

**SOCPSY 2B03: PSYCHOLOGY OF WELL-BEING  
Fall Term**

**Instructor:** Dr. Tara Marshall  
**Email:** [marsht6@mcmaster.ca](mailto:marsht6@mcmaster.ca) (I aim to respond within two working days)  
**Pronouns:** she/her  
**Please call me:** Dr./Professor Marshall  
**Office:** KTH 234  
**Office Hours:** by appointment  
**Lectures:** In person: Mondays, 12:30pm-2:20pm, in T13 127.

**Tutorials:** In person on Wednesdays (12:30-1:20pm, PGCLL M24) and Fridays (10:30-11:20am, PGCLL M25); virtual on Thursdays (2:30-3:20pm and 4:30-5:20pm; Zoom links provided on Avenue)  
**Teaching Assistants:** TBA. Office hours are by appointment.

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## **Course Description**

An exploration of what social psychological perspectives and research can contribute to the quest for physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. This course is divided into three major parts:

### **1. Conceptualizations and mechanisms of well-being**

First, we will discuss various conceptualizations of “the good life” (e.g., life satisfaction, positive emotion, and the absence of negative emotion; the search for meaning) and how these vary across cultures. Second, we will discuss mechanisms through which people may maximize their well-being: goal-setting and motivation; cognitive mechanisms such as creativity, mindfulness, and “flow”; gratitude and prosocial behavior; and resilience and personal growth.

### **2. Key domains of well-being**

This section of the course examines the ways that key life domains (relationships/social networking, leisure, work, physical health, and spirituality) influence well-being, and, reciprocally, the ways that well-being influences these life domains.

### **3. Inequality and well-being**

In this final section of the course, we will examine the effect of structural inequality on well-being, focusing on the impact of discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, and ‘race’/ethnicity.

## **Program and Course Learning Objectives**

The Honours Social Psychology Program has 6 program learning objectives. This course meets the following 4 objectives in the following ways:

### **1. Appreciate the interdisciplinary nature of Social Psychology and evaluate the contributions that different disciplines contribute to the field**

- By the end of this course, students should be able to demonstrate broad understanding of the study of well-being from psychological and sociological perspectives.

### **2. Understand critically the major theoretical perspectives and debates in the field and be able to articulate a position**

- By the end of this course, students should be able to demonstrate general knowledge and understanding of key concepts, methodologies, theoretical approaches and assumptions in the study of well-being.

**3. Demonstrate effective oral and written communication skills through participation in class discussions, debates, activities, presentations, course papers and assignments**

- By the end of this course, students should be able to demonstrate clear and concise academic writing.

**4. Understand and apply a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods relevant to the field**

- By the end of this course, students should be able to critically analyze the research methods of empirical papers published within the field of well-being.

**Required Materials and Texts**

Journal articles are assigned for each lecture (see reading list below). These articles can be accessed on Google Scholar or downloaded via the McMaster Library.

**Class Format**

Lectures will be held on Mondays from 12:30pm-2:20pm in T13 127. This is an **in-person** lecture, and attendance is expected. The content is captured using Echo360 and available for review, however, should you have to be absent from lecture. The recordings will be posted on Avenue to Learn shortly after each lecture. There will be opportunities to receive **bonus marks** if you attend the lectures (see p. 7 for details).

Tutorials will be in person or virtual depending on your tutorial section. If you enrolled in a virtual tutorial section, please click on these Zoom links to attend the tutorial: Thursdays from 2:30-3:20pm (link TBA); Thursdays from 4:30-5:30pm (link TBA). The tutorials will consist of exercises that illustrate the topic covered in that week's lecture (worth 5% of your final mark), small-group discussions (approx. 4-5 students), and midterm, exam, and essay preparation. More generally, they are an opportunity to get to know your fellow students and engage in social bonding (one of the most important contributors to subjective well-being!). You will not be marked on your contribution to discussions and students who attend online will not be required to turn cameras on.

