

POLSCI 3H03: HONOURS ISSUES IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Digital Authoritarianism

Winter 2021, Term II

Instructor: Dr. Netina Tan
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Lecture: Fridays, 9:30am – 11:20am

Classes: Via Zoom (link on Avenue)
Office Hours: Every Tues, 1-2pm. Sign up via Google Docs (link on Avenue)

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Course Description

Digital authoritarianism – a state’s use of digital technology to surveil, repress and manipulate domestic and foreign populations – is on the rise around the world. In this course, we examine *why* digital authoritarianism gains global momentum, *how* both democratic and autocratic governments use digital tools to manipulate public opinion, and *what* impact the “big data”, technological tools and platforms have on democracy. Drawing from global and comparative politics literature, we begin the course by surveying the causes of global democratic regression and examine how digital dictators in China and Russia project “sharp power” by interfering in elections, hacking and spreading disinformation in established democracies. We then examine the emerging digital threats to cybersecurity, digital censorship and the use of bots, troll factories, memes to spread disinformation, mistrust and hate. We conclude the course by comparing the efficacy of digital activism and the approaches taken by the governments, digital platforms and citizens to regulate the cyber-chaos.

Course Objectives

This course introduces undergraduate students to the contemporary threats and challenges of digital technology to democracy. Students will learn:

- The dominant theories and debates in the digital technology and comparative authoritarianism literature

- The toolkits and strategies that the autocrats used to stay in power and spread distrust and chaos
- To analyze the current events around the globe based on the theories covered in the course

Required Materials and Texts

There is no required textbook. All the readings are available electronically from the Mills Library and Avenue to Learn.

Class Format

This is reading and discussion intensive class. Each week, you will need to attend one two-hour online class via Zoom. Aside from the first class, all the virtual classes will be held on Friday, comprising of a lecture, a short break and an interactive group discussion. The lecture portion will be recorded and put up on Avenue's under "Contents". My presentation slides will also be available and uploaded on Avenue. Given our learning format, it will be best for you to download in advance and/or learn the following free apps and tools for this class:

- 1) [Avenue to learn](#) – to access course readings, ppt slides, videos and assignments
- 2) [Zoom](#) – for our weekly online classes
- 3) [Google docs](#) – available online for collaborative work and discussion
- 4) [Zotero](#) – free citation software (strongly encourage for your annotated bibliography and research essay)

You are expected to be consistent in your reading and submitting weekly assignments, so that you can keep up and have a good grasp of the course literature and content. Your weekly work and participation will prepare you for your assignments and final take-home exam. It is important to be consistent and manage your time carefully in this course. Pay attention to the due dates for all the weekly assignments and research projects (see Course Schedule in p.7). You will have time to work on your readings, weekly responses and presentation projects within a flexible time frame.

I will hold office hours every **Tues from 1:00pm-2:00pm and via appointment**. I will be available to meet with you virtually one-on-one for at least 15 mins time slot. You can sign up for your slot on google-docs. You can use the office hour slot to discuss one-on-one any questions or ideas you have about the course. Additionally, you can contact me via email at netina@mcmaster.ca or on Avenue's other communication channels (check "Activity Feeds"). I will do my best to respond as promptly as possible.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Group Moderation, Summary Note and Presentation – 20%, by sign-up
2. Op-ed – 25%, due 5 March 2020
3. Documentary Review – 25%, due 26 Mar 2021
4. Take Home Exam – 30%, due 16 April 2021

Course Evaluation – Details

Group Moderation, Summary Note and Presentation (20%), sign-up

You will sign up to be a group moderator on one assigned or required reading on the first day of class. The class will be divided into groups of 3-4 for a 15-minute group discussion in Zoom’s “break out rooms” for 10 weeks of the term (see Course schedule on scheduled Group Discussions). If you are the group moderator for that week, you will be responsible for facilitating a small group discussion on at least one reading and summarize your discussion points (e.g. thesis, contributions, credibility of sources, etc.).

