Sociology 4CM3:

Critical Analysis of Media

Winter, 2022.

Day(s) and Time(s) of Class:

Wed., 2:30 pm to 5:20 pm.

Classroom: KTH 109.

Instructor: Dr. David Young.

Email: youngd@mcmaster.ca (**Important:** Please read the instructions in the “Email Communication” sub-section below **before** sending messages).

Office Location: KTH 629.

Office Consultation:

Through Zoom and by appointment only (**Important:** Please read the “Virtual Office Meetings” sub-section below for more information).

Office Phone: Ext. 23615.

# Course Outline

My name is Dr. Young. Welcome to the course! Please carefully read through the following information in this course outline. I have covered many issues that students are often wondering about.

## Contact Information

Email communication will be one means for you to ask me questions, but you can also discuss things with me through virtual office meetings. Please read the two sub-sections below for more information.

### Email Communication

If you have a question, it is best to contact me through email. Email provides an opportunity for you to develop or practice the strong business communication skills that employers are looking for! Before sending an email message, please ensure that you have carefully followed the instructions in the seven points below:

1. Please check to see if your question has been answered already somewhere in this course outline or in other course handouts. If your question has **not** been answered in the various course handouts, feel free to send an email message to me.
2. Please make sure that your question deals with something short and simple. Complicated matters can only be addressed through face-to-face interaction (i.e., during a meeting held by appointment through Zoom).
3. Please send your message from your McMaster email account. Do **not** send a message from another email account or from Avenue to Learn mail. Please understand that the Faculty of Social Sciences requires students to use their McMaster email account when communicating with university personnel, and university personnel are **not** obligated to reply if a message originates from another source.
4. Please use “Sociology 4CM3” as your subject line (so that I can quickly identify which of my courses you are in and more easily sort my email).
5. Please start your message with an appropriate greeting or form of address followed by my name (writing “Hi Dr. Young”, “Hello Dr. Young”, or “Dear Dr. Young”). In business communication, including communication with professors or TAs, please understand that it is proper etiquette to follow a greeting or form of address with the person’s name. Please also understand that “Hey” is **not** an appropriate greeting in business communication.
6. Please write your message in a professional manner. Be polite and respectful. Where appropriate, write “please” or “thank you.” Write in full sentences and with proper spelling. Please understand that writing business communication to a professor or a TA is **not** the same as writing a text to a friend.
7. Please bring your message to a close in a professional manner (writing “Thank you”, “Thanks”, “Regards”, “Sincerely” or something similar followed by your full name and your student number).

In the points above, I have emphasized some elements of business communication because I am trying to help you to develop the strong business communication skills that are crucial for many desirable occupations in the work world. I want you to develop these communication skills so that you can be successful out there!

After you have sent your email message, please keep the following points in mind:

1. Email that fails to follow the instructions noted above may **not** be answered (or, as a learning exercise, I may require you to re-write and re-send the email message before I will answer your question or address your concern).
2. Even if you have followed the instructions, please do **not** expect an immediate response. Please understand that professors and TAs are busy people, and it may take us up to two business days to reply. Furthermore, please keep in mind that email will **only** be read and answered during regular business hours (Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm). Please understand that evenings and weekends are personal and family time for me and for any TAs I may have for this course.
3. If you have not received a reply after two full business days, please check to see if you followed all the instructions provided above. If you did and still did not receive a response, it may be that the message was not received or somehow got missed. At that point, please send a follow-up message.

### Virtual Office Meetings

Most matters can be dealt with through email, but there may be some occasions when it is useful or necessary to speak face-to-face.

Due to the continuing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, I am **not** prepared at this point to resume physical office meetings with students. My office is very small and lacks windows which open. Obviously, it is much safer to meet with students through virtual office meetings. If you wish to speak with me, please use your McMaster email account to send me a meeting request (along with several days and times that you are available). I will then be happy to set up a mutually convenient day and time for us to connect via Zoom.

## Course Description

This course familiarizes students with selected issues associated with critical analysis of the media. It is not necessary to have previous background in relevant sociology courses (because I will be giving an introductory lecture that aims to get all students on the same page), but relevant background can certainly be useful. Relevant background includes courses on media institutions, media and social issues, political sociology, or social movements.

