“The Answer to the Great Question... Of Life, the Universe and Everything... Is...
Forty-two,' said Deep Thought, with infinite majesty and calm” ....
"Forty-two!" yelled Loonquawl. "Is that all you've got to show for seven and a
half million years' work?"
"I checked it very thoroughly," said the computer, "and that quite definitely is the
answer. I think the problem, to be quite honest with you, is that you've never
actually known what the question is."

- Douglas Adams' The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

The goal of this course is to help students become “intellectual ominvores,” individuals who can
recognize and digest knowledge from a multitude of sources and in a range of forms. Recognizing
the diversity of knowledge practices employed over human history helps students develop
interpretational skills, which in turn closes the gap between ancient thinking and our own, and
opens up a world of traditional or non-Western knowledge. To that end, we will be reading major
works in philosophy and literature as well as examining developments in how humans cultivate,
organize and transmit knowledge. The course begins with the rise of symbolic thinking among early
humans and continues until the arrival of modernity with its characteristic habits of thought.

In the first term, we kick off the term with an intellectual puzzle – Plato's seemingly petty
decision to crown the Greek poets with laurels and march them outside the city gates. With this
philosophic oddity in mind, we go on to examine the rise of the modern mind, and consider how the
development of externalized memory and symbolic thinking triggered a change in how we engage
with the world. We then go on to consider how issues such as representation, conflict and love,
story-telling, wisdom and philosophy, help shape our understanding.

We begin our second term with Plato's most famous student, Aristotle, and consider how
his work builds on structured habits of thought, including logic and analysis. The readings then
examine familiar concerns such as nature, law and strategic thinking, finally arriving at a level of
introspection that is associated with modern individualism. Evolving ways of thinking about time,
space and information are given specific consideration, and the course concludes with a selection
of modern readings that combine aesthetic and emotive themes with analytic and scientific thinking
in surprising ways.
At completion of this course students will be ready to:

- Identify and creatively draw upon multiple forms and sources of knowledge across the range of human experience;
- Supplement sharp analytic and critical skills with other forms of wisdom including emotional, social, introspective and aesthetic;
- Discuss the significance of formats, media, and organizational systems to the development of knowledge;
- Use knowledge systems wisely, conscious of each systems' strengths and limitations, and contextualise that knowledge within historical and social settings;
- Generate and communicate ideas effectively across a range of idioms; and
- Ask good questions.

Course Texts

- The majority of your course readings are available as links to online sources, or "pdf" files in the Avenue to Learn site for this course. Please remember that Avenue can sometimes be down, so access the readings well in advance.
- Remaining readings are from the following texts, which have been ordered into the bookstore (see reading list for full bibliographic details).
  - *The Epic of Gilgamesh*
  - Aristophanes, *The Clouds*
  - Sappho, *Stung with Love*
  - Plato, *The Phaedrus*
  - Marcus Aurelius, *The Meditations*
  - Thich Nhat Hahn, *The Heart of Understanding*
- Please note that many of the above texts are available free online from the Guttenberg Project ([http://www.gutenberg.org/](http://www.gutenberg.org/)) or other reputable databases. There are two things to keep in mind concerning the online/Gutenberg option. First, they are generally older versions, and better translations have appeared since. Second, they are sometimes unpaginated, making citations and your own review work more challenging. You can decide which better suits your needs, but research papers require full page citations so keep that in mind. You may also find some of them read aloud at [librivox](http://www.librivox.org).

Background Reading & Sources (Optional)

- Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* (a classic on how to streamline your writing and avoid glaring errors, a key to elegance and accomplished writing).
- Booth, Colomb & William's *The Craft of Research* (helpful in terms of building and communicating a sound argument, and research design).
Assignments

TERM 1

#1 Media Detox assignment: Spend twenty four hours without using ANY written, or digital communications then, guided by a series of supplied questions, write a 2-3pp reflection on the experience and any insights that resulted (5% of grade). Due: Sept. 15, 2015

#2 Tutorial exercises: These activities are designed to improve relevant learning skills with the support of your TA. In addition:
   1) Memorization exercise: Memorize and recite, error-free and with engaging delivery ten lines or more of a poem or speech from a pre-approved selection (2.5% of grade). Due: By arrangement with your TA, but no later than Oct 9, 2015.
   2) Conversation exercise: Meet individually with your TA at least once during the term, and hold a 10-15 minute conversation where YOU pose the questions about readings or assignments in the course. The goal is to ask questions that genuinely puzzle you, or where you need clarification, not to try to outsmart your TA (2.5% of grade). Due: By arrangement with your TA, but no later than Oct 9, 2015.