Feel free to schedule individual meetings with me (in person or through Zoom) if you have any questions about the course. I will also be available after the lecture on Mondays if there is anything you'd like to discuss with me (or would like an opportunity for us to get to know each other better!).

**Course Evaluation – Overview**

1. Midterm - 30%, October 24<sup>th</sup> (12:30pm-2:20pm)
2. Essay – 30%, due December 2<sup>nd</sup> by 11:59pm
3. Exam – 35%, date TBA
4. Tutorial exercises – 5%

5. Lecture exercises – up to 5% in bonus marks

### **Course Evaluation – Details**

#### **Midterm (30%), October 24<sup>th</sup> (12:30pm-2:20pm)**

The midterm will consist of multiple-choice questions only. It will take place online in the Quiz section of Avenue to Learn and will be based on material covered in Weeks 1-7 only (lectures and required reading). The material on spirituality presented in Week 8 (October 24<sup>th</sup> *after* the midterm) will be covered in the final exam, not the midterm. Please note that you will not be tested on the details of the method or analysis of any empirical papers on the reading list, but you will be responsible for learning the main pattern of results (focus on the summary of results in the Abstract or Discussion sections). You will not be tested on any material in the readings that is not covered during lectures.

As the midterm is worth 30%, is not eligible for an online MSAF. If the midterm on October 24<sup>th</sup> is missed, please email me. Where appropriate, **your final exam will be reweighted to 70% of your final mark**. There is no make-up test for a missed midterm.

#### **Essay (30%), due December 2<sup>nd</sup> by 11:59pm**

Please choose an intervention and review evidence of its effectiveness for increasing well-being. Examples include interventions that seek to enhance gratitude (e.g. gratitude lists or letters), mindfulness, goal progress (e.g., implementation intentions, best possible selves), creativity (e.g., crafting, music), engagement with nature, physical health (e.g., aerobic activity, dance), social engagement, relationship quality (e.g., self-expansion activities with a partner), or the active use of social media. The intervention does not have to be one discussed in lectures or in the assigned readings, but it should *\*not\** be a clinical intervention (i.e., a specific type of therapy administered by professionals to clinical patients, such as CBT or dialectical behaviour therapy). Rather, the intervention should be one that is relatively easily accessed for non-clinical populations (i.e., easily self-administered or administered in a non-clinical group-based setting). It should also be an intervention intended to enhance subjective or eudaimonic well-being rather than focused solely on improving clinical symptoms (e.g., depression or anxiety). Please speak with me if you are unsure about whether the intervention you have chosen is appropriate.

As a rough guideline, about 1/3 of the essay should consist of an appropriate description of the intervention (e.g., how it is implemented, underlying theoretical models about how it works), and the other 2/3 of the essay should review empirical studies that have tested its effectiveness. This review should consist of two elements:

#### **(1) A review of appropriate studies and their results**

Aim to review 3-4 empirical studies in greater depth. At least one of the studies you review should be experimental in design (e.g., participants are randomly assigned to an intervention group or to a control group). It is preferable to focus on experimental studies for this assignment, but it is acceptable to review correlational research as well (tip: it's better to review longitudinal research than cross-sectional research if you decide to review correlational research). You should not review qualitative research in detail in the body of your paper – do not make a qualitative study one of your 3-4 focal papers. However, it is fine to briefly cite qualitative research in the introduction and/or conclusion. It is also fine to draw on the material covered in lectures in your essay, but please cite the studies themselves – do not cite me. To do well, it is also important to go beyond the material covered in class and to conduct your own independent literature review.

## **(2) A critical review of these studies**

When reviewing the 3-4 empirical studies, please be critical of the research methods and the strength of outcomes within and across studies. For example, was the participant sample large and diverse? Was the study pre-registered? Was it a randomized controlled trial? Was it cross-sectional or longitudinal? I will elaborate on these points and provide more detail about the essay about half-way through this course, and I will provide example essays from past students.