Part I of the course considers theoretical and methodological issues. We will become familiar with two critical perspectives on the mass media. One is critical political economy, and the other is critical cultural studies. These Marxian-influenced theoretical perspectives focus on the issues of power, inequality, and conflict in relation to the mass media. Essentially, critical political economy ties these issues to media production while the perspective of critical cultural studies links the issues to media content. While addressing theoretical issues, we will also discuss methodological approaches to the mass media by examining both administrative research and critical research.

Part II builds on the earlier discussion of critical political economy by examining a variety of topics connected to media production. These topics include ownership (such as the dangers of growing ownership concentration among media companies); globalization (including the impact of transnational media companies and the Internet); the state and its role (with regard to issues such as globalization, legislation, regulation, promotion, and broadcasting); and conflict between private media companies and the state (on the one hand) and social movements (on the other hand) over media policy and other issues.

Part III builds on the earlier discussion of critical cultural studies by considering several topics associated with media content. These topics include dominant ideology, hegemony, and counter hegemony; the under-representation and misrepresentation of subordinate groups (labour unions, the working class, women, racialized minorities, and Indigenous peoples) in the mainstream media; and the role of alternative media in relation to the political objectives of social movements.

## Course Learning Objectives

This course has several learning objectives. By the end of the course, you will:

* understand theoretical and methodological approaches that sociologists and other scholars have used to study the media in a critical way.
* comprehend how media production is connected to political and economic aspects of capitalist society (such as regulation and ownership).
* grasp how media content reflects capitalist, patriarchal, and racist ideology.
* recognize the conflicts that exist between powerful classes or groups and less powerful classes or groups with regard to media production and media content.

All of the objectives noted above are associated with the topic and content of the course. Additional objectives are connected to several of the [Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations](http://cll.mcmaster.ca/COU/degree/undergraduate.html) adopted at McMaster University. In particular, you will have the opportunity to enhance the depth and breadth of your knowledge as you learn about various theoretical ideas in the sociology of mass media. Through written work, you will have the opportunity to apply knowledge acquired in the course. Along with verbal participation in classes, the written work in the course will help to enhance your communication skills. Finally, you will be encouraged to deepen your autonomy and professional capacity by developing qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study and employment (e.g., business communication skills, reliability, maturity, time management skills, and behaviour consistent with academic integrity and social responsibility).

## Course Format

Unless McMaster University goes into another lockdown and shifts online again, **all classes in this course will be held in-person**. You are expected to be physical present for the classes.

The Scheduling Office has determined when class will be held in this course and the classroom location for this course. That information is specified above. The course is scheduled to run for up to three hours each Wednesday afternoon. You will be given a 15-minute break at a convenient point (toward the middle of the class period). You **must** be prepared to stay for the entire class.

In the first week of the course, I will give you an in-person lecture. Since students may have varying levels of knowledge about issues associated with critical analysis of media, this lecture will aim to get all students on the same page.

In some later weeks of the course, I will give you a link to an educational film that you are expected to view and take notes on at a convenient time prior to the in-person class. I will give you some questions to think about before watching the film, and these questions will provide the basis for in-person discussion of the film. You are expected to view the film assigned for a given week and have some ideas jotted down in response to the provided questions. You are also expected to participate in the discussion and show knowledge of the film.

For all weeks of the course, I will give you some questions to think about as you do the required readings for the topic that will be addressed during the in-person class. When we meet, we will go through the questions one by one. You are expected to complete all the readings assigned for a given week and have some ideas jotted down in response to the provided questions. You are also expected to participate in the discussion and show knowledge of the readings.

**Please Note (Hearing Disability):** Please keep in mind that I am partially deaf. This can make it difficult for me to hear comments or questions, especially if there are many students in a course or if a classroom has poor acoustics. Therefore, when students are asking questions or making comments, or when any class discussions are taking place, please listen and refrain from making any noise. Competition from other sounds (talking, sorting notes, adjusting chairs, etc.) makes it extremely difficult for me to hear what someone is saying to me.

