

# SCAR 2M03 – DEATH AND DYING: COMPARATIVE VIEWS Fall 2022

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**Office:** UH 129

**Office Hours:** By Appointment via Teams, Zoom or In Person

**Lecture:** Online (synchronous): Mon & Wed @ 1:30PM-2:20PM through Teams

\*Lecture audio + PPT slides uploaded to Avenue/Teams each week\*



SOCIAL SCIENCES  
Department of  
Religious Studies

McMaster  
University

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# Course Overview

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## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

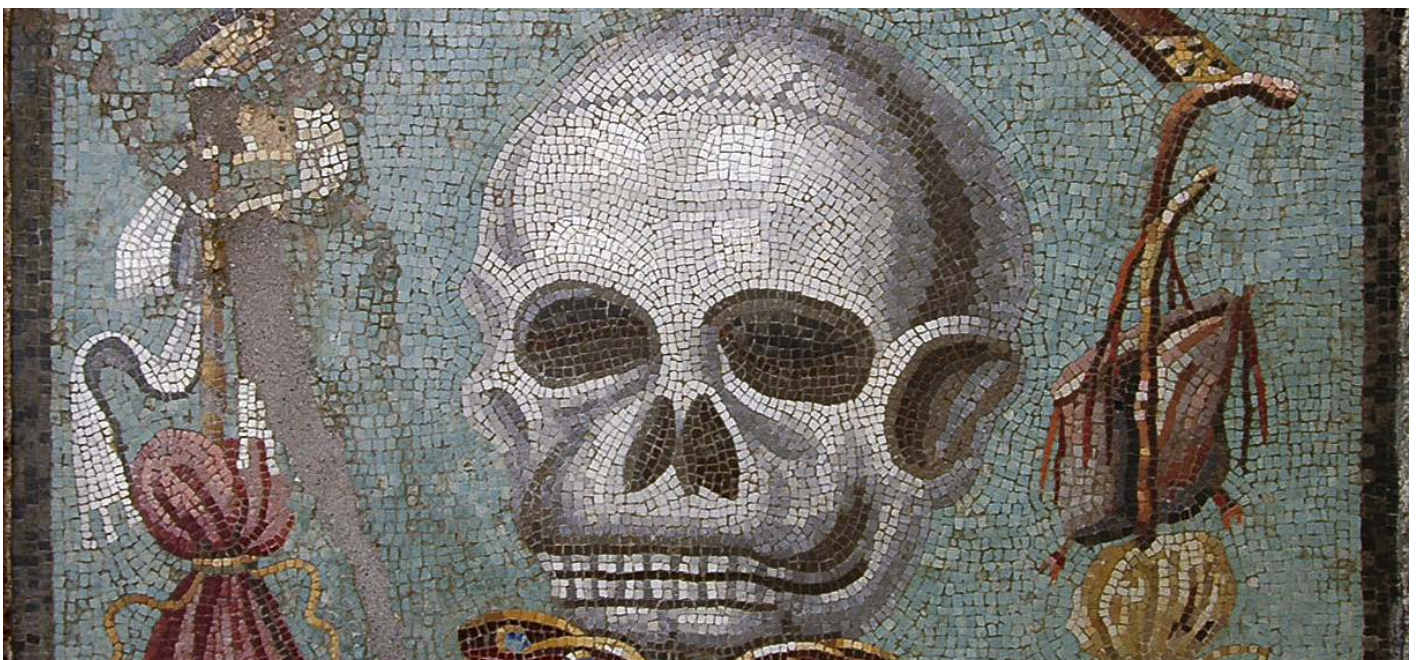
I recognize and acknowledge that McMaster University is located on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the “Dish with One Spoon” wampum agreement.

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## COURSE INFORMATION

Why do we die? What happens after death? These questions are fundamental to the human experience, but the answers are always contingent on our cultural, political, and religious milieu. Each week we'll explore a broad range of topics within the field of death and dying from a social scientific perspective using an interdisciplinary and comparative approach.

You'll be introduced to a wide range of religious and cultural responses to death, dying, and bereavement from around the world through various practices, funerary rituals, conceptions of the afterlife and the 'soul', ancestor veneration, social justice, ecological grief, and globalization.

