

ARTS & SCIENCE 1A06/ PRACTICES OF KNOWLEDGE

McMaster University, Term 3, 2018-19 Mondays & Thursdays: 9:30am-10:20am,

Instructor - Dr. Travis Kroeker (Fall 2018): kroekert@mcmaster.ca

Dr. David Penner (Winter 2019): pennerdl@mcmaster.ca

Office hour, Term 1: Thursday 10:30-12:00 (UH 122)

Term 2: Thursday 10:30-12:00 (LRW 3038)

Teaching Assistants:

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Course Description and Objectives

The aim of this course is to gain insight into the intellectual and cultural sources that shape our world by studying in an interdisciplinary and integrated way important works in philosophy and literature from ancient to contemporary times and places. This means that our practices of knowledge in the course will be related to the study, not **about** various other times and places (e.g. the Ancient Near East, classical Greece or the Roman empire, medieval or Enlightenment Europe, modernity and postmodernity; traditions such as Judaism, Taoism, Christianity or Islam) but rather **of** primary representative works written by people living in those and other times and places (and thus “practicing knowledge”) that continue to nurture our own. Some of these will be more familiar, others less so, depending on your background, training and interests. But the aim is for all of us to gain experience in building up an intellectual imagination capable of thinking sympathetically and critically in relation to a wide range of paradigms, genres, and visions of life that still inform our own practices of knowledge as humans in a complex and diverse world.

Among the guiding questions, here are some to consider:

What do we mean by “knowledge”? Some other European languages have at least two words to distinguish types of knowing (e.g. *savoir* and *connaître/connaissance* in French; *wissen* and *kennen*, and cf. *können*, in German); all of these words have long histories and a wide range of meanings (not to mention a host of synonyms: wisdom, information, intelligence, familiarity, awareness . . .). How are these meanings distinct, how are they related, and why does it matter? These words for knowledge and knowing may take the form of a noun or a verb, and the verb-al form is emphasized in the language of “practices.” That is, knowledge is an activity tied to habitual human practices of various kinds and contexts: vocational, institutional, religious, sexual, culinary, political, educational, technological, to name just a few. How do these contexts relate to the various practices of knowledge, and which of these contexts or habitual practices take priority or receive privilege in cultural and linguistic definitions of knowledge?

Sometimes the emphasis is on embodied practices such as various trades and musical training; at other times the emphasis is on intellectual practices of abstraction such as mathematics, logical analysis, or critical argumentation. Aristotle distinguished between 3 types of knowledge: *theoria* (related to theories or visions of truth), *poiesis* (related to

making, including literary poetics), and *praxis* (related to action), but of course these types are always also related as well as distinct. We will be interested in paying attention to the distinctions and the relations in the texts and contexts we study.

These are daunting complexities and in our first classes we will begin to think together about how to approach, interpret and better understand them. The aim of this course is that by the end of it students will be much better equipped and trained (through “practice”) to recognize distinct practices of knowledge and to think about how they are related, why they matter, how and why they continue to inform our everyday life—our thought and action—in a complex, diverse, yet interrelated world.

Required texts:

Many of the required reading or viewing materials for this course will be available on the Avenue to Learn website. Selected course texts will also be available in hard copies ordered through the McMaster campus store and students are encouraged to purchase hard copies of assigned texts whenever they are available for purposes of annotation.

Course assignments and evaluation:

Participation: 10% - Students will participate every week in a tutorial session, in which they are expected to be well-prepared to discuss and raise questions with regard to the assigned course materials for that week. In addition there will be a “media detox” assignment with guided questions on which students will write a reflection, due **September 19** (more information provided on the Avenue to Learn course site).

Midterm examination, Term 1: 15% - In-class short essay examination on **October 22 2018** based on the assigned readings up to that point.

Term examination, Term 1: 25% - This will be a 2 hour essay format examination on all term 1 course materials to be scheduled in the **December 2018** exam period.

Midterm Take Home Exam, Term 2: 15% - One week before the midterm take home exam is due you will be provided with four exam questions. You are to write a short essay in regard to one of the questions. Responses should not exceed five double spaced pages. The midterm is due on **February 14th, 2019**.

Essay: 15% - Essay topics will be provided after the midterm exam and will refer to material studied after the midterm. You are encouraged to develop your own essay topic. However, any essay topic developed by the student must refer to material after the midterm exam and must be approved by the course instructor. Your essay topic must argue a thesis and pertain only to materials studied in this course. There should be no use of secondary materials in your essays. The essay should be approximately five pages, double spaced in 12 pt font. The essay is due on **March 22nd, 2019**.

Final Exam: 20% - The final exam will be a 2 hour essay format examination set in the **April 2019** exam period.

Term 1: Remembering who “we” are

Sept 6 Introduction to the course

Why do origin stories (cosmogonies and cosmologies) matter?