McMaster’s COVID-19 Protocols for In-Person Classes

During this term, you are expected to follow McMaster’s COVID-19 protocols for in-person classes. The protocols can be found in the [Mac Check](https://covid19.mcmaster.ca/maccheck/) and the [Health & Safety](https://covid19.mcmaster.ca/campus-health-safety/) sections of the COVID-19 Back to Mac webpage. Among other things, the protocols include:

* Completing the “Daily Check-In” on Mac Check and being prepared to display your green check mark to any university officials (including professors and TAs) who ask to see it.
* Being fully masked during classes (i.e., ensuring that a face mask fully covers your mouth, nose, and chin). Eating is **not** allowed in classrooms, but you are allowed to pull down your mask **very briefly** to take a sip of water. Masks are required unless students have met the conditions for a rare mask exemption and received an accommodation through Student Accessibility Services (SAS).

Please respect the rules noted above as well as the other rules that McMaster University has put in place to ensure the health and safely of faculty, staff, and other students as the pandemic continues.

## Overview of Course Requirements

The course requirements, and the weights attached to them in the calculation of your final grade, are as follows:

Critical Media Analysis Assignment (20%); due on Feb. 2.

Take Home Examination 1 (30%); distributed on Mar. 2 and due on Mar. 16.

Take Home Examination 2 (30%); distributed on Apr. 14 and due on Apr. 28.

Seminar Attendance (10%); grade determined after classes end.

Seminar Participation (10%); grade determined after classes end.

You **must** complete **all** these course requirements. More information about the course requirements can be found in the section below.

## Details of Course Requirements

Critical Media Analysis Assignment

With the aim of assessing your learning in the course, you will be required to prepare an assignment that focuses on critical media analysis. The assignment will cover Part I of the course.

For the assignment, you will prepare a short paper (4 to 5 pages long). You must incorporate the introductory lecture (from Jan. 12) and the first set of readings in the course (from Jan. 19) into your critical media analysis assignment. No other readings will be required (or permitted), and no research will be required. Detailed instructions for completing the assignment will be provided.

Take Home Examinations

For the purpose of assessing your overall learning in the course, you will be required to write two take home examinations. One examination will be on Part II of the course, and the other examination will be on Part III of the course.

In each examination, you will be required to answer one question (possibly from a choice between two questions). You will prepare an answer (8 to 10 pages long) that synthesizes material from the part of the course being addressed. In order to successfully answer the question, you will have to display substantial understanding of the required readings associated with the topic of the question and any film presentations related to the topic of the question. Detailed instructions for completing the take home examinations will be provided at the time they are distributed.

Seminar Attendance

Your seminar attendance grade will be based on a quantitative count of how often your name appears on the attendance sheet that is distributed each week.

I reserve the right to reduce your grade if you arrive late for class, if you return late from a break, if you leave at the break and do not come back, or if you get up and walk out on assigned active learning activities.

I also reserve the right to reduce your grade if you engage in problematic behaviour while the class is in session (e.g., while I am lecturing, showing films, or leading discussions). It should be obvious, for instance, that it is inappropriate to play with a smartphone in front of me while I am teaching you.

Seminar Participation

Your seminar participation grade will be based on your verbal responses to discussion questions throughout the course.

You are expected to complete **both** the assigned readings for **each** week of the course. During each class in the course, you are also expected to participate by offering thoughtful comments about the readings.

To facilitate discussion of the readings, I will post some discussion questions on Avenue to Learn about a week before each class. You must access the discussion questions on Avenue (at least a few days before class), consider these questions as you do the assigned readings for that week, and jot down some thoughts or ideas to bring up during the class discussion. Since everyone will know in advance the major questions that I will raise and have time to consider them in advance, there will be no excuse for not offering viewpoints during the class. It is extremely important that you develop speaking skills, and that is why emphasis is being placed on verbal responses to discussion questions.

Your seminar participation grade will primarily be based on my observation of the **quantity** and the **quality** of your **knowledgeable** contribution to class discussions (e.g., how often you say something about the required readings or the films shown in class and the degree of understanding you display of such course material). If you say nothing throughout the term, please be aware that I will be forced to give you a grade of zero for this component of your grade. If you say very little, I will be forced to give you a very low (failing) grade for this component. Please note that you will **only** get credit for making contributions that show knowledge and understanding of the material. For example, if we are discussing an article about video games, you will get credit for articulating some of the author’s points and articulating some thoughtful reactions to these points. Such commentary would have much value, but simply talking about your personal experiences with video games (because you did not read the article) would have little value (and you would not get credit for it).