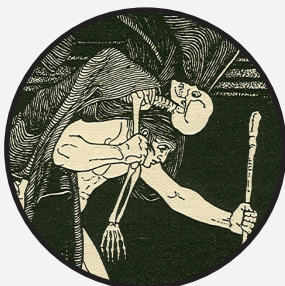
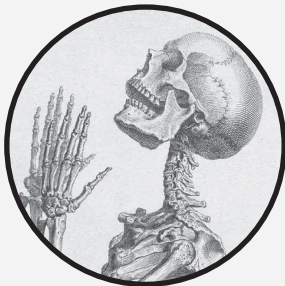
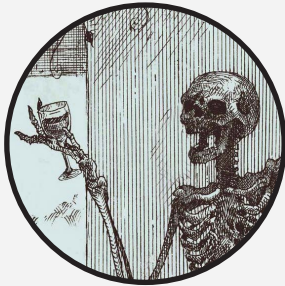




# Course Objectives

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This is an introductory course on death and dying offered by the Department of Religious Studies (SCAR). I do not assume you have any prior knowledge of the topics discussed, or any background in the social scientific study of religion. **All are welcome!**



## **INTRODUCTORY SURVEY**

To provide you with an introductory survey of selected aspects of the cultural, historical, political, and religious considerations around death, dying, and bereavement.

## **CONNECTIONS & CURIOSITY**

To develop your intellectual and creative curiosity by recognizing how death, dying, and religion are connected to your daily life and educational goals.

## **CRITICAL THINKING**

To cultivate analytical, reflective and critical thought regarding your own and others' attitudes toward death, dying, and bereavement, especially in relation to inequalities and social justice issues.

## **EMPATHY**

To resist the urge to keep death at a safe distance from our Being by focusing on our shared collective humanity, and learning to articulate the power of empathy.

# Course Evaluation

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You are responsible for completing all the assigned weekly readings, watching videos, and attending lectures. These will prepare you for the course assignments.

PowerPoint slides & course recordings will be made available each week.

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## COURSE DELIVERY

- Synchronous Lectures through Team
- Lectures recorded and posted each week
- The course uses Avenue2Learn

## REQUIRED TEXTS

- Journal Articles via McMaster Library
- Chapters are on Teams
- Videos are all publicly available

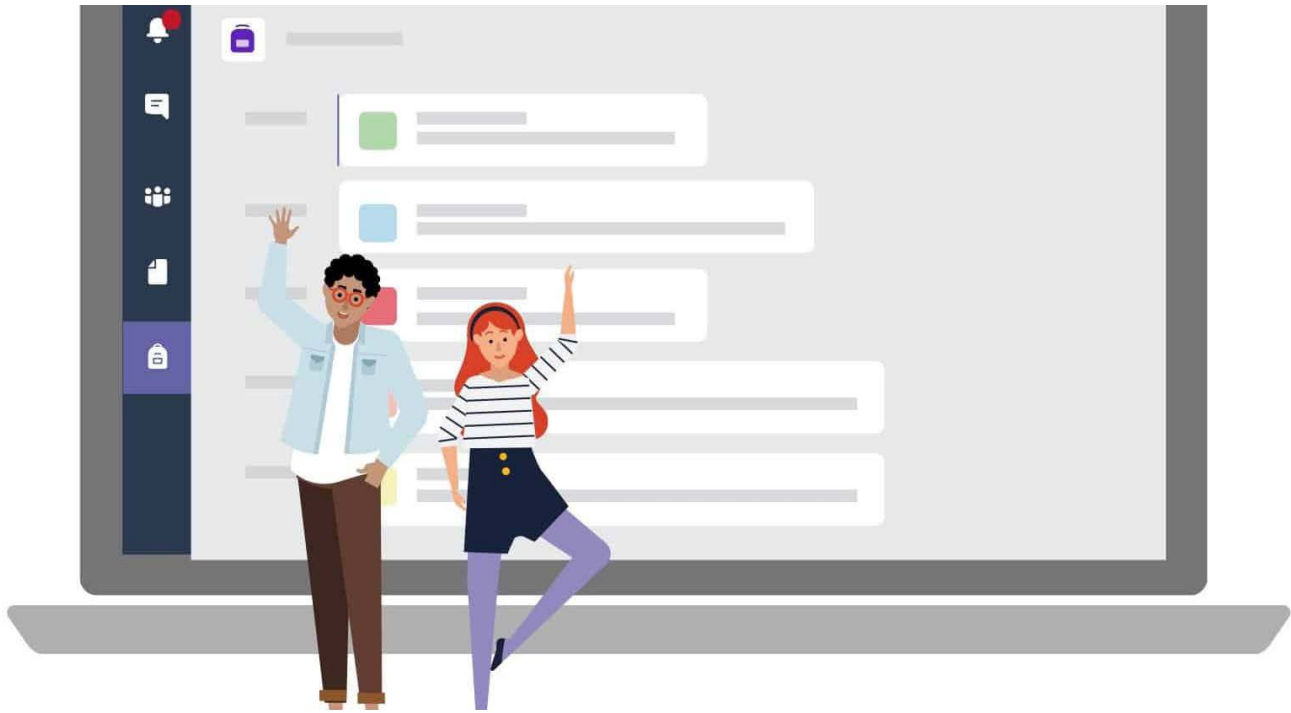


*Don't behave as if you are destined to live forever. What's fated hangs over you. As long you live and while you can, become good now. — Marcus Aurelius*



# Lecture Information

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## **SYNCHRONOUS VIA TEAMS**

This course is offered synchronously through Microsoft Teams. The lectures are also recorded, and can be watched at any time through Avenue or Teams.