You will sign up for your reading in advance on a **google-doc (posted on Avenue)**. I will move between groups during the discussion period to help if necessary. After the small group discussions, the whole class will meet again. As the moderator, you will list the contributions of your team and share what your group discussed (no more than 1-2 mins) on the assigned required or recommended reading. Your moderation will be evaluated based on your ability to summarize key points of the readings and communicate the main points of your group’s discussion.

Op-Ed (25%), due 26 Feb

You will pick a timely topic that is related to any of the key themes covered in this course, and write a 800 word single-spaced, opinion piece that would potentially be published in an online platform such as [The Conversation](#) (also see [The Conversation](#) for guidelines and examples). Academic sources are not needed but it will be great to hyperlink sources of your claim. I will provide tips and ideas on how to frame an op-ed on 29 Jan. You may like to run through your topic with me during office hours. Selected op-ed may be posted on [Digital Democracy Research Hub](#) website. Some interesting and timely topics can include the following:

- 1) Foreign interference in elections is nothing new
- 2) Digital technology worsen inequalities
- 3) “Sharp power” and its impact on Canada
- 4) Covid-19 and surveillance technology – rights and privacy
- 5) Do we need facial recognition technology?
- 6) Internet censorship is good and necessary
- 7) Ban Instagram
- 8) Deactivate Facebook!
- 9) Twitter and hate speech
- 10) Who’s responsible for fact-checking “fake news”?

Documentary Review (25%), due 19 Mar

You will select a documentary listed below and write a one-page review about it (about 500 words, single-spaced). Your documentary review should summarize the central theme/message in the documentary in 1-2 sentences, assess the producer’s use of sources (historical archives, interviews and data); the relevance of the documentary for class discussion, and highlight any favorite/memorable/aspect of the documentary. Will you recommend the documentary for future study of this course? Assess the credibility of sources, persuasiveness and explain if the film advance your understanding of the key threats and challenges of digital technology in this post-truth world. You may like to

check out other sources, apart from the documentaries listed here to review. But be sure to send the title to me for approval in advance, before reviewing it.

List of documentaries:

- Bernet, David. 2015. [Democracy: The Politics of Privacy Inside the E.U.](#)
- Blue Ice Docs. 2018. [The Cleaners: The Politics of Removing Inappropriate Content from the Internet.](#)
- HBO Documentary Films. 2020. [After Truth: Disinformation and the Cost of Fake News.](#)
- HBO Documentary Films. 2020. [Kill Chain: The Cyber War on America’s Elections.](#)
- Meillassoux, Marc, and Mihaela Gladovic. 2017. [Nothing to Hide - the Documentary About Surveillance and You.](#)
- PBS. 2019. [In the Age of AI.](#)
- Netflix. 2019. [The Great Hack.](#)
- ———. 2020. [The Social Dilemma.](#)

**The last two interesting Netflix documentaries are only available to subscribers.*

Take Home Exam (30%), due 7 Apr

This exam will be cumulative and cover all the materials introduced in Weeks 1-11. I will release the final exam questions online on 9 Apr 2021. You will have a week to complete the exam. You will submit the completed final exam on 16 Apr on Avenue (Assignments). The exam format will consist of concept definitions and short essays.

Weekly Course Schedule

Wks	Friday	9:30am – 11:20am	Activities/deadline
1	15 Jan	Introduction	Sign up for group moderation
2	22 Jan	Digital Authoritarianism	Group discussion 1
3	29 Jan	Digital Dictators	Group discussion 2
4	5 Feb	Cyberthreats and Security	Group discussion 3
5	12 Feb	Internet Freedom and Blackout Your say! How to op-ed?	Guest Lecturer: Helen Beny Group discussion 4
Reading Break (14-21 Feb)			
6	26 Feb	Authoritarian Innovations	Group discussion 5
7	5 Mar	Disinformation and Manipulation	Group discussion 6 Op-ed due 26 Feb
8	12 Mar	Surveillance, Data and Privacy	Group discussion 7
9	19 Mar	Digital Campaign and Democracy	Group discussion 8 Documentary review due 19 Mar
10	26 Mar	Regulating Cyber-chaos	Group discussion 9 Release take-home exam on 31 Mar, Wed
11	2 Apr	Good Friday, no class!	
12	9 Apr	What’s Ahead?	Take-home exam due 7 Apr, Wed on AVL