## Required Course Materials and Texts

All the required readings have been assembled as eReserves and are available through Avenue to Learn. These readings are crucial to your success in the course. You will have to demonstrate knowledge of the readings in several ways (e.g., through participation in weekly class discussions and through answers on take-home examinations).

## Course Schedule and Required Readings

The course schedule below identifies the course topics, the scheduled dates when the topics will be addressed, and the required readings for the topics. You will be given reasonable notice if significant changes must be made to the course schedule (e.g., dropping a topic because we have run out of time).

**IMPORTANT NOTICE: This lecture schedule is based upon current university and public health guidelines and may be subject to changes during the term. Any changes to the schedule or course delivery will be communicated on the course announcements section of Avenue to Learn. Please check the announcements prior to attending class.**

### Part I: Theoretical and Methodological Issues

**Introduction to Sociological Analysis of the Media (Topic 1).**

Scheduled for Jan. 12.

Required Reading: None.

**No in-person class. Recorded lecture available (through Avenue) prior to the date noted above. Seminar held virtually (through Zoom) on the date noted above.**

**Critical Perspectives on the Media (Topic 2).**

Scheduled for Jan. 19.

Required Reading: Mosco (eReserves, Reading 1).

Required Reading: Hamilton (eReserves, Reading 2).

**No in-person class. Seminar held virtually (through Zoom) on the date noted above.**

### Part II: Critical Political Economy

**Ownership of the Media (Topic 3).**

Scheduled for Jan. 26.

Required Reading: Winseck (eReserves, Reading 3).

Required Reading: Bishop (eReserves, Reading 4).

Required Viewing: *Behind the Screens: Hollywood Goes Hypercommercial* (a link to this educational film will be posted on Avenue for viewing prior to class).

**No in-person class. Film available online (through the McMaster Library) prior to the date noted above. Seminar held virtually (through Zoom) on the date noted above.**

**Globalization of the Media (Topic 4).**

Scheduled for Feb. 2.

Required Reading: McChesney (eReserves, Reading 5).

Required Reading: Foster and McChesney (eReserves, Reading 6).

Required Viewing: *No Logo: Brands, Globalization, Resistance* (a link to this educational film will be posted on Avenue for viewing prior to class).

**No in-person class. Film available online (through the McMaster Library) prior to the date noted above. Seminar held virtually (through Zoom) on the date noted above.**

**The State and the Media I: Policy and Regulation (Topic 5).**

Scheduled for Feb. 9.

Required Reading: Nesbitt-Larking (eReserves, Reading 7).

Required Reading: Young (eReserves, Reading 8).

**In-person classes scheduled to begin on Feb. 7 (unless a further delay is implemented by McMaster University due to pandemic conditions).**

**The State and the Media II: Public Broadcasting (Topic 6).**

Scheduled for Feb. 16.

Required Reading: Raboy and Taras (eReserves, Reading 9).

Required Reading: Young (eReserves, Reading 10).

**Mid-Term Recess**

No class on Feb. 23.

**Struggles over Media Policy (Topic 7).**

Scheduled for Mar. 2.

Required Reading: McChesney (eReserves, Reading 11).

Required Reading: Hackett and Anderson (eReserves, Reading 12).

### Part III: Critical Cultural Studies

**Media Representation I: Labour Unions and the Working Class (Topic 8).**

Scheduled for Mar. 9.

Required Reading: Steuter (eReserves, Reading 13).

Required Reading: Butsch (eReserves, Reading 14).

Required Viewing: *Class Dismissed: How TV Frames the Working Class* (a link to this educational film will be posted on Avenue for viewing prior to class).

**Media Representation II: Women (Topic 9).**

Scheduled for Mar. 16.

Required Reading: Mendes (eReserves, Reading 15).

Required Reading: Kim (eReserves, Reading 16).

Required Viewing: *Killing Us Softly 4: Advertising’s Image of Women* (a link to this educational film will be posted on Avenue for viewing prior to class).

**Media Representation III: Racialized Minorities and Indigenous Peoples (Topic 10).**

Scheduled for Mar. 23.

Required Reading: Burns and Shor (eReserves, Reading 17).

Required Reading: Young (eReserves, Reading 18).