#3 Midterm test: Short answer format. Please note that there will be 50 minutes of class time allowed for the test, beginning precisely on the half hour and ending at twenty after the hour. Students are advised to arrive on time, and students will not be excused until the time is up (15% of grade). In-class Nov 3, 2015.

#4 Tutorials: Attend tutorials consistently and engage productively with peers both in class and online (5% of grade).

#5 December exam: Essay-question format (20% of grade). To be scheduled during exam period.

TERM 2

#6 Research Design: Develop a research design for your paper based on a set of assigned questions (5% of grade). Due: Feb 9, 2016.

#7 Major paper: Write a 6-8pp (double-spaced) argument-based research paper focused on some relevant theme or issue drawn from the course topics, and referencing at least two course readings (20% of grade). Due: Mar 15, 2016. You also have the option of supplementing your paper with up to 2pp extra material that you think helps shed light on your project, but which takes a different form than a traditional research argument (i.e., artwork, a poem, story, satire, etc.). If the supplementary material is not of your own creation, appropriate citations should be provided.

#8 Tutorials: Attend tutorials consistently and engage productively with peers both in class and online (5% of grade).

#9 Final exam: Essay-question format (20% of grade). To be scheduled during exam period.
OTHER ACTIVITIES

Idea File: You are encouraged to keep a journal or "idea file" to collect ideas from this course, your first year experiences, thoughts on contemporary affairs, random insights, potential research ideas, etc. This is a practice followed by many great thinkers and innovators, and it's an essential habit to develop, because "idea files" are a great place to turn to when developing paper topics. But here's another reason to do it: Personal journals and reflections have proven invaluable as forms of history, yet less and less people keep them, meaning we are at risk of becoming one of the least documented civilizations ever. By committing your thoughts to paper or some other medium, you may become one of the few voices by which future generations learn about our era. How's that for incentive? This will not be collected or graded but is nonetheless encouraged.

Online tutorial discussions: Each week students are invited to post a brief comment on a special section of Avenue to Learn's discussion groups. It's especially helpful if the post is a summary or reflection on the week's readings and lectures, or includes key ideas, rich associations (like movies, pop culture, etc.). When students post on a topic they generally develop a better feel for the material, and better memory of that subject area. Done consistently, this can provide an incredible resource for midterms and exams, and it helps your instructor and TA's get a feel for how material is being received, so we can better help you when tests come around. This is considered part of your tutorial participation.

Evaluation and Expectations

Evaluation
Participatory experiences, including the Media Detox, Memorization exercise, Conversation exercise and Tutorials should:
- Reflect an open, engaged, and attentive mind.
- Demonstrate resourcefulness in self-expression, as well as a willingness to listen or observe.
- Reflect a readiness to engage in creative and collaborative problem-solving as required.
- Reflect a willingness to share one's own insights and learning process, however tentative.

Written assignments, including the Midterm and Exams should:
- Be legible and intelligible.
- Demonstrate engagement with, and mastery of the concepts covered in the course.
- Make rich connections between different issues raised in the course, and apply that learning to relevant problems including everyday experience
- Where appropriate, pose good questions.

The Major Paper should:
- Demonstrate an accomplished writing style, including grammar competency, clear organization and structure, and correct word-usage.
- Show that a student grasps the conceptual issues raised in the course, and that an effort is being made to address these issues constructively.
- Pose a good question and demonstrate knowledge of the material covered by the course.
- Reflect original thought and careful, thorough research and idea development.
Be properly documented (Including a reference list) using a single, consistent well-recognized citation style. I strongly recommend the Chicago in-text style as the best for an interdisciplinary approach. If you use any other citation system you must correctly indicate which one you are using at the end of the paper. I recommend against using software or online programs to autofill your citations, these programs are not designed for serious academic work and are very often wrong. Note: All direct citations and all references to specific or characteristic ideas from a thinker or source must be supported with a page citation.