This assignment will increase your knowledge of an area of interest, develop your ability to think critically about research methods and the interpretation of evidence, and cultivate your writing skills. The essay should not exceed 1,800 words in length (excluding the title page and References). There are no rules about how many references you should include, but as a loose guideline, I would aim for around 10. Of these, you should focus on 3-4 studies in depth, privileging experimental research. The rest of your references should be primarily journal articles (e.g., empirical papers, systematic or narrative reviews, meta-analyses). See the section on Submission of Assignments for more information on the formatting of your essay. **On the title page, please include your student number only – DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR NAME.**

While we are happy to answer any questions you may have about the essay, neither myself nor the TAs are able to read drafts before the due date. As the essay is worth 30%, it is not eligible for an online MSAF. Please email me if you do not think you will be able to submit your essay on time.

**Exam (35%) – date TBA (two hours)**

The final exam will consist of multiple-choice questions only. It will take place online at a Registrar-scheduled time in the Quiz section of Avenue to Learn. It is a non-cumulative exam, so it will be based on material covered in Weeks 8-13 only (lectures and required readings). Similar to the midterm, you will not be tested on the details of the method or analysis for any empirical papers on the reading list, just the summary of results. You will not be tested on any material in the readings that is not covered during lectures.

As the exam is worth 35%, is not eligible for an online MSAF. If the exam is missed, please email your respective Faculty office with appropriate documentation for the Faculty to review.

### **Tutorial exercises (5%)**

Students will complete exercises worth 1% each (summing up to 5%) throughout the term. All you need to do is complete the exercise in the tutorial for full marks; this means that you will need to attend the tutorial to complete the exercise. If you miss a tutorial, there will be opportunities in subsequent tutorials to make up the lost mark. You will not be graded on your answers to these exercises (i.e., there are no “wrong” answers). Exercises will take the form of multiple-choice questions and open-ended responses to illustrate the key concepts learned in this course.

### **Lecture exercises (5% bonus)**

You will have an opportunity to earn **bonus marks** for engaging in lecture exercises that will occur at random times throughout the term. Each exercise is worth 1% each (summing up to 5%). All you need to do is attend the in-person lectures, participate in short exercises (either alone or in a small group), and submit them through Avenue to Learn. You will not be graded on your answers to these exercises (i.e., there are no “wrong” answers). To account for the bonus marks in your final grade, I will reweight either your midterm or final exam (whichever one had the lower mark) so that it accounts for less of your final grade, and the bonus marks will be added on to your final mark. For example, let's say you received marks of 80% and 85% on the midterm and exam; if you completed all 5 bonus marks, I would reduce the weighting of your midterm to 25% (instead of 30%) and add 5% in bonus marks to your final grade.

For students who are unable to attend lectures in person due to SAS accommodations, there will be an opportunity to submit a short paper to earn up to 5 bonus marks. This short paper will consist of 200-word reflections on assigned readings of your choice. Each 200-word reflection is worth a 1% bonus mark and you can submit up to 5 reflections for a total of 5 bonus marks. Thus, for 5 bonus marks, your paper would be 1,000 words in total (consisting of 5 reflections on 5 different assigned readings of your choice). Half of each reflection should sum up what the reading was about and the other half should consist of your own thoughts and feelings about the reading. All you need to do is email it to me by **December 5<sup>th</sup>** to receive the marks; I will not be marking the

content or style of what you have written. However, you will not receive any marks if your reflection(s) are less than 200 words each, if you engage in plagiarism, or if you submit the paper late. The bonus marks will be allocated in the same way as the in-person lecture exercises (i.e., I will take up to 5% off the weighting of your midterm or exam and allocate this to bonus marks).

### **Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings**

#### **Week 1 (September 6<sup>th</sup>): Introduction to this course**

**NOTE:** There will not be an in-person lecture this week because September 5<sup>th</sup> is Labour Day. Instead, I will post an online recording on September 6<sup>th</sup> that introduces this course. **There are no tutorials or readings this week.**

#### **Week 2 (September 12<sup>th</sup>): Conceptualizations and theories of well-being**

Readings:

Diener, E., Oishi, S., & Tay, L. (2018). Advances in subjective well-being research. *Nature Human Behavior*, 2, 253-260.