**Reception of Representation in Mainstream Media (Topic 11).**

Scheduled for Mar. 30.

Required Reading: Mahtani (eReserves, Reading 19).

Required Reading: Flores Espiritu (eReserves, Reading 20).

**Struggles through Alternative Media (Topic 12).**

Scheduled for Apr. 6.

Required Reading: Fuchs (eReserves, Reading 21).

Required Reading: Sullivan, Spicer, and Böhm (eReserves, Reading 22).

## Course Policies

Please familiarize yourself with the following course policies. You are responsible for being aware of and adhering to all policies established for this course.

### Use of Avenue to Learn

Some courses may use online elements, including Avenue to Learn. 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 McMaster email 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 online 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.

Avenue to Learn will be a crucial resource for this course. Avenue will be used to communicate announcements, to distribute various course handouts (such as a course outline or assignment instructions), to submit assignments, to post grades, and to meet other educational needs.

Please do **not** contact me through Avenue to Learn. There are two reasons for this. First, I prefer to use my McMaster email account for correspondence. Second, it is impossible to reply to a message sent from Avenue to a McMaster email account. Consequently, if you expect your message to be read and answered, please send the message from your McMaster email account to my McMaster email account.

Please be aware that material posted on Avenue to Learn is protected by copyright. You are permitted to print or download one copy of material that I have written (e.g., course handouts or certain course content) so that you can privately read or study this material. However, any further copying or any distribution of this material (e.g., to websites or to students not enrolled in the course) is strictly prohibited. If some academic writing has been posted on Avenue (e.g., an excerpt from a book), please note that this has been done under provisions in Canada’s Copyright Act.

### Absences and Missed Academic Term Work

Please note that work times or travel arrangements are **not** acceptable grounds for absences or missed academic term work. Tests and tutorials are held during scheduled class time(s), and examinations are held during a scheduled period at the end of the term. Since the scheduled class/testing time(s) and the scheduled examination period are published in this course outline and therefore known to you at the beginning of the course, you **must** ensure that you are available for scheduled testing or tutorials if you elect to continue with the course. If you are not available, you are advised to either reschedule your work/travel or to drop the course and perhaps take it at another time. Do **not** assume that work or travel which conflicts with class time(s) or course requirements will be grounds for accommodation by McMaster University. Indeed, you should be aware that McMaster University’s Undergraduate Calendar specifically states the following: “Examinations are not rescheduled for purposes of travel. Students must be available for the entire examination period.”

In accordance with McMaster University policy, only certain circumstances constitute acceptable grounds for absences or missed academic term work. Accommodation can be arranged for unanticipated, unfortunate circumstances occurring on or shortly before scheduled work dates during the term (such as a test date or an assignment due date). These circumstances include medical situations (e.g., illness) or personal situations (e.g., a death in the family). If you wish to be considered for accommodation, please carefully follow the instructions in McMaster University’s policy on “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work” and pay particular attention to the “Documentation Requirements.” For more information, see the sub-section below on “Accommodation for Missed Academic Term Work.”

Please note that most or all requirements in my courses are worth over 25% of the final grade. As a result, you **cannot** use the MSAF online self-reporting tool to request accommodation for such missed requirements. Instead, you must contact your Faculty/Program Office and present acceptable documentation of illness, death in the family, or other serious circumstances occurring on or shortly before the missed date.

Please note that, according to McMaster’s policy on “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”, you are required to follow-up with your instructor **immediately** in order to make arrangements with regard to any missed work. Failure to follow-up in a timely manner may negate the opportunity for relief and result in no consideration given for missed work.

Please note that submitting an MSAF or submitting documentation is **not** an automatic guarantee of accommodation. Accommodation can be denied by your Faculty/Program Office or by your instructor for various reasons (e.g., submitting an MSAF far too late, submitting inadequate documentation or submitting the documentation too late, or failing to follow-up with the instructor in a timely manner to request accommodation).

If I grant you accommodation for missed term work, you will be required to enter into a written agreement with me (through email) with regard to arrangements pertaining to the missed work (e.g., establishing a date for writing a make-up test or establishing a new due date for an assignment). If you fail to meet the terms of this agreement (for any reason) and the work is still not completed by the alternate date, you will receive an automatic zero for that particular course requirement and there will be no further accommodation.

