

Course Title: The Past, Present and Future of Working in Hamilton

Course Dates: Saturdays | September 13 – November 29, 2025 (NO class October 11)

Course Time: 10:30am – 2:15pm

Classroom: LRW 1055

Lunchroom: LRW 3038 (Arts & Science Program)

Graduation: December 6 | 11:00am-1:00pm

Agenda:

- 10:00-10:30am Coffee & Tea
- 10:30-12:00pm Class: Interactive lecture and/or discussion
- 12:00-12:45pm Lunch (provided)
- 12:45-2:15pm Class: Student Project Work

Instructor: Dr. Stephanie Ross, School of Labour Studies

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Program Coordinator: Sarah Bennett

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Student Support Team:

- April Louie
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Course Overview:

Most of us, throughout most of our lives, will work. The kind of work we do has a profound impact on our economic security, our identities, and our place in the community. Each of us has a personal story of working, whether paid or unpaid, but that story is connected to what is happening in the world around us – economic development and decline, war, immigration, technological change, struggles for economic & social rights, and transformations in family life.

In Canada, Hamilton has always been at the centre of these transformations, making it an excellent place to examine our relationship to the past, present and future of work. In this course, we will examine our own experiences of working against the backdrop of an ever-evolving city, to see what we can learn about ourselves, the kinds of work that sustains us, and the possible futures of work we might face.

Course Objectives:

- To learn more about the changing nature of work in Hamilton, and position one's own working life in that context
- To develop an understanding of the various definitions of work and the factors that shape which kinds of work are given more economic and social value

- To engage with debates over the future of work, who may or may not benefit from those changes, and what we want work to look like for ourselves and our community
- To increase your skills in interpreting and evaluating information
- To strengthen your reading, writing, and critical thinking abilities
- To strengthen your skills navigating post-secondary academic spaces in Canada
- To begin applying the above learnings to one's own work and education

In-class Assignments & Discussion

There are no mandatory assignments in this course, but students are encouraged to discuss and/or write a brief reflection on the following:

Week 4: Workers' City Analysis

If you wish to practice your essay writing skills, you are encouraged to write an individual reflection (3 pages max) on the guiding questions listed below. You should also incorporate course readings, lectures, and discussions in your response. This reflection should be submitted on Week 5 either via email or printed.

Choose one of the historical tours on the Workers' City website (except the one called "COVID Chronicles"). Review any written or audio material that accompanies **five locations** on the tour you chose. Even better if you can visit one of those locations in person.

Guiding Questions:

- What is a theme you noticed that cuts across these different experiences of work in Hamilton's history?
- Do any of these stories resonate with your own experience of work?

Website: <https://www.workerscity.ca/tours>

We will have time to discuss this assignment in class on Week 4 and we will talk about the Workers' City website in class on Week 5.

Week 5: Video Analysis: Defying the Law

Small Group Discussion: In groups of 3, students will critically engage with the content of the video to analyze the causes of the 1946 Stelco strike and its aftermath. We will then share these reflections with the whole class.

If you wish to practice your essay writing skills, you are encouraged to write an individual reflection (3 pages max) on the guiding questions listed below. You should also incorporate course readings, lectures, and discussions in your response. This reflection should be submitted on Week 6 either via email or printed.

Guiding Questions:

- What were the causes of the 1946 Stelco Strike? What was the strike about?
- What role did the employer, the government, the union and the community play in the events of this strike?
- What was the outcome of the strike, both in Hamilton and in the rest of Canada?
- What lessons can we learn from these events that are still relevant for workers today?

Week 9: Video Analysis: Code Red 10 Years Later

Small Group Discussion: In groups of 3, students will critically engage with the content of the video to analyze the patterns of inequality in different neighbourhoods of Hamilton and connect these inequalities to the changing nature of work in the city.

If you wish to practice your essay writing skills, you are encouraged to write an individual reflection (3 pages max) on the guiding questions listed below. You should also incorporate course readings, lectures, and discussions in your response. This reflection should be submitted on Week 10 either via email or printed.

Guiding Questions:

- What is the most significant finding of the Code Red project? Which disparity surprised you the most?
- How do you think the project's findings on physical and mental health, aging and life expectancy, or education relate to the changing nature of work in the city?