Lyubomirsky, S., & Layous, K. (2013). How do simple positive activities increase well-being? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22, 57-62.

**NOTE:** tutorials start this week

#### **Week 3 (September 19<sup>th</sup>): Culture and well-being**

Readings:

Suh, E. M., & Choi, S. (2018). Predictors of subjective well-being across cultures. In E. Diener, S. Oishi, & L. Tay (Eds.), *Handbook of well-being*. Salt Lake City, UT: DEF Publishers.  
<https://www.nobascholar.com/chapters/45/download.pdf>

Tov, W., & Diener, E. (2013). Subjective well-being. *Research Collection School of Social Sciences*. Paper 1395.  
[http://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/soss\\_research/1395](http://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/soss_research/1395)

**NOTE:** tutorials start this week

#### **Week 4 (September 26<sup>th</sup>): Goals and motivation**

Readings:



Kaftan, O. J., & Freund, A. M. (2018). The way is the goal: The role of goal focus for successful goal pursuit and subjective well-being. In E. Diener, S. Oishi, & L. Tay (Eds.), *Handbook of well-being*. Salt Lake City, UT: DEF Publishers.

[https://www.zora.uzh.ch/id/eprint/147437/1/Kaftan %26 Freund %282018 %29 - The Way is the Goal.pdf](https://www.zora.uzh.ch/id/eprint/147437/1/Kaftan%20Freund%282018%29-TheWayisTheGoal.pdf)

Klug, H. J. P., & Maier, G. W. (2015). Linking goal progress and subjective well-being: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 16, 37-65.

**NOTE:** tutorials held this week

### **Week 5 (October 3<sup>rd</sup>): Cognitive components of well-being**

Readings:

Conner, T. S., De Young, C. G., & Silvia, P. J. (2018). Everyday creative activity as a path to flourishing. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 13, 181-189.

Keng, S. L., Smoski, M. J., & Robins, C. J. (2011). Effects of mindfulness on psychological health: A review of empirical studies. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 31, 1041-1056.

**NOTE:** tutorials held this week

### **Week 6 (October 10<sup>th</sup>): Reading Week – no lectures or tutorials**

### **Week 7 (October 17<sup>th</sup>): Gratitude and prosocial behaviour**

Readings:

Martela, F., & Ryan, R. M. (2016). Prosocial behavior increases well-being and vitality even without contact with the beneficiary: Causal and behavioral evidence. *Motivation and Emotion*, 40, 351-357.

Wood, A. M., Froh, J. J., & Geraghty, A. W. A. (2010). Gratitude and well-being: A review and theoretical integration. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 30, 890-905.

**NOTE:** tutorials held this week

### **Week 8 (October 24<sup>th</sup>): **\*\*Midterm\*\*** and Spirituality**

**Midterm:** October 24<sup>th</sup>, 12:30pm-2:20pm, ONLINE

Readings:

Ivtzan, I., Chan, C. P. L., Gardner, H. E., & Prashar, K. (2013). Linking religion and spirituality with psychological well-being: Examining self-actualisation, meaning in life, and personal growth initiative. *Journal of Religion and Health, 52*, 915-929.

**NOTE:** The material on spirituality will **not** be included on the midterm, just the final exam.

**There will be NO tutorials this week**

**Week 9 (October 31<sup>st</sup>): Resilience and Personal growth**

Readings:

Chan, K. J., Young, M. Y., & Sharif, N. (2016). Well-being after trauma: A review of posttraumatic growth among refugees. *Canadian Psychology, 57*, 291-299.

Hartley, M. T. (2011). Examining the relationships between resilience, mental health, and academic persistence in undergraduate college students. *Journal of American College Health, 59*, 596-604.

Perez, W., Espinoza, R., Ramos, K., Coronado, H. M., & Cortes, R. (2009). Academic resilience among undocumented Latino students. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 31*, 149-181.

**NOTE:** tutorials held this week

**Week 10 (November 7<sup>th</sup>): Social networking and relationships**

Readings:

Verduyn, P., Ybarra, O., Resibois, M., Jonides, J., & Kross, E. (2017). Do social network sites enhance or undermine subjective well-being? A critical review. *Social Issues and Policy Review, 11*, 274-302.