Please note that the McMaster policy on “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work” does **not** apply to a final examination. If you miss the final examination, I do **not** have the authority to let you write it. You will have to deal with your Faculty/Program Office and have compelling, documented medical or personal reasons for missing the examination. Please see the Undergraduate Calendar for the McMaster policy on “Petition for Special Consideration: Request for Deferred Examination.”

### Extensions on Assignments

Sometimes, students ask for extensions on the due dates for assignments. Please keep in mind that I do **not** grant what students typically think of as “extensions.” I will certainly give students a little more time to complete an assignment if accommodation is justified due to certain medical or personal situations (as covered by the McMaster University policy discussed directly above) or certain disabilities (as supported by an accommodation letter that some students will have from Student Accessibility Services). Any other explanations for not getting an assignment in on time (e.g., having full or part-time work obligations, having many assignments coming due at the same time, having vacation or travel arrangements, and having computer breakdowns) are **not** acceptable grounds for accommodation and will **not** result in extensions. I suggest that you start on your assignments early, organize your time throughout the term so that you can manage your various obligations or activities, and regularly create external backups of your work.

### Lateness of Assignments

If students lack acceptable grounds for accommodation (see the two sub-sections directly above), a lateness penalty will be imposed on their assignments.

The penalty for lateness in this course will be 5% per day. Late assignments are to be submitted through the “Assignments” section of Avenue to Learn. The day and time of submission (as recorded by Avenue) will be the basis for determining the lateness penalty. Assignments must be submitted by 11:59 pm on a given day or they will be considered to be an additional day late. Assignments that are late by more than five days will **not** be accepted. Weekends will **not** be included in the lateness calculation.

### Use of Turnitin.com

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student-submitted work. In 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., Avenue to Learn) that employs plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) to check the work for academic dishonesty.

Turnitin.com will be used in this course. Students who do not wish their work to be submitted to 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 plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., through an online search or the use of other software). For more details about McMaster’s use of Turnitin.com, please refer to the [McMaster Turnitin Guidelines](https://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/turnitin/guidelines.html) on the website for the Office of Academic Integrity.

If you do not wish to submit your work to plagiarism detection software, please be aware that I will need time to perform the laborious task of checking your work manually for signs of academic dishonesty. Consequently, I reserve the right to withhold your work until I have had a chance to check it manually. This means that you should **not** expect to get a graded assignment returned to you on the same day that graded work is returned to the students who did submit their work to plagiarism detection software. You will have to wait several weeks longer.

If you do submit your work to plagiarism detection software, and if analysis by the software suggests that there may be a problem with your work, I reserve the right to withhold your assignment until I can carry out a further investigation.

### Grade Changes on Assignments

Sometimes, students disagree with a grade on an assignment and want to know what is involved with trying to get a higher grade. The basic process is as follows.

First, you are asked to wait at least one week from the time you received your graded assignment (so that you have the time to calmly and critically reflect on your work and try to understand why you were given that particular grade).

Second, if one full week has gone by and you still believe that you deserve a higher grade, you are asked to submit a polite and professional letter to the grader (either a TA or the instructor) in which you make the case that the assignment is of better quality than the grader thought (in relation to the several marking criteria that were identified, defined, and described by the instructor). You will cut and paste your letter into an email message (no attachments please) and send it to the grader from your McMaster email account (no other account). This letter will give the grader something to consider, but it is **not** a guarantee of a grade increase.

Third, after receiving your letter, the grader will re-examine the assignment and do one of three things. The grader may increase your grade, leave your grade as it is, or decrease your grade. The grader may find that there is no merit to your argument for a higher grade. With more time to examine the assignment, the grader may even notice problems with your work that were not spotted the first time around and find it necessary to reduce your grade. Therefore, if you elect to write and send a letter, you do so with the understanding and full acceptance that you are taking a risk with your grade.

### Marking Schemes

This course may utilize two different marking schemes, both of which are based on the grading system adopted by McMaster University. This system involves the following grades.