Course Project:

During this course, you will complete a project based on class themes. You are especially encouraged to explore your own experience with working in Hamilton. This project can be done alone or in groups and can explore any theme relating to the class. The afternoon portion of class will often be dedicated to project work. The SST will be around to help you in this process. **If you need additional help with your project, please let us know so we can arrange a time to help you.**

Project Format:

Option 1 – Video or Podcast Reflection

Submit a video or podcast reflecting on some aspect of working in Hamilton, using Adobe Premiere Pro (a software for video development) or Adobe Audition (a software for audio editing).

Option 2 – Visual Representation

Submit a visual representation of your project theme - i.e. collage, drawing, painting, quilt etc.

Option 3 – Written Reflection

Submit a written exploration of your project theme – i.e. essay, reflection, short story, poem etc.

Project presentations and showcase will take place on **Saturday, November 29 (Week 11)**.

EXAMPLE:

An example of a project theme is ***The Meaning of Work***, and it would explore concepts like:

- Your own understanding of work
- The way that work has shaped your opportunities or challenges in life
- The way that work does or does not bring meaning to your life

Assignment Submission:

Assignments may be submitted electronically or hard copy/printed.

Assignment Feedback:

You will not be assigned a grade for this course, but the instructor will provide feedback on your assignments, if you choose to submit a written essay. If written assignments have been submitted, arrangements for the return of assignments will be finalized during the first class.

Readings:

Readings will be provided in multiple formats (electronic and print) to assist with learning. Readings are to be read before class. Readings are not mandatory, but students are encouraged to complete them to the best of their ability as this will allow for more dynamic discussions in class.

Videos and Podcasts:

Videos and podcasts also listed on the weekly schedule are to be watched or listened to before class. Videos and podcasts are not mandatory, but students are encouraged to complete them to the best of their ability as this will allow for more dynamic discussions in class.

We will support you 😊

We want you to enjoy the course and grow through your experiences with each other and with the subject matter we are studying. The instructor, program coordinator, and the student support team are committed to ensuring that you are supported and encouraged on your way to success in the course. Tell us how we can help you!

Respect

Students are expected to contribute to the creation of a respectful and constructive learning environment. Everyone's voice is important and is to be respected. Behaviour(s) that interrupts, impedes, or belittles others will not be allowed. **If discourteous or disturbing incidents occur, you may be asked to stop attending the course.**

Accessibility Statement

The university recognizes that people learn and express their knowledge in different ways. We are committed to reducing barriers to accessibility in the classroom and working towards classrooms that welcome diverse learners. If you have accessibility concerns or want to talk about your learning needs, please get in touch with the Program Coordinator.

Attendance Policy

Students are encouraged to attend as many sessions as they are able. Please let the Program Coordinator know if you are unable to attend class. If you miss more than two classes without letting us know, we will reach out to discuss attendance.

To receive a certificate recognizing your participation in the program, students must attend a minimum of **9** sessions.

Academic Integrity

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. 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](#).

The following illustrates only two 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.

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.

Weekly Schedule	
<p>Week 1: September 13, 2025</p> <p>Topic: What is Work? Why Does it Matter?</p> <p>Reading: Robert Bruno, "Introduction" and "Conclusion", <i>What Work Is</i> (University of Illinois Press, 2024)</p> <p>Video: "Why Work Won't Love You Back (and That's OK) (w/ Sarah Jaffe)," How to be a Better Human Ted (https://youtu.be/dOtN6IQv3uw?si=HBuRwMgLnVDysji8)</p>	<p>Class: LRW 1055 Lunch: LRW 3038</p>
<p>Week 2: September 20, 2025</p> <p>Topic: Indigenous Life and Work Before and After Colonialism</p> <p>Reading: Lynne Fernandez and Jim Silver, <i>Indigenous People, Wage Labour and Trade Unions: The Historical Experience in Canada</i> (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Manitoba, 2017) https://www.policyalternatives.ca/wp-content/uploads/attachments/Indigenous_Labour_Trade_Union.pdf</p> <p>Video: <i>Deskaheh</i>, Allan Downey, Tekenikhon Doreen, Jersee Hill, Kira Gibson, and Saki Murotani (2024) https://youtu.be/Jw6JIN1cPYQ?si=mlus6Ei_VzFNEm-J</p>	<p>Class: LRW 1055 Lunch: LRW 3038</p>
<p>Week 3: September 27, 2025</p> <p>Topic: Industrial Work, Past and Present</p> <p>Reading: Craig Heron, "Studholme's People," <i>Lunch-Bucket Lives: Remaking the Workers' City</i> (Between the Lines, 2015)</p> <p>Video: "Introduction to Labour History," Alberta Union of Public Employees, https://youtu.be/4pC56qMSDMs?si=k2M4JWCvLa77s9yU</p>	<p>Class: LRW 1055 Lunch: LRW 3038</p>
<p>Week 4: October 4, 2025</p> <p>Topic: Zine Workshop with Mariel Rutherford Please bring printed materials that can be cut up and used to create collages. All other materials will be provided in class as well as some additional printed materials.</p> <p>In-class Assignment: Analysis of Workers' City website tours, https://www.workerscity.ca/tours, assignment details on page 2 above</p>	<p>Class: LRW 1055 Lunch: LRW 3038</p>

