ARTS&SCI 4A06 / 4C06

INDIVIDUAL STUDY AND THESIS COURSE OUTLINE (2014-15)

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ARTS&SCI 4A06: INDIVIDUAL STUDY, ARTS&SCI 4C06: THESIS

Students in the B.Arts Sc. (Honours) Program (non-combined honours) are required to complete six units of an individual study or thesis (ARTS&SCI 4A06 or 4C06). Students in many (though not all) 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). Students should consult the Combined Honours Program descriptions on the Arts & Science website www.mcmaster.ca/artsci for specific requirements.

Students enrolled in any of the ARTS&SCI courses listed above are required to present their work to the Arts & Science community in half-hour sessions scheduled in March. Supervisors are expected to attend and to provide feedback to their students. (Students completing courses in their Combined Honours subject are welcome to present their work at the Thesis Gala, an informal and optional, but generally well-attended, poster session held in anticipation of the ARTS&SCI 4A06 / 4C06 March presentations.)

Students planning to take ARTS&SCI 4A06 or 4C06 in 2015-16 are encouraged to attend the March 2015 thesis gala and presentations. They are also advised to consult the list of current projects (students, supervisors, and titles) posted on the Arts & Science Program website www.mcmaster.ca/artsci. Copies of projects completed by Arts & Science students in the past are available in the Arts & Science Office (C-105) or on Avenue to Learn.

Important Forms and Deadlines:

Students and Supervisors meet to begin the study: Early September 2014


Thesis Gala and Presentations in Arts & Science Program Library (C-105): March 2015

Students submit completed work to Supervisor: Deadline: 8 April 2015

Supervisor’s Final Report: Deadline: 23 April 2015
The student's final grade report must be completed by the supervisor and submitted to Program Administrators Shelley Anderson or Rebecca Bishop by the deadline. “Clear to Graduate” status not granted unless this requirement is met.

Student’s Submission to Arts & Science Office: Deadline: 23 April 2015
A PDF copy of the individual study or thesis (single-spaced) must be submitted to Program Administrators Shelley Anderson or Rebecca Bishop by the deadline.
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. Students in Combined Honours programs who take ARTS&SCI 4A06 or 4C06 (if a Departmental course is not specified) often choose a topic for investigation within or related to the subject area of their discipline, but it is not required that they do so. Students taking 4C06 are welcome to propose experiential learning theses. All course plans must be approved by the Arts & Science Director.

It is possible to take either ARTS&SCI 4A06 or 4C06 for 9 or 12 units under exceptional circumstances. Requests for a 9 or 12 unit project require justification and the approval of the Arts & Science Director.

The decision about whether to take an individual study or thesis should be made by the student in discussion with her or his supervisor about which format is the more suitable and offers the more valuable educational experience. The difference between the courses is principally in the methods used by students to report on their studies and in the methods by which their work will be assessed. If the plan of the project indicates that the work is progressive and not segmented, it is likely best described in a single major paper or thesis; the assessment is accordingly based on the thesis itself (and possibly on the oral presentation of it in March). 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, and there might be a variety of assessment exercises.

Any McMaster faculty member is an acceptable supervisor. Students planning to take ARTS&SCI 4A06 or 4C06 in 2015-16 should attend the Program’s 4A06 / 4C06 Information Session in late October 2015, and by January 2015, having decided on the general area in which they wish to study, have chosen a manageable topic and approached an appropriate faculty member to request that he/she act as supervisor. The topic is likely to be redefined in discussion with the supervisor. Initial planning sheets for 2015-16 are due 23 Jan. 2015; final course plans for approval are due 6 Mar. 2015.

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

Sequence of Steps:

These courses offer each student an opportunity to work closely with a faculty member on a topic of special interest to both. Students can make the most of this valuable opportunity by preparing well for each meeting with their supervisor and working steadily in the course. The thesis course may offer real temptations to delay. Students who have not resisted this
temptation have sometimes discovered too late that the topic did not offer the educational opportunities they had hoped for. It is useful to set goals and timetables for the project.

Students and supervisors are expected to meet during the first week of classes in September 2014 to confirm arrangements and begin the study.

Students and supervisors complete and sign the interim progress report together; student submits it to the Arts & Science Director via Program Administrators Shelley Anderson or Rebecca Bishop by 16 January 2015.

In March 2015, students present their work in half-hour sessions, chaired by the Arts & Science Director (5 minutes of intro., 15 minutes of presentation, 10 minutes of discussion), to the Arts & Science community in C-105 (times arranged by Shelley and Rebecca in consultation with students and supervisors). Supervisors are expected to attend the presentation and to provide feedback to their students.

Students should regard these presentations as useful to their learning. They impose some pressure to have background adequately prepared; to be able to justify the choice of the topic, the approach taken to it, and the conclusions drawn; and to be able to answer questions from an audience made up of people with different levels of familiarity with the area. Students can expect feedback from their supervisors.

The purposes of the presentation are to ensure that students are able to describe their study to a multidisciplinary audience and that they are able to make effective oral reports on their work; to provide Arts & Science students with the opportunity to hear about their peers' work; to provide students in Levels I to III with examples of what is expected; and to provide information to the Arts & Science Program on the effectiveness of the opportunities for individual study provided by these courses.

Students are to submit the final document by the last day of classes in term 2 (8 April 2015) to their supervisor. They then submit a final, edited PDF copy (single-spaced) to Shelley or Rebecca by 23 April 2015.

Supervisors submit the student's grade sheet, with commentary on the work done, to the Arts & Science Director via Program Administrators Shelley Anderson or Rebecca Bishop by 23 April 2015 (no extensions possible).

Important Forms and Deadlines for Courses to be taken in 2015-16:

January Planning Sheet: Deadline: 23 January 2015. Students must complete the initial planning sheet, which identifies the proposed topic and possible supervisor(s), and submit it to Shelley or Rebecca in the Arts & Science office by the deadline.

Final Course Plan: Deadline: 6 March 2015. The form that outlines course plans for final approval must be completed by the student and supervisor, signed by the supervisor, and submitted by the student to the Arts & Science Director via Shelley or Rebecca in the Arts & Science office by the deadline.