Students will be automatically enrolled in Teams.

- **Quick start PDF:** [Click Here](#)

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## **MEETINGS & WORKSHOPS**

Teams allows us to communicate, run workshops, view and participate in lectures, and stay in touch in one location.

All meetings with myself and TAs are scheduled through Microsoft Teams (accessible through Avenue).

Assignments and grading are through Avenue.

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# 2M03 DEATH CAFE

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I recognize that many of you may be coping with the loss of an important person in your life, or are having difficulty at the thought of your own mortality.

At the end of the course, we will hold a virtual 'Death Cafe.' This will be an opportunity for us to informally chat about our experiences with death, and to face mortality together.

This is an optional, extracurricular event held through Microsoft Teams. It will not be recorded! *Snacking highly encouraged!*

## What is a Death Cafe?

- “[Death Cafe’s] objective is ‘to increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of their (finite) lives’. A Death Cafe is a group directed discussion of death with no agenda, objectives or themes. It is a discussion group rather than a grief support or counselling session.” - [deathcafe.com/what/](https://deathcafe.com/what/)

# Course Assignments

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## INTRODUCTION (5%)

Introduce yourself and answer the following questions: Who are you? Why are you taking this course? What are your learning objectives this semester and how will you reach them? What is one academic skill that you most want to improve (ex: writing, reading comprehension)?

**Due Date:** September 19th @ 11:59pm

## SELF-ASSESSMENT PARTICIPATION (10%)

As part of an effort to make grading fairer, participation is not based on tutorial attendance alone. Participation can take a number of forms, including attending tutorials, speaking in class/tutorials, and optional discussion posts. Participation grades will be based on your learning objectives, a self-assessment, and input from TAs. More information available on Avenue.



## CONCEPT MAPPING (20%)

Submit four concept maps, diagrams, or any other type of map during the semester. This assignment will improve your reading comprehension skills by creating a mental overview of the readings.

**Due dates:** Sept 27th, Oct 6th, Oct 25th, Nov 22nd.

## BUILD-AN-ALTAR (25%)

Create a presentation detailing the cultural and religious significance of Dias de los Muertos celebrations, and the importance of continued bonds with the dead within Latin culture.

Then build your own altar with objects that are meaningful to you, with brief explanations for each object.

**Due Date:** November 14th, 2021





# Course Assignments

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## **FINAL: CULTURAL EXPLAINER (40%)**

We can only scratch the surface of the traditions, cultures, practices, and rituals examined in this course. For the final assignment, I want you to move beyond the surface by investigating and sharing the historical, cultural, political, and religious significance of your death, dying, and bereavement practices.

Create a death and dying 'explainer' related to the cultural/religious background most familiar to you. You are welcome to interview family members, death care professionals, or religious authorities for this project, and incorporate their answers into your project.

This project can be submitted as a text-based explainer, a video explainer, graphic novel, zine, or other creative medium.

### **WHAT IS AN EXPLAINER?**

Explainers are one of the most prominent forms of journalism and popular media today. Explainers are short, information packed articles or videos meant to convey complex ideas in an approachable way. Unlike a traditional academic essay, explainers answer set questions and offer useful answers in a more conversational and direct tone.

**Proposal + Bibliography (10%):** November 1st @ 11:59PM

**Final Due Date (30%):** December 7th @ 11:59PM

# Weekly Schedule

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## WEEK ONE - INTRODUCTION

### SEPT 7TH

- Overview of the assignments and learning objectives.
  - Microsoft Teams & Avenue2Learn run-through.
  - Learning strategy tips and tricks.
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## WEEK TWO - UNDERSTANDING DEATH

### SEPT 12TH

- Sumegi, Angela. 2014. "Understanding Death" In *Understanding Death: An Introduction to Ideas of Self and the Afterlife in World Religions*. 1-22.