Conform to standard academic paper format (i.e., paper should be double-spaced, letter-size paper, using a 12-point Times New Roman font, with standard margins, indicating course title, instructor and TA, due date of assignment, student name and student number on cover page, stapled not paperclips or folder, etc. If in doubt, ask your TA).

Any supplementary materials should be clearly identified, and do not need to follow the standard format, beyond full citations.

Expectations

Students are expected to attend scheduled classes, and to arrive prepared to discuss the week’s readings. An environment of mutual respect among students is to be maintained. Repeated absences will be noted and reflected in the grade.

Students are expected to complete the assignments on schedule, except in cases of illness or immediate personal emergency (see MSAF requirements). Please note that coinciding assignments in other courses is not grounds for an extension, so prepare accordingly.

Students are expected to provide legible copies of the assignments. Submission by e-mail is not acceptable unless specifically requested by the instructor or TA.

Assignments are due by 4pm on the day indicated in the syllabus, if they are not handed in during class time. Late penalties of 10% per day (weekends count as one day) applies to work that arrives after the assignment deadline.

Grade appeals can be made no sooner than 24 hours after the work is returned. Assignments returned for grade appeals must be accompanied by a one-page statement setting out the grounds for re-evaluation. If sufficient grounds exist, an assignment will be re-evaluated. Please note, that re-evaluation may also result in a grade being lowered.

E-mail guidelines

E-mail regarding the course should be sent to me via Avenue to Learn. I will be checking this e-mail regularly, although you should always allow several days for a response.

If you have a question, and are thinking of e-mailing myself or the TAs, please take the following steps:
1. First, check the syllabus and reading list – is the answer there?
2. If the answer is not clear from the syllabus or website, ask yourself whether this question can wait until your next tutorial or class meeting, so everyone can benefit from the answer.
3. If it just can’t wait or is not something of general interest, then feel free to e-mail me through Avenue or your TA (by their preferred email method).
4. If I feel your question could also help other students, I may post the question (withholding your name) on the discussion portion of the Avenue website.
5. Please note that only email sent from a McMaster email address will receive a response.
**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, located at: [http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](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.

**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.” Please also see the MSAF statement on our website ([http://artsci.mcmaster.ca/forms-requests](http://artsci.mcmaster.ca/forms-requests)) and direct any questions or concerns to Shelley Anderson or Rebecca Bishop in the Arts & Science Program Office as appropriate.

**Email Contact and Student Responsibility Statement**
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. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of students to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes. Announcements will be made in class and by using the course email distribution list.

**Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities**
Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or email sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.
Sept 8: Introduction, course design and expectations.

Sept 11: How to succeed at POK.

“THE OLD QUARREL” (26x2)


THE RISE OF SYMBOLIC THINKING (38)

 DETOX DUE


ICON/SYMBOL/SIGN (30)

 Also please consult the San Rock Art of South Africa image gallery available online through The Bradshaw Foundation at: http://www.bradshawfoundation.com/south_africa/south_africa_gallery.php.


AGONISM (100)


RITUAL (29)

MASK (115)


MIDTERM & MEME (13)
Nov 3: MIDTERM


STORY (74)


POETRY (88)


WISDOM (40)


PHILOSOPHY (103)


END OF TERM REVIEW
Dec 8: Summary lecture & exam review.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
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<th>AUTHOR/EDITOR</th>
<th>PAGES</th>
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<td><strong>CLOSE ANALYSIS DUE</strong></td>
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<td>MID-TERM REVIEW &amp; RESEARCH/Writing (16)</td>
<td>Feb 2</td>
<td>Midterm review lecture &amp; paper discussion</td>
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INTROSPECTION (44)

ORIENTATION (49)

INFORMATION (47)

SCIENCE (35)
  • MAJOR PAPER DUE

NOTHINGNESS (54)

CITIZEN-SCIENTIST

Apr 1: Course conclusion.
Apr 5: Exam Review.