Week 1 (15 January) – Introduction

Required Readings:

1. Drum, Kevin. 2020. "[Tech World](#)," July 29, 2020.

Week 2 (22 January) – Digital Authoritarianism

Required Readings:

1. Lührmann, Anna, and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2019. "[A Third Wave of Autocratization Is Here: What Is New About It?](#)" *Democratization* 26 (7): 1095–1113.
2. Gunitsky, Seva. 2015. "[Corrupting the Cyber-Commons: Social Media as a Tool of Autocratic Stability.](#)" *Perspectives on Politics* 13 (1).
3. Shahbaz, Adrian. 2018. "[Freedom on the Net 2018: The Rise of Digital Authoritarianism.](#)" *Freedom on the Net*. Freedom House.

Recommended Readings:

1. Mounk, Yascha, and Roberto Stefan Foa. 2019. "[The End of the Democratic Century](#)," August 19, 2019.
2. Nakasone, Paul M., and Michael Sulmeyer. 2020. "[How to Compete in Cyberspace](#)," August 25, 2020.
3. Kornbluh, Karen. 2020. "[The Internet's Lost Promise.](#)" *Foreign Affairs*, July 29, 2020.

Week 3 (29 January) – Digital Dictators

Required Readings:

1. Kendall-Taylor, Andrea, Erica Frantz, and Joseph Wright. 2020. "[The Digital Dictators](#)," April 16, 2020.
2. Greitens, Sheena Chestnut. 2013. "[Authoritarianism Online: What Can We Learn from Internet Data in Nondemocracies?](#)" *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46 (2): 262–70.
3. Walker, Christopher, and Jessica Ludwig. 2018. "[The Meaning of Sharp Power](#)," January 4, 2018.

Recommended Readings:

1. Bulovsky, Andrew. 2019. "[Authoritarian Communication on Social Media: The Relationship Between Democracy and Leaders' Digital Communicative Practices.](#)" *International Communication Gazette* 81 (1): 20–45.
2. Gerschewski, Johannes, and Alexander Dukalskis. 2018. "[How the Internet Can Reinforce Authoritarian Regimes: The Case of North Korea.](#)" *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 19 (1): 12–19.

China

3. Ang, Yuen Yuen. 2018. "[Autocracy With Chinese Characteristics.](#)" *Foreign Affairs* 97 (3): 39–46.

4. Johnston, Lauren A. 2019. "[The Belt and Road Initiative: What Is in It for China?](#)" *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 6 (1): 40–58.
5. Economist. 2020. "[China Wants to Put Itself Back at the Centre of the World.](#)" *The Economist*, February 6, 2020.
6. Xiao, Qiang. 2019. "[The Road to Digital Unfreedom: President Xi's Surveillance State.](#)" *Journal of Democracy* 30 (1): 53–67.

Russia

7. Polyakova, Alina. 2020. "[The Kremlin's Plot Against Democracy,](#)" September 2, 2020.
8. Economist. 2020. "[Russian Interference Highlights Britain's Political Failings.](#)" *The Economist*, July 25, 2020.
9. Pomerantsev, Peter. 2015. "[Beyond Propaganda.](#)" *Foreign Policy* (blog). June 23, 2015.
10. Gilbert, David. 2019. "[Russia Is Building Its Own Version of China's Great Firewall.](#)" *Vice News* (blog). March 6, 2019.