### SEPT 14TH

- Rosaldo, Renato. 1989. "Grief and a Headhunter's Rage." In *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. 1-21.
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## WEEK THREE - RITUAL & RITES OF PASSAGE

### SEPT 19TH

- van Gennep, Arnold. 2017. "The Rites of Passage." In *Death, Mourning, and Burial: A Cross-Cultural Reader*. 34-43.

### SEPT 21ST

- Tsuji, Yohko. 2011. "Rites of Passage to Death and Afterlife in Japan." *Generations: Journal of the American Society on Aging* 35: 28-33.
  - Suzuki, Taku. 2022. "...Okinawan Mourning Rituals in the Northern Mariana Islands." *OMEGA* 84: 1175-92.
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## WEEK FOUR - BEREAVEMENT AND MOURNING

### SEPT 26TH

- Rosenblatt, Paul C. 1993. "Cross-Cultural Variation in the Experience, Expression, and Understanding of Grief" 13-19.
- Wade, Breeshia. 2021. "Grief as Spiritual Death." In *Grieving While Black*. 19-34.

### SEPT 28TH

- **Watch:** A Family's Secret Grief and Trauma Shared for the First Time - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1kGwNZrKNY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1kGwNZrKNY)
  - Ochs, Vanessa. 2018. "Jewish Funeral and Mourning Practices" In, *The Routledge Companion to Death and Dying*, 55-65.
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# Weekly Schedule

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## WEEK FIVE - LIFE AFTER DEATH

### OCT 3RD

- Setta, Susan M. 2013. "Determining Death: Perspectives from World Religions." In, *Death, Dying, Culture: An Interdisciplinary Interrogation*. 117-124.

### OCT 5TH

- Gielen, Joris and Komal Kashyap. 2019. "Belief in Karma and Moksa at the End of Life in India" In *Death Across Cultures*. 22-38.

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## WEEK SIX - WINTER BREAK!

## WEEK SEVEN - LIFE AFTER DEATH, CONTINUED

### OCT 17TH

- Alladin, Waseem. 2015. "The Islamic way of death and dying: Homeward bound." In, *Death and Bereavement Across Cultures*. 110-132.

### OCT 19TH

- Ebrahim, Shanil, Sheena Bance, and Kerry W. Bowman. 2011. "Sikh Perspectives towards Death and End-Of-Life Care." *Journal of Palliative Care* 27: 170-74.

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## WEEK EIGHT - LIVING WITH THE ANCESTORS

### OCT 24TH

- Watch: "The Buddha Mummies of North Japan" [mcmaster.kanopy.com/video/buddha-mummies-north-japan](https://mcmaster.kanopy.com/video/buddha-mummies-north-japan)
- Stefen, Edith Marie. 2021. "Interacting With The Afterlife: Continuing bonds with deceased loved ones" In *Death, Immortality and Eternal Life*. 11-28.

### OCT 26TH

- Adams, Kathleen M. 2018. "Leisure in the "Land of the Walking Dead." In, *Western Mortuary Tourism, the Internet, and Zombie Pop Culture in Toraja, Indonesia*. 97-121.



# Weekly Schedule

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## WEEK NINE - LIVING WITH THE ANCESTORS, CONTINUED

### OCT 31ST

- **(PRE-RECORDED LECTURE)**
- Brandes, Stanley H. 2006. "The Day of the Dead and Halloween" In *Skulls to the living, bread to the dead*. 117-129.

### NOV 2ND

- De Orellana, Margarita, Michelle Suderman, Dominique Dufétel, et al., 2011. "Day of the Dead Ritual Serenity." *Artes De México*, 62: **65-74 ONLY**.
- **Optional:** Watch Disney's *Coco*!

## WEEK TEN - ECOLOGICAL GRIEF & MOURNING

### NOV 7TH

- "Ecological Grief: Mourning the Loss of our Planet" [www.talkdeath.com/ecological-grief-mourning-loss-our-planet/](http://www.talkdeath.com/ecological-grief-mourning-loss-our-planet/)
- Menning, Nancy. 2017. "Environmental Mourning and the Religious Imagination." In *Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief*. 39-59.

### NOV 9TH

- Rodríguez Aguilera, Meztli Yoalli. 2022. "Grieving geographies, mourning waters: Life, death, and environmental gendered racialized struggles in Mexico." *Feminist Anthropology* 3: 28-43

## WEEK ELEVEN - THE POLITICS OF DEATH

### NOV 14TH

- **Watch:** Unidentified Corpses on the Streets of Karachi, Pakistan - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITBby2dU3Uw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITBby2dU3Uw)
- O'Neill, Kevin Lewis. 2012. "There Is No More Room: Cemeteries, Personhood, and Bare Death." *Ethnography* 13: 510-30.

