

UNIONS IN ACTION

2022-23 (Fall 2022) Tentative Outline

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CLASS TIME: Mondays, 7-10pm
CLASSROOM – L.R. Wilson Hall 1055

OFFICE: KTH 723
OFFICE HOURS: Mondays 5:30-6:20

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Course Description

This course examines how unions work, what they do for workers, and the challenges they face in the Canadian context. Students will explore collective bargaining, union democracy, labour’s role in politics, working class diversity, and union renewal. The course will also focus on the processes by which unions make decisions and try to take action on key issues. Group work will provide students with an opportunity to gain experience with how these processes work. By the end of the course, students will have a better grip on the purpose of unions, why they are important, why some interests are hostile to them, and how they hope to survive in the future.

Course Learning Objectives

This course will enhance the student’s depth and breadth of knowledge – depth will be especially enhanced, as we will explore in detail the successes and limits of organized labour in Canada. As with all Labour Studies courses, it takes an interdisciplinary approach, thus allowing students to learn and apply different theoretical frameworks and analytical tools from various fields. The course will also help students to understand the limits of knowledge, in particular because scholars remain divided (or simply uncertain)

about the causes of the recent struggles of unions, and especially about how unions can recover their strength.

The course will give students greater knowledge of methodologies, in both the research assignment, and especially in the group work. Through the research for the group project and the mock labour convention, students will also enhance their teamwork and their oral communication skills. Since the group work challenges students to pick their own union and develop policies to further its interests, the course will further their professional capacities and their ability to apply knowledge.

Required Materials and Texts

- All course materials will be available online, either through links or via PDFs posted on Avenue

Course Evaluation Breakdown

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|-----|
| • Mid-Term Test | October 24 | 20% |
| • Short Essay | November 21 | 25% |
| • Group Work | See detailed breakdown | 15% |
| • Presentations & Discussions | See detailed breakdown | 10% |
| • Final Exam | Exam period | 30% |

• Notes on Evaluations

- Both the In-class test and the Final Exam will be online, on Avenue to Learn. Both will involve a mixture of instant answer-questions (such as multiple-choice, true-false, matching exercises, etc), and written response questions. For all written response questions, you will be given a chance to pick between 2-3 questions to answer.
 - Final exam covers all material *after* the in-class test, except one broad question that will cover the entire course. You will be given this question in advance of the exam.
- For the short essay, you will be provided a list of research questions. However, you can formulate your own question with the permission of the instructor.
 - Guidelines for the essay will be provided in an assignment sheet in October.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 – September 12

Topics

- **Introduction**
- **Explaining the Group Work**
 - This will be key to the important group component to the class – please make sure to attend.

Readings: None Yet.

Part I – Where We Are

Week 2 – September 19

Topics

- **The Foundation: The Wagner Model - Strengths and Limits**

Readings:

- Stewards Handbook – URL posted on Avenue to Learn
- Wayne Lewchuk, “Collective Bargaining in Canada in the Age of Precarious Employment” (Pdf on ATL)

Further Recommended Reading:

- Bryan Burkett, “Future of the Wagner Act: A Canadian American Comparison”
<https://journal.queenslaw.ca/sites/journal/files/Issues/Vol%2038%20i2/2.%20Burkett.pdf>

Group Work:

- Establish Your Groups
- Begin selecting your organization

Week 3 – September 26

Topics

- **Protecting the Vulnerable - Or Not?**
- **Social Unionism**

Readings:

- On Protecting the Vulnerable:
 - Thomas Lemieux et al, “Unions and Wage Inequality: The Roles of Gender, Skill, and Public Sector Unemployment (Pdf on ATL)
- On Social Unionism:

- “Canadian Autoworkers, the Climate Crisis, and the Contradictions of Social Unionism.” (Pdf on ATL)

Further Recommended Reading:

Tanya Basok, “Temporary Migrant Workers in Canada: Protecting and Extending Labour Rights.” (Pdf on ATL)

Group Work: Learning the Basics About Your Organization

Week 4 – October 3

Topic

- **Neo-Liberal Attack on Unions**

Readings:

- Judy Fudge and Eric Tucker, “The Freedom to Strike in Canada: A Brief Legal History.”

https://www.law.utoronto.ca/documents/conferences2/StrikeSymposium09_Fudge-Tucker.pdf

- Steve Hill, “All of the Ways A Rundown of All the Ways Trump Is Overseeing an All Out, Under-the-Radar Attack on Workers

http://inthesetimes.com/working/entry/21391/trump_workers_labor_unions_nlr

Group Work: Identifying Key Challenges & Previous Campaigns

Reading Week – October 10 – No Class

Week 5 – October 17

Topic

- **Union Resistance**

Readings:

- John Peters, “Down in the Vale: Corporate Globalization, Unions on the Defensive, and the USW 6500 Strike in Sudbury” (Pdf on ATL)

Group Work: Choosing & Developing Your Action Plan

Week 6 – October 24

Topic – In-Class Test

Readings: None This Week

Group Work: Draft & Discuss Plans of Action

Week 7 – October 31

Date – Topic

- **Union Renewal**

Readings:

- Bronfenbrenner and Juravich, “It Takes more than Housecalls. Organizing to Win with Comprehensive Union Strategy” from *Organizing to Win: New Research on Union Strategies* (Pdf on ATL)
- “Bureaucracy and Solidarity: An Interview with Staughton Lynd” Jacobin Magazine
<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/06/bureaucracy-and-solidarity-an-interview-with-staughton-lynd/>

Group Work: Write Proposals, Organize Responses

- Proposal Submission Due November 3

Part II – How We Got Here

Week 8 – November 7

Topics:

- **Unions & Politics – Can’t Find a Home**

Readings:

- Dennis Pillon, Stephanie Ross and Larry Savage, “Solidarity Revisited: Organized Labour and the New Democratic Party” (Pdf on ATL)

Group Work: Finalize Proposals, Prepare Presentations & Responses

Week 9 – November 14

Topics:

- **Presentations & Responses**

Week 10 – November 21

Topics

- **Revolutionary Unionism**
- **Presentations & Responses II (if needed)**

Readings:

- Lenin’s Critique of Economism (Pdf on ATL)

- Ruth Frager, “Pulling in One Direction: The Development of Jewish Working-Class Activism,” from *Sweatshop Strife* (Pdf on ATL)

Week 11 – November 28

Topics

- **Industrial Democracy**
- **Industrial Unionism**

Readings:

- Nelson Lichtenstein, “Citizenship at Work” from *State of the Union* (Pdf on ATL)
- Wendy Cuthbertson, “Labour & the War for the Common Man” (Pdf on ATL)

Group Work: Revise Proposals After Presentations & Discussion

Week 12 – December 5

Topics

- **Decline of the Union Ideal**
- **Wrap-Up and Exam Prep**

Readings:

- Nelson Lichtenstein, “Erosion of the Union Idea” from *State of the Union* (Pdf on ATL)

Group Work: Finish & Submit Revised Proposal

Group Work

A big part of the course will focus on a problem-based small group project. This year, the project will involve developing an action or mobilization plan for a union or other labour organization. After you form into groups, each group will decide on a union or other labour organization they want to represent, and then explore that organization in depth. The group will then identify some key challenges facing their organization, look at previous campaigns that have been employed to address these challenges, and then develop their own plan.

Attendance and active student participation are extremely important in this course. The problem-based learning aspect of the course will not work unless the students make it work. You need to show not only a willingness to participate, but also some initiative in making decisions and setting your agenda. You will then write a proposal for a plan of action – (explained in next item).

- Grades for this section will be determined by
 - tutorial attendance & participation – how much you put into the group work is essential
 - group meeting summaries (see details below)
 - submission of drafts and research findings (usually part of group summaries – more details to come)
 - a group self-assessment (see details below).

Presentations and Responses

Each group will develop a proposal for a plan of action, which will be in written form (specific guidelines will be provided in due course). You will then present your proposal to a mock labour council – the council will be made up of the instructor, the TAs, and the students at least one other group. The mock labour council will need to receive the report several days before the presentation (more detailed timelines will come during the course).

The mock labour council will respond to the proposal – asking questions, providing feedback, and considering whether the council will support the proposal and form the support should take. Your group will then produce a final report that addresses concerns raised by the council and adjusting your plan as you see fit.

- Grades for this section will be determined by
 - the quality of the report you present to council
 - your presentation, including your response to the council's questions
 - the quality of the final report (after final revisions)
 - your performance when you play the role of labour council.

Group Meeting Summaries

A member of each group will submit weekly meeting summaries by 9am Friday morning following the tutorial. A template will be provided to help you with the summaries.

Note taking responsibility should be allocated to a group member. It is recommended that you rotate responsibility for this, although it is not required (and yes, of course being the one who writes these reports counts as good participation!). Summaries must include the following:

- A list of group members present.
- Record of key discussion points.
- Plans for future action.
- Agenda for next meeting.

Reports do not need to be excessively detailed. 400-500 words may be adequate in many cases; most should not exceed 750 words, although in some weeks they could be this long.

Peer Evaluation

One of the methods (but not the only one) used to determine the grade for both Tutorial participation and the Group Projects is peer evaluation. Students will be given forms that ask them to assess in detail the work of the other members of their group – and of themselves. Your answers, of course, will be confidential.

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

- Assignments will be submitted online, including assignments related to the group work.
 - The instructor may ask for paper copies of the research essay, as it is better to read and mark on paper.

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

- **Late Penalties:**
 - **First 3 days:** 1% per working day. (This means 1% out of 100 on that assignment, not 1% from the final course grade.)
 - **After first 3 days:** 2% per working day. (This means 2% out of 100 on that assignment, not 2% from the final course grade.)
- **Grade Adjustments:** redistributions of grade values (for example, moving the weight for an assignment to the final exam) are extremely rare and given only in truly extraordinary circumstances.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

If you need to miss a class or any term work or any other course requirement, it is your responsibility to notify the instructor so we can work out how to move forward.

If you experience a disruption that will affect this course and others too, you should consult with Academic Advising in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

<https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/current-students/academic-advising/>

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. 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.

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:

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/>

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- 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.

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.

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.

Student Accessibility Services:

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

Location: MUSC – B107

Contact: 905-525-9140 extension: 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 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/>

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/>

PGCLL - 210 905-525-9140 x27700

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