Saturday, October 11, 2025 – No Class – Thanksgiving

Week 5: October 18, 2025

Class: LRW 1055 | **Lunch:** LRW 3038

Topic: Union Town: Hamilton and the Making of Canada’s Labour Movement

Reading: Rob Kristofferon and Simon Orpana, *Showdown! Making Modern Unions* [graphic novel] (Between the Lines, 2016)

Video: *Defying the Law* (National Film Board, 1997): <https://collection.nfb.ca/film/defying-the-law>

- In the session, we will watch *Defying the Law* together and then discuss Hamilton workers’ central role in creating the modern Canadian labour movement. We will also discuss the impact the 1946 Stelco strike had on Hamilton itself.

In-class Assignment: Analysis of *Defying the Law*, assignment details on page 2 above

Week 6: October 25, 2025

Class: LRW 3001 | **Lunch:** LRW 3038

Topic: Library Workshop & Project Research

Library Workshop

- Tour of Mills Memorial Library and library facilities
- Library workshop – Room TBD
- Facilitator: Katie Compton, Teaching and Learning Librarian

Project Research

- Remainder of class for project research and working on project
- Project details located on pages 2 & 3 of course outline

Week 7: November 1, 2025

Class and Lunch: WAHC, 51 Stuart Street

Topic: Exploring Contemporary Experiences of Work

Field Trip: Workers Arts and Heritage Centre, 51 Stuart Street, Hamilton

- Guided by museum staff, we will participate in an interactive exploration of the exhibits at the Workers Arts and Heritage Centre (WAHC). Our goal will be to discuss our varied and changing relationship to work and envision what kind of work futures we hope or fear
- You can view WAHC’s exhibits and events here: <https://wahc-museum.ca>

Week 8: November 8, 2025

Class: LRW 1055 | **Lunch:** LRW 3038

Topic: Work in Transformation

Reading: Meg Luxton and June Corman, "[Women's Work: Juggling Home and Family,](#)" [Getting By In Hard Times: Gendered Labour at Home and On the Job](#) (University of Toronto Press, 2001).

Sheila Block and Grace-Edward Galabuzi, *Persistent Inequality: Ontario's Colour-coded Labour Market* (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Ontario, 2018), <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/wp-content/uploads/attachments/Persistent%20inequality.pdf>

Digital Archive: Women and Labour, Rise Up Feminist Archive: <https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/explore-our-exhibits/collection-women-and-labour>

Week 9: November 15, 2025

Class: LRW 3001 | **Lunch:** LRW 3038

Topic: Work in Crisis

Reading: Jeff Martin and Wayne Lewchuk, *Generation Effect: Millennials, employment precarity and the 21st Century workplace* [report] <https://pepso.ca/documents/the-generation-effect-full-report.pdf>

Video: *Code Red 10 Years Later*, Hamilton Spectator: <https://youtu.be/IYjic1VvlhE?si=ilzLFUOaqfetDfZb>

In-class Assignment: Analysis of *Code Red 10 Years Later*, assignment details on page 3 above

Week 10: November 22, 2025

Class: LRW 1055 | **Lunch:** LRW 3038

Topic: Is Art the New Steel? Futures of Work in Hamilton

Reading: Stephen Dale, "[A Blue-Collar Legacy: For Better and For Worse,](#)" [Shift Change: Scenes from a Post-Industrial City](#) (Between the Lines, 2021)

Video: Adam Carter, "For Those Left Behind: Hamilton's arts renaissance isn't working for everyone," *CBC Hamilton*, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/hamilton-arts-1.4811797> (there are many videos embedded in this story – please watch at least one of them)

Week 11: November 29, 2025

Class: LRW 1055 | **Lunch:** LRW 3038

Topic: Student Project Presentations

Week 12: December 6, 2025

Ceremony: TBC

MDP Graduation Ceremony & Reception | 11:00am – 1:00pm

Plus a showcase of all completed course projects!