Proulx, C. M., Helms, H. M., & Buehler, C. (2007). Marital quality and personal well-being: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 69*, 576-593.

Wesselmann, E. D., & Williams, K. D. (2017). Social life and social death: Inclusion, ostracism, and rejection in groups. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations, 20*, 693-706.

**NOTE:** tutorials held this week

**Week 11 (November 14<sup>th</sup>): Leisure and work**

Readings:

Newman, D. B., Tay, L., & Diener, E. (2014). Leisure and subjective well-being: A model of psychological mechanisms as mediating factors. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 15*, 555-578.

Russell, J. E. A. (2008). Promoting subjective well-being at work. *Journal of Career Assessment, 16*, 117-131.

**NOTE:** tutorials held this week

**Week 12 (November 21<sup>st</sup>): Physical health and well-being**

Readings:

Diener, E., Pressman, S. D., Hunter, J., & Delgado-Chase, D. (2017). If, why, and when subjective well-being influences health, and future needed research. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being, 9*, 133-167.

Young, K. C., Machell, K. A., Kashdan, T. B., & Westwater, M. L. (2018). The cascade of positive events: Does exercise on a given day increase the frequency of additional positive events? *Personality and Individual Differences, 120*, 299-303.

**NOTE:** tutorials this week are devoted to helping you with your essay

**Week 13 (November 28<sup>th</sup>): Inequality, discrimination, and well-being**

Readings:

Harrell, S. P. (2000). A multidimensional conceptualization of racism-related stress: Implications for the well-being of people of color. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 70*, 42-57.

Schmitt, M. T., Branscombe, N. R., Postmes, T., & Garcia, A. (2014). The consequences of perceived discrimination for psychological well-being: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin, 140*, 921-948.

Van Den Berghe, W., Dewaele, A., Cox, N., & Vincke, J. (2010). Minority-specific determinants of mental well-being among lesbian, gay and bisexual youth. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 40*, 153-166.

**NOTE:** tutorials held this week

**\*\*Essay due December 2<sup>nd</sup> by 11:59pm\*\***

**Week 14 (December 5<sup>th</sup>): Exam review (no new material presented).**

**NOTE: NO tutorials this week**

## **Course Policies**

### **Submission of Assignments**

Please submit an electronic copy of your essay by 11:59pm on December 2<sup>nd</sup> via the dropbox in Avenue to Learn (Assessments → Assignments → SOCPSY 2B03 Essay). This dropbox is Turnitin-enabled. Emailed assignments will NOT be accepted. Your essay should be typed and double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font with one-inch (2.54cm) margins on all sides. Please include a title page with your essay title, student number (**DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR NAME**), date submitted, course number, page number (upper right corner), and word count, and a References section at the end. References should adhere to APA style conventions. I will review these conventions in a subsequent lecture, but they should take the following form:

John, J. B., & Joe, M. L. (1998). Gratitude interventions enhance subjective well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 27*, 254-260.

Tip: do not include the title of any papers in the body of your essay as this will deplete your word count unnecessarily (i.e., include the title in the References section only). In-text citations should only include the authors' last names and the date of publication (e.g., "Smith & Lee, 2019").

### **Grades**

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

<b>MARK</b>	<b>GRADE</b>
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C

<b>MARK</b>	<b>GRADE</b>
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

### **Late Assignments**

Extensions for course assignments will only be granted under conditions of medical, family, or other extraordinary circumstances. All other late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 5% per day (including weekends). Late assignments will not be accepted after 7 days beyond the original deadline without appropriate documentation from the Office of the Associate Dean of Social Sciences.

### **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.

### **Absences, Missed Work, Illness**

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 Integrity**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### **Authenticity/Plagiarism Detection**

This course uses a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

### **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 or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

### **Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities policy.

### **Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work**

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

### **Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)**

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office ***normally within 10 working days*** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

### **Copyright and Recording**

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

### **Extreme Circumstances**

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.