Sept 10 Genesis 1-11

13 Genesis 1-11 and the *Enuma Elish*

17 *Black Elk Speaks* (chps I-IX)

20 *Black Elk Speaks* (chps X-end)

Media DeTox assignment due, Sept. 20

Tragedy and philosophy: the education of desire

Sept 24 Sophocles: *Antigone*

27 Sophocles: *Antigone*

Oct 1 Plato: *Phaedrus*

4 Plato: *Phaedrus*

Term break: October 8-12

Law, politics, and the path (I)

Oct 15 Exodus 1-22

18 “Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew 5-7)

22 Midterm exam

Methodological interlude

Oct 25 Walter Benjamin: “The Task of the Translator”

Confessional knowing: self and nature

Oct 29 Augustine: *Confessions*, books I-III

Nov 1 Augustine: *Confessions*, books VII-IX

Nov 5 Julian of Norwich: *Revelations of Divine Love* (selections)

8 Julian of Norwich, selections

12 Annie Dillard: *Holy the Firm*

15 Annie Dillard: *Holy the Firm*

Nov 19 Rabi'a al-Basri, selected poems
 22 Rabi'a al-Basri

Law, Politics and the Path (II)

Nov. 26 Lao Tse: *Tao-te ching*
 29 Lao Tse: *Tao-te ching*

Term review and exam preparation
 Dec. 3

Term 2: Western Trajectories: Modernity and its Critics

The Will to Question

Jan. 7 Introduction to Term Two
 Kant: "What Is Enlightenment?"

Jan. 10 The Dare of Wisdom
 Kant: "What Is Enlightenment?"

Jan 14, 17: The Confusions of Society, Sex and the Body
 Freud: *The Interpretation of Dreams* (selections)

Jan. 21, 24: Themes of Moral Education
 Nietzsche: *The Genealogy of Morals* (Essay 1)
 Nietzsche: *Anti-Education* (selections)

Jan. 28, 31: Where is Enlightenment?
 Foucault: *The History of Sexuality: The Will To Knowledge* (Part III)
 Foucault: "What Is Enlightenment?"

Mid-term Take Home Posted

Controlled Thought and Freedom

Feb. 4, 7 and 11: "London's Burning But I Live By the River"
 Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness*

Feb.14: What Is There To Do In Bensalem?
 Francis Bacon: *The New Atlantis*

Term Break: Feb. 18 and 21

Feb. 25 and 28: Thinking about Nothing and Something
 Heidegger: Discourse on Thinking (“Memorial Address”)
 Heidegger: “The Question Concerning Technology”

March 4 and 7: “And Yet . . .”
 Holderlin: “The Ister”
 Heidegger: “Holderlin and the Essence of Poetry”

March 11, 14 and 18: We Are All So Beautiful
 Aldous Huxley: *Brave New World*

Essay Posted

Seeing as Knowledge

March 21: Knowing the Secret
 Tarkovsky: “The Bell” (Final Section of *Andrei Rublev* – Stream Through Library)

March 25: The Image and/is the Word
 Marie-Jose Mondzain: “Tarkovsky: Embodying the Screen”

March 28: Stop Reading and Watch
 Bresson: *Au Hazard Balthazar* (Stream Through Library)
 Bresson: “Notes on the Cinematographer”

April 1: Spectatorship
 Dardennes: *La Promesse* (Stream Through Library)

April 4: Silent Script
 Bergman: *Persona* (Stream through Library)
 Marc Gervais: “Ingenting,” in *Ingmar Bergman: Magician and Prophet*

April 8: The Image of Freedom
 Alonso: *La Libertad* (On Youtube)
 Jean-Luc Godard: *A True History of Cinema* (Selection)

Final Exam scheduled by the Registrar

Arts & Science Course Outline Statements

Sustainable Written Work Submission Guidelines

The written work submission guidelines have been chosen to support the more sustainable use of paper, energy, and toner of the Office of Sustainability; <http://www.mcmaster.ca/sustainability/>. All written work (except for in-class and

university supervised examinations) should be submitted in double-spaced typewritten pages and uploaded to the electronic dropbox on the Avenue to Learn course site.

Academic Integrity Statement

McMaster Policy on 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. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences—e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty, please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity), located at: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty: 1) Plagiarism—e.g., the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained. 2) Improper collaboration in group work. 3) Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

MSAF Statement and Late penalties

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF):

In the event of an absence, students should review and follow the Academic Regulations in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work.” Please consult the MSAF statement on our website (<https://artsci.mcmaster.ca/forms-requests/>) and direct any questions or concerns to Shelley Anderson or Rebecca Bishop in the Arts & Science Program Office. It is important to follow up immediately with the course Instructor in the case of an MSAF.

Late Penalties of 10% per day (weekends count as one day) will apply to work that arrives after the assignment deadline specified on the syllabus.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities Statement

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities:

Students who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. SAS can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or email sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

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

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 requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office (i.e. to Shelley

Anderson or Rebecca Bishop in the Arts & Science Program 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.

Email Contact and Student Responsibility Statement

Please Note:

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (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. It is the responsibility of students to check **their McMaster email** and course websites regularly during the term and to note any changes. Announcements will be made in class and by using the course email distribution list.