### NOV 16TH

- Çalışkan, Dilara. 2019. "'Nobody Is Going to Let You Attend Your Own Funeral': A Funeral for a Trans Woman and Naming the Unnamed." In *Women Mobilizing Memory*. 206-18.
- **Optional:** Winter, Kristy. 2022. "Necropolitics and the Erasure of Trans and Non-Binary Bodies in Death." [www.talkdeath.com/necropolitics-and-the-erasure-of-trans-and-non-binary-bodies-in-death/](http://www.talkdeath.com/necropolitics-and-the-erasure-of-trans-and-non-binary-bodies-in-death/)

# Weekly Schedule

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## WEEK TWELVE - DEATH & GLOBALIZATION IN CHINA

### NOV 21ST

- **NO CLASS**
- **Watch:** "Despised for Working in the Death Trade: The Last Rites." [www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0qdBdHpGtU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0qdBdHpGtU)

### NOV 23RD

- Wu, Keping. 2018. "Death and Life in a Pluralistic Society" In *The Routledge Handbook of Death and the Afterlife*. 315-327.

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## WEEK THIRTEEN - DEATH & GLOBALIZATION IN AFRICA

### NOV 28TH

- Saraiva Clara. 2019. "Ancestors and Death: From West Africa to Southwest Europe" In *Death Across Cultures*. 151-165.

### NOV 30TH

- Van Der Geest, Sjaak. 2006. "Between Death and Funeral: Mortuaries and the Exploitation of Liminality in Kwahu, Ghana." *Journal of the Int. African Institute* 76: 485-501.

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## WEEK FOURTEEN - DEATH CAFE EVENT

### DEC 5TH

- DEATH CAFE EXTRACURRICULAR EVENT.

# Student Resources

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## CAMPUS RESOURCES

- Food Collective Centre: [www.msumcmaster.ca/services-directory/14-mac-bread-bin](http://www.msumcmaster.ca/services-directory/14-mac-bread-bin)
- Indigenous Student Services: [indigenous.mcmaster.ca/](http://indigenous.mcmaster.ca/)
- Sexual Violence Response Coordinator: [svpro.mcmaster.ca/contact/](http://svpro.mcmaster.ca/contact/)
- Equity and Inclusion: [equity.mcmaster.ca/](http://equity.mcmaster.ca/)
- Online Learning Support: [studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/academic-skills/online-learning/](http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/academic-skills/online-learning/)
- Writing Support: [studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/academic-skills/writing-support/](http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/academic-skills/writing-support/)
- Student Success Centre: [studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/](http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/)
- Ontario Crisis Resources and Helplines: [www.camh.ca/en/health-info/crisis-resources](http://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/crisis-resources)
- Canada Suicide Prevention Service: [www.crisisservicescanada.ca/en/](http://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/en/)

## HOW TO CITE

- MLA: [owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/mla\\_style/mla\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/mla\\_in\\_text\\_citations\\_the\\_basics.html](http://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_in_text_citations_the_basics.html)
- Chicago: [www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html)
- APA: [guides.libraries.psu.edu/apaquickguide/intext](http://guides.libraries.psu.edu/apaquickguide/intext)

## HOW TO AVOID UNINTENTIONAL PLAGIARISM

- [www.lakeforest.edu/academics/resources/writingcenter/plagiarism.php](http://www.lakeforest.edu/academics/resources/writingcenter/plagiarism.php)

## HOW TO WRITE AN ESSAY & PUNCTUATION RULES

- How to Write an Essay: [advice.writing.utoronto.ca/general/general-advice/](http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/general/general-advice/)
- Reading and Writing for Academic Purposes: [studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/reading-and-writing-for-academic-purposes-2021/](http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/reading-and-writing-for-academic-purposes-2021/)
- 13 Rules for Using Commas: [www.businessinsider.com/a-guide-to-proper-comma-use-2013-9](http://www.businessinsider.com/a-guide-to-proper-comma-use-2013-9)
- How to use the Semi-Colon: [theoatmeal.com/comics/semicolon](http://theoatmeal.com/comics/semicolon)



# Course Policies

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## **SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS**

All written assignments must be uploaded to Avenue in .docx or .pdf format (NO .pages).

## **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**

Students should contact their TA if they plan on handing in an assignment late. Late assignments may be penalized at the discretion of the TA and/or professor.

## **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.

# University Policies

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## 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 [secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/](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

**Some courses may** use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

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

# University Policies

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## **COURSES WITH AN ON-LINE ELEMENT**

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

## **ONLINE PROCTORING**

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

## **CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS**

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

## **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.



# University Policies

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## 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.