

ARTSSCI 4A06: INDIVIDUAL STUDY / ARTSSCI 4C06: THESIS (2019-20)

Dr. Jean Wilson, Director, Arts & Science, LRW-3038, x24656, wilsonj@mcmaster.ca
Shelley Anderson, Program Administrator, LRW-3038, x24655 anderso@mcmaster.ca
Madeline Van Impe, Program Administrator, LRW-3038, x23153 vanimpem@mcmaster.ca

Students in the B.Arts Sc. (Honours) Program (non-combined) are required to complete six units of an individual study or thesis (ARTSSCI 4A06 or 4C06). Students in many Combined Honours programs are also required to complete an individual study or thesis, sometimes through one of the courses listed above, but often through a course in the discipline of their Combined Honours program (offered by the relevant Department). Consult the Combined Honours Program descriptions on the Arts & Science website artsci.mcmaster.ca for specific requirements.

Students enrolled in ARTSSCI 4A06 or 4C06 are required to present their work to the Arts & Science community in half-hour sessions scheduled in March. Current projects are posted on the Artsci website <https://artsci.mcmaster.ca/courses-year/4a06-4c06/> Copies of projects completed by Arts & Science students in the past are available on Avenue to Learn. Consult Shelley or Madeline for details.

Forms and Deadlines:

September 2019: Students and Supervisors *meet during the first week of classes* to confirm arrangements (normally for biweekly meetings) and begin the study. Any questions or concerns, as well as any significant changes to the thesis plan, should be discussed with the Arts & Science Director, Dr. Jean Wilson, who is available for consultation throughout the academic year.

13 January 2020: Students and supervisors meet to complete the *Interim Report* together; students are responsible for submitting the signed form (in hard copy) to Shelley or Madeline by the deadline.

March 2020: Students *present* their work to the Arts & Science community in back-to-back, half-hour sessions, chaired by Dr. Wilson (presentation 15 minutes, discussion 10 minutes). Times are arranged by Shelley or Madeline in consultation with students and supervisors; *any final changes to thesis titles are to be submitted when the presentation schedule is being arranged. Supervisors are expected to attend the presentation and to provide feedback to students. Presentations* require students to contextualize their studies; to be able to justify the choice of topic, the approach taken, and the conclusions drawn; and to be able to answer questions from an audience of students, faculty, and guests. Students can expect feedback from their supervisors. The purposes of the presentation are: to ensure that students are able to make an effective oral report on their research to a multidisciplinary audience; to provide Arts & Science students in all levels with the opportunity to hear about their peers' work; to provide students in Levels I to III with examples of what is expected of them in Level IV; and to provide information to the Arts & Science Program on the effectiveness of the opportunities for individual study and research provided by these courses.

7 April 2020: Students submit completed work to their supervisors **by the last day of classes.**

24 April 2020: Students submit the final PDF copy (single-spaced) to Shelley or Madeline.

24 April 2020 Supervisor's Final Report: Supervisors submit the student's final grade report, with commentary on the work done, to the Arts & Science Director via Program Administrators Shelley Anderson or Madeline Van Impe. Report must be submitted by the deadline if "Clear to Graduate" status is to be granted (no extensions possible).

Courses and Supervisors:

Students are responsible for selecting a topic for study or research and a faculty member who is willing to supervise their work. Any McMaster faculty member is an acceptable supervisor. Students in

Combined Honours programs who take ARTSSCI 4A06 or 4C06 often choose a topic for investigation related to the subject area of their discipline, but it is not required that they do so. It is possible to take ARTSSCI 4A06 or 4C06 for 9 units under exceptional circumstances. All course plans must be approved by the Arts & Science Director.

The decision about whether to take an individual study or thesis is made by students in discussion with their supervisor about which format is the more suitable and offers the more valuable educational experience. The main difference has to do with the method used by students to report on their studies. If the proposal indicates that the work is progressive and not segmented, it is probably best described in a single major paper or thesis; if there are clearly separable and independent components of the plan, and if the work could be submitted and evaluated in parts, it might more appropriately be approached as an individual study. **N.B.: In all cases, students are expected to stretch themselves and to learn.** E.g., rather than approach the course as an opportunity to write up previously conducted research or predetermined conclusions, students are to undertake fresh studies and report on their findings.

The individual study or thesis offers each student an opportunity to work closely with a faculty member on a topic of interest to both. Students can make the most of this valuable opportunity by preparing well for each (normally biweekly) meeting with their supervisor and working steadily in the course. Students who have not done so have sometimes discovered too late that the topic did not offer the educational opportunities for which they had hoped. It is useful to set goals and timetables for the project.

Guidelines Regarding Research Ethics:

Supervisors who are working with students whose projects require Ethics Committee approval should ensure that all communications with the Boards or Committees identify the course, the student and the supervisor, and bear the signatures of both. The ethics review, if applicable, for the Arts & Science Individual Study or Thesis is conducted by the ethics committee which oversees the ethics reviews for the department to which the student's supervisor belongs.

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/ors/ethics/sreb/courseguide.htm>
http://www.mcmaster.ca/ors/ethics/faculty_guidelines.htm
<http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/healthresearch/reb/index.html>

Forms and Deadlines for Courses to be taken in 2020-21:

Students planning to take ARTSSCI 4A06 or 4C06 in 2020-21 should attend the Information Session held by Dr. Wilson in Fall 2019 (date TBA).

By Jan. 2020, having decided on the general area in which they wish to study, students are expected to have chosen a topic and approached an appropriate faculty member about the possibility of supervising. The topic is likely to be redefined in discussion with the supervisor.

17 January 2020: Students must complete the ***January Planning Sheet***, which identifies the proposed topic and possible supervisor, and submit it (in hard copy) to Shelley or Madeline by the deadline.

2 March 2020: The ***Final Course Plan***, a form that outlines course plans for final approval, must be completed by the student and supervisor together, signed by the supervisor, and submitted by the student to Shelley or Madeline by the deadline.