**Percentage Grades** **Equivalent Letter Grades**

90-100 A+

85-89 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

Percentage grades will be used for any multiple choice and true/false testing, but letter grades may be used for written work. Letter grades are preferred for written work since a numerical scheme implies that it is possible to produce a perfect piece of writing. However, for purposes of interpretation and calculation of a final course grade, the numerical mid-point of a letter grade (or the approximate numerical mid-point) will also be provided. In the case of a failing grade (i.e., an F), the numerical equivalent (between 0%-49%) will be the decision of the marker.

### Course Conduct

In relation to this course, you are expected to exhibit polite and respectful behaviour. Such behaviour is required for interactions through email and through Zoom, just as it is required for interactions taking place in person. Professors, TAs, university staff, and your fellow students deserve to be treated in a courteous and appropriate manner.

Please exhibit polite and respectful behaviour while in-person lectures, tutorials, or seminars are in session. For instance, please do **not** talk during classes or play with a smartphone during classes. These are just some examples of rude and distracting behaviour which can make it difficult for a professor or TA to teach and difficult for students to learn.

It is important to avoid more extreme forms of unacceptable behaviour as well. This includes behaviour that is insulting, derogatory, or aggressive. McMaster University’s “Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities” (formerly known as the “Student Code of Conduct”) makes it clear that unacceptable behaviour also includes (but is not limited to) discriminatory, harassing, intimidating, or threatening behaviour. Such behaviour is **not** permitted in person, and it is also **not** permitted through any electronic media where there is a clear connection to the McMaster community.

Extreme forms of unacceptable behaviour that occur in or out of class may constitute a violation of McMaster University’s “Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities” and be punishable by various sanctions (penalties) that can be imposed on students by the university (including, in serious cases, suspension or expulsion from the university). According to the university, all McMaster students have an obligation to familiarize themselves with the “Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities.” For more information, please see the official university statement below under the sub-section titled “Conduct Expectations.”

## Faculty and University Policies

Please familiarize yourself with the following Faculty and University policies. You are responsible for being aware of and adhering to policies established by the Faculty of Social Sciences and McMaster University.

### Faculty of Social Sciences Email Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University email 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 email account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply.

### Accommodation for Missed Academic Term Work

Students sometimes miss academic term work (e.g., a scheduled test or the due date for an assignment) as a result of medical situations (e.g., illness) or personal situations (e.g., a death in the family).

McMaster University has a policy on [Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work (MSAF)](https://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/content.php?catoid=41&navoid=8622#requests-for-relief-for-missed-academic-term-work) which includes the “Documentation Requirements” for proving legitimate grounds for missed work. This policy is also in the Undergraduate Calendar.

As noted in this policy, the appropriate approach for requesting relief due to missed academic term work depends on the value of the missed work as well as your specific situation:

1. For medical or personal situations lasting up to three calendar days and affecting academic work worth less than 25% of the final grade, students must use the McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF) online self-reporting tool. No further documentation is required.
2. For medical or personal situations lasting more than three calendar days, and/or for missed academic work worth 25% or more of the final grade, and/or for any requests for relief in a term where the MSAF has been used previously in that term, students must report to their Faculty/Program Office (i.e., their Associate Dean’s office) to discuss their situation and will be required to provide appropriate supporting documentation.

More detailed information can be found in the Undergraduate Calendar and at the website link provided above. You are strongly advised to read the entire policy statement and ensure that you have a full understanding of it. Failure to properly follow the instructions in the policy may negate the opportunity for relief and result in no consideration given for missed work.

### Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](https://sas.mcmaster.ca/) (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’s policy on [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Academic-Accommodations-Policy.pdf).

### 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 McMaster’s policy on [Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/02/Academic-Accommodation-for-Religious-Indigenous-and-Spiritual-Observances-Policy-on.pdf) (the RISO policy). Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of the 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

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. It can result in the grade of zero on an assignment; loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (the 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 McMaster’s [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Academic-Integrity-Policy-1-1.pdf) and visit the website for the [Office of Academic Integrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

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; and 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 and Responsibilities](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Code-of-Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities.pdf) (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., the use of Avenue to Learn or Zoom) will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

### Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor constitute 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 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.

### Course Modification and Extreme Circumstances

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather or labour disruptions). If modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice will be given to students with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels (e.g., McMaster Daily News, Avenue to Learn, and/or McMaster email). It is the responsibility of students to check these communication channels regularly during the term and to note any changes.