Week 4 (5 February) – Cyberthreats and Security

Required Readings:

1. Jang-Jaccard, Julian, and Surya Nepal. 2014. "[A Survey of Emerging Threats in Cybersecurity.](#)" *Journal of Computer and System Sciences*, Special Issue on Dependable and Secure Computing, 80 (5): 973–93.
2. Hjortdal, Magnus. 2011. "[China's Use of Cyber Warfare: Espionage Meets Strategic Deterrence.](#)" *Journal of Strategic Security* 4 (2): 1–24.
3. Deibert, Ronald, and Rafal Rohozinski. 2010. "[Liberation vs. Control: The Future of Cyberspace.](#)" *Journal of Democracy* 21 (4): 43–57.
4. Zegart, Amy, and Michael Morell. 2019. "[Spies, Lies, and Algorithms,](#)" August 28, 2019.

Recommended Readings:

1. Knake, Rob. 2018. "[The Next Cyber Battleground.](#)" *Foreign Affairs*, July 19, 2018.
2. Marczak, Bill, John Scott-Railton, Adam Senft, Bahr Abdul Razzak, and Ron Deibert. 2018. "[The Kingdom Came to Canada: How Saudi-Linked Digital Espionage Reached Canadian Soil.](#)" Toronto: The Citizen Lab.
3. Cave, Danielle. 2019. "[Espionage or Interference? The Attack on Australia's Parliament and Political Parties,](#)" February 2019.

Week 5 (12 February) – Internet Freedom

Guest Lecturer: PhD Candidate Helen Beny: “Internet Blackout”

Required Readings:

1. Chang, Chun-Chih, and Thung-Hong Lin. 2020. “[Autocracy Login: Internet Censorship and Civil Society in the Digital Age.](#)” *Democratization* 0 (0): 1–22.
2. Feldstein, Steven. 2019. “[The Road to Digital Unfreedom: How Artificial Intelligence Is Reshaping Repression.](#)” *Journal of Democracy* 30 (1): 40–52.
3. Howard, Philip N., Sheetal D. Agarwal, and Muzammil M. Hussain. 2011. “[When Do States Disconnect Their Digital Networks? Regime Responses to the Political Uses of Social Media.](#)” *The Communication Review* 14 (3): 216–32.

Recommended Readings:

1. Arnaudo, Daniel. 2018. “[A New Wave of Censorship: Distributed Attacks on Expression and Press Freedom.](#)” National Endowment for Democracy: Center for International Media Assistance.
2. Freedom House. 2019. “[Media Freedom: A Downward Spiral.](#)”

How to Op-Ed? Samples and Tips:

- “[How to Write an Op-Ed or Column.](#)” n.d. *Harvard Kennedy School*. Accessed January 24, 2020.
- Stephens, Bret. 2017. “[Tips for Aspiring Op-Ed Writers.](#)” *The New York Times*, August 25, 2017, sec. Opinion.

Mid-Term Recess (15-21 February)

Week 6 (26 February) - Authoritarian Innovations

Required Readings:

1. Nyst, Carly, Nicholas Monaco, and Samuel Woolley. 2018. “[State-Sponsored Trolling: How Governments Are Deploying Disinformation as Part of Broader Digital Harassment Campaigns.](#)” Institute for the Future.
2. Morgenbesser, Lee. 2020. “[The Menu of Autocratic Innovation.](#)” *Democratization* 27 (6): 1053–72.
3. Tan, Netina. 2020. “[Digital Learning and Extending Electoral Authoritarianism in Singapore.](#)” *Democratization* 27 (6): 1073–91.
4. Bradshaw, Samantha, and Philip Howard. 2019. “[The Global Disinformation Order: 2019 Global Inventory of Organised Social Media Manipulation.](#)” Computational Propaganda Research Project. University of Oxford.

Recommended Readings:

1. Fidler, David P. 2014. “[Le Cyberspace, c’est Moi? Authoritarian Leaders, the Internet, and International Politics.](#)” *Seton Hall Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations; South Orange* 15 (1): 7–21.

