally graded the assignment. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of that conversation, please make an appointment to see the professor.
2. Regrades can result in an **increase or a decrease** in the assigned grade.

**Instructor’s Email Tips |** I am generally quite accessible by email, but there are a few tips to follow for effective and professional email communication:

* **Use your university email account:** This minimizes the chance that your email will get lost in the spam filter and presents a more serious image than does hotdude@gmail.com or babelicious@hotmail.com.
* **Include the course number in the subject line:** This will help us sort out more quickly which student from which class is asking for help. A subject line like “WORKLABR 2M03: question about readings” is a better than “Hi” or “Question”, which can also look like spam.
* **Politeness is appreciated:** You don’t have to be formal but opening with “Dear Prof. Ross” or “Dear Stephanie” is preferred.
* **Sign your full name:** I like to know who I’m talking to.
* **Acknowledge my response:** You can simply put “Thanks: EOM” in the subject line (EOM = “end of message”; handy for one-line emails, since you don’t have to write an actual full email).
* **Be patient:** I am usually quite diligent about getting back to students quickly but will aim to respond within 48 hours.
* **Follow up:** If you email me and do not receive a reply within 48 hours, assume that I did not receive your email, and try again.
* **Check your own email regularly:** There will be times when we must change arrangements or get in touch quickly, and it is important for you to check your email regularly to keep on top of these things.

**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 to go [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

**Reading the Course Outline |** It is your responsibility to read the course outline, know the policies, and know the deadlines for assignments. To reward you for reading these policies to this point, I will grant 1 bonus mark to any student that emails me a meme or screen grab of a film, TV show or other image depicting something about workers or work. ;)

**Department and University Policies**

**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.

In this course, we will be using Turnitin, a software package designed to reveal plagiarism. Students will be required to submit their work electronically for this purpose.

**Submission of Assignments |** 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/**](http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/)

Students are asked to use the on-line self-reporting tool for an illness lasting **less than 3 days**. The MSAF 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**](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.

**E-Mail 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**](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/**](http://sas.mcmaster.ca/) **MUSC-B107 905-525-9140 x28652**

*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 accommodation needs that are not being met.

**McMaster University Policy on Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities & McMaster University Anti-Discrimination Policy**

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

**Student Success Centre |** [**http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/**](http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/) **GH-110 905-525-9140 x24254**

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 |** [**http://wellness.mcmaster.ca/**](http://wellness.mcmaster.ca/) **MUSC-B101 905-525-9140 x27700**

The SWC provides services in Personal and Psychological Counselling, Mental Health Support, Medical and Health Service

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Participation: Evaluation Criteria** | | |
| **Grade** | **Discussion** | **Reading** |
| **A+**  **Exceptional** | -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 | -has done all readings  -demonstrates superior grasp of readings / concepts  -regular and very capable use readings in discussion |
| **A**  **Excellent** | -strong knowledge base  -frequent participation, asks questions  -shows some capacity for analysis / synthesis / critical evaluation | -has done most readings  -demonstrates strong grasp of readings / concepts  -frequent use of readings in discussion |
| **B to B+**  **Good to Very Good** | -good knowledge base, with some misunderstandings  -analysis / critical evaluation somewhat underdeveloped, with arguments less well supported  -participation is variable | -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** | -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 | -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** | -poor knowledge base; superficial grasp of concepts or issues  -very little critical thinking or analysis  -rarely participates or asks questions | -does readings infrequently  -shows little familiarity with concepts  -almost never refers to readings in discussion |
| **E to F**  **Failing** | -never participates  -does not even show superficial understanding of ideas | -never does readings |

**Ways you can participate:**

* initiate a topic or question
* provide information when needed by professor or other students
* offer a positive or negative reaction to something under discussion or ask for positive or negative reactions
* state when you disagree with what the professor or other students have said, and why
* restate what someone else said to ensure you understand
* give examples when needed, or ask others to give examples
* synthesize or summarize part of the discussion
* encourage or help others in the group

**To participate effectively, you must:**

* have done the reading
* be willing to share what you think you understand, so that others can learn and so you can check that your understandings are accurate
* be willing to say that you don’t know or understand something, and ask for further explanation