2. Makhortykh, Mykola, and Juan Manuel González Aguilar. 2020. "[Memory, Politics and Emotions: Internet Memes and Protests in Venezuela and Ukraine.](#)" *Continuum* 34 (3): 342–62.

Week 7 (5 March) – Disinformation and Manipulation

Required Readings:

1. Freelon, Deen, and Chris Wells. 2020. "[Disinformation as Political Communication.](#)" *Political Communication* 37 (2): 145–56.
2. Humprecht, Edda. 2018. "[Where 'Fake News' Flourishes: A Comparison Across Four Western Democracies.](#)" *Information, Communication & Society* 22 (13): 1–16.
3. Haigh, Maria, Thomas Haigh, and Nadine I. Kozak. 2017. "[Stopping Fake News.](#)" *Journalism Studies* 19 (14): 2062–87.
4. [Sacha Baron Cohen's Keynote Address at ADL's 2019 Never Is Now Summit on Anti-Semitism and Hate.](#) 2019. Anti-Defamation League.

Recommended Readings:

1. Lazer, David M. J., Matthew A. Baum, Yochai Benkler, Adam J. Berinsky, Kelly M. Greenhill, Filippo Menczer, Miriam J. Metzger, et al. 2018. "[The Science of Fake News.](#)" *Science* 359 (6380): 1094–96.
2. Funke, Daniel, and Daniela Flamini. 2020. "[A Guide to Anti-Misinformation Actions Around the World.](#)" *Poynter* (blog). August 13, 2020.
3. Meyer, Robinson. 2018. "[The Grim Conclusions of the Largest-Ever Study of Fake News.](#)" *The Atlantic*, March 8, 2018.

Cambridge Analytica Scandal

4. Meredith, Sam. 2018. "[Facebook-Cambridge Analytica: A Timeline of the Data Hijacking Scandal.](#)" April 10, 2018.
5. Lapowsky, Louise Matsakis, Issie. 2018. "[Everything We Know About Facebook's Massive Security Breach.](#)" *Wired*, September 28, 2018.

Week 8 (12 Mar) – Surveillance, Data and Privacy

Required Readings:

1. Esposti, Sara Degli. 2014. "[When Big Data Meets Dataveillance: The Hidden Side of Analytics.](#)" *Surveillance & Society* 12 (2): 209–25.
2. Feldstein, Steven. 2019. "[The Global Expansion of AI Surveillance.](#)" Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
3. Couldry, Nick. 2017. "[Surveillance-Democracy.](#)" *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 14 (2): 182–88.
4. Zuboff, Shoshana. 2015. "[Big Other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects of an Information Civilization.](#)" *Journal of Information Technology* 30 (1): 75–89.

Recommended Readings:

1. Frederick, Richard Fontaine and Kara. 2019. "[The Autocrat's New Tool Kit.](#)" *Wall Street Journal*, March 15, 2019, sec. Life.
2. Robertson, Kate, Cynthia Khoo, and Yolanda Song. 2020. "[To Surveil and Predict: A Human Rights Analysis of Algorithmic Policing in Canada.](#)" Citizen Lab.

Covid-19 Surveillance Technology

3. Wright, Nicholas. 2020. "[Coronavirus and the Future of Surveillance,](#)" April 13, 2020.
4. Bradford, Laura, Mateo Aboy, and Kathleen Liddell. 2020. "[COVID-19 Contact Tracing Apps: A Stress Test for Privacy, the GDPR, and Data Protection Regimes.](#)" *Journal of Law and the Biosciences* 7 (1): Isaa034.

Week 9 (19 March) – Digital Campaign and Democracy

Required Readings

1. Cheeseman, Nic, Gabrielle Lynch, and Justin Willis. 2018. "[Digital Dilemmas: The Unintended Consequences of Election Technology.](#)" *Democratization* 25 (8): 1397–1418.
2. Merloe, Patrick. 2015. "[Election Monitoring Vs. Disinformation.](#)" *Journal of Democracy* 26 (3): 79–93.
3. Tan, Netina. 2020. "[Electoral Management of Digital Campaigns and Disinformation in East and Southeast Asia.](#)" *Election Law Journal: Rules, Politics, and Policy* 19 (2): 214–39.

Recommended Readings:

1. IDEA. 2018. "[Digital Microtargeting: Political Party Innovation Primer 1.](#)" Strömsborg: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.
2. Chertoff, Michael, and Anders Fogh Rasmussen. 2019. "[The Unhackable Election,](#)" January 29, 2019.

Week 10 (26 March) – Regulating Cyber-chaos

Required Readings:

1. Weiss, Moritz, and Vytautas Jankauskas. 2019. "[Securing Cyberspace: How States Design Governance Arrangements.](#)" *Governance* 32 (2): 259–75.
2. DeNardis, L., and A.M. Hackl. 2015. "[Internet Governance by Social Media Platforms.](#)" *Telecommunications Policy* 39 (9): 761–70.
3. Marchant, Gary E., and Brad Allenby. 2017. "[Soft Law: New Tools for Governing Emerging Technologies.](#)" *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 73 (2): 108–14.
4. Hong, Seung-Hun, and Jong-sung You. 2018. "[Limits of Regulatory Responsiveness: Democratic Credentials of Responsive Regulation: Limits of Regulatory Responsiveness.](#)" *Regulation & Governance*, March.

Recommended Readings:

1. Cohen, Jared, and Richard Fontaine. 2020. "[Uniting the Techno Democracies.](#)" *Foreign Affairs*, December, 112–22.

Fact Checking

2. Nieminen, Sakari, and Lauri Rapeli. 2019. "[Fighting Misperceptions and Doubting Journalists' Objectivity: A Review of Fact-Checking Literature.](#)" *Political Studies Review* 17 (3): 296–309.
3. Lim, Chloe. 2018. "[Checking How Fact-Checkers Check.](#)" *Research & Politics* 5 (3): 2053168018786848.

Week 11 (2 April) – Good Friday, no class

Week 12 (9 April) – What's Ahead?

Required Readings:

1. Mandel, Gregory N. 2009. "[Regulating Emerging Technologies.](#)" *Law, Innovation and Technology* 1 (1): 75–92.
2. Dumbacher, Erin D. 2018. "[Limiting Cyberwarfare: Applying Arms-Control Models to an Emerging Technology.](#)" *The Nonproliferation Review* 25 (3–4): 203–22.
3. Rosenberger, Laura. 2020. "[Making Cyberspace Safe for Democracy,](#)" May 9, 2020.

Recommended Readings:

4. Griffin, James G. H. 2020. "[The Enforcement of Laws Regulating Digital Cultural Content: A Proposal.](#)" *International Review of Law, Computers & Technology*: 1–14.
5. Friedberg, Aaron L. 2020. "[An Answer to Aggression.](#)" *Foreign Affairs*, September 15, 2020.

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

All written work ought to follow the author-date citation style according to the Chicago Manual of Style available. See [McMaster Library's citation style guide](#) for details.

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

Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due dates. Assignments turned in after the beginning of the class will not earn full credit. **5** percent of the total grade will be deducted each day after the submission deadline (weekends count as one day). Late assignments will not be accepted 48 hours after the original deadline. To avoid late penalties and ensure fairness, a MSAF or medical certification that has been presented to Social Sciences Faculty Office is required. If you anticipate having problems meeting the deadlines, please contact me before the assignment is due to discuss your situation

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

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".

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 authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via Avenue to Learn (A2L) plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work through A2L and/or Turnitin.com must still submit an electronic and/or hardcopy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com or A2L. 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 information please refer to the [Turnitin.com Policy](#).

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.

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.

Academic Integrity Statement

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. 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. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

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.

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 to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that 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 becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

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.

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.