

**IBH 3BD3
Interpersonal Communication
Fall 2025**

**DeGroote School of Business
McMaster University**

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION

Course Instructor

Dr. Jeff Donison
donisojm@mcmaster.ca
Office: TSH 333
Office Hours: Mondays, 3:00pm-4:20pm

Student TA

Ethan Stollar
stollare@mcmaster.ca

COURSE ELEMENTS

Credit Value: 3	Leadership: Yes	IT skills: No	Global view: Yes
A2L: Yes	Ethics: No	Numeracy: No	Written skills: Yes
Participation: Yes	Innovation: Yes	Group work: Yes	Oral skills: Yes
Evidence-based: Yes	Experiential: Yes	Final Exam: No	Guest speaker(s): No

COURSE INFORMATION

Lectures: Mondays, 4:30pm-6:20pm

Workshops: Wednesdays, 4:30pm-5:20pm

Course Delivery: In-person

Course Description: This course offers an introduction to contemporary interpersonal communication theories and research. Topics include: small group communication, persuasive communication, argumentation strategies, conflict resolution and computer mediated, intercultural, international and political communication.

We ask the following questions: How do humans communicate with one another? What is the basis for the perceptions we share, and the knowledge that enables us to use language, visuals, and sound to

transmit messages and understand one another? How do humans produce and interpret messages communicated through mass media and small groups, or in mediated, online communities?

Students will examine fundamental systems of representation, identify the communicative differences between verbal and nonverbal behaviours, and explore the dynamics of persuasion and power. The course will enhance skills in writing and public speaking while fostering effective intercultural communication and listening practices. This course is designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary for successful interactions in various academic, professional, and personal contexts. Whether you are pursuing a career in communication, business, education, or simply seeking to enhance your interpersonal skills in everyday life, this course will offer valuable insights and practical applications.

MEETING DETAILS

Lectures:

Lectures will not be recorded. Only in special circumstances will the professor record a lecture (e.g., if they are sick). This course relies heavily on participation in a small-classroom environment, so students are expected to attend every week. Please do not hesitate to attend if you are shy or have fears speaking publicly. This course is meant to be a fun and informative experience for students who are all at the same learning stages of academic research and writing. Students are encouraged to share their unique viewpoints with each other about interpersonal communication we engage with in class and in the readings. Let's all strive to support each other throughout this course!

Lecture Environment – Respect, Collaboration, Diversity:

At McMaster University, an inclusive community is one in which there is real, visible and meaningful representation of the diversity evident in the wider community at all levels and in all constituencies on campus (faculty, staff, students, administration). It is a community in which all members feel safe and empowered, valued and respected for their contributions to the shared purposes of the University; research and education excellence. It is a community where the rights of all individuals and groups are protected. Inclusion occurs when an organization provides equitable access to its services, benefits and opportunities, when systems and structures facilitate full participation by all members and where members are treated equitably and fairly and are recognized for their contributions.

The key ingredients are equitable access, participation (especially in decision-making processes) and equal attention to the needs and aspirations of all. In seeking to build an inclusive community with a shared purpose, McMaster University strives to embody these values:

A Respectful Community: is one where freedom of expression, belief, and diversity of knowledge occur in a framework of dignity, respect, and public engagement.

A Collaborative Community: is one where participants jointly move the academic vision forward in respectful and non-confrontational ways, having regard for personal and collective safety and well-being.

A Diverse Community: is one that enables us to learn from our differences and that affirms our shared accountability for achieving access, equity, and meaningful inclusion of under-represented groups at all levels of the campus community.

IMPORTANT LINKS

- [Mosaic](#)
- [Avenue to Learn](#)
- [Student Accessibility Services - Accommodations](#)
- [McMaster University Library](#)

Writing Support:

Your ability to write clearly and with purpose is crucial to your academic success. Because the writing process takes time and expectations vary across disciplines (and from one instructor to another), it is important to manage this process carefully. The following guidelines can help you do that:

1. Start early – The writing process involves several steps: prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. You will do your best work when you follow all the steps. Prewriting involves thinking about what you've learned on a topic, often assisted by note-taking, so that your reflections become your writing.
2. Read the instructions – Every assignment has a specific purpose, audience, length, and format. Pay close attention to these specifications and revisit them as you work on the assignment.
3. Seek support – Writing is hard work, but you are not alone. Your instructor is there to help you. Don't be afraid to ask for guidance or drop in during office hours.
4. Put in the time – Writing is a valuable skill, and any time spent developing your writing ability will contribute to your success, both in academic and professional careers.
5. Visit the Student Success Centre for writing tutors who will work with you at any stage of the writing process. Writing tutors will engage you in conversation about your writing and help you develop your skills in alignment with assignment expectations and course objectives.

Find McMaster University's writing support at <https://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/writing-and-academic-skills/appointments/>

[Writing and Academic Skills](#)

[Indigenous Student Services](#)

[International Student Services](#)

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course students will be able to:

1. **Explain and apply key theories of interpersonal communication:** Identify foundational concepts of verbal, nonverbal, intercultural, and mediated communication.
2. **Analyze rhetorical strategies and persuasive communication techniques:** Deconstruct speeches, media texts, and everyday discourse using rhetorical frameworks.
3. **Differentiate between verbal and nonverbal communication processes:** Assess the role of body language, tone, and other nonverbal cues in meaning-making.
4. **Develop and deliver effective public communication:** Produce clear, structured, and engaging oral presentations tailored to specific audiences using digital tools.
5. **Apply conflict resolution strategies to real-world scenarios:** Evaluate sources of interpersonal and group conflict and employ suitable conflict management techniques.
6. **Demonstrate intercultural and international communication competence:** Recognize cultural differences in communication styles, listening practices, and meaning-making.
7. **Critically engage with digital and mass-mediated communication:** Analyze the role of journalism, misinformation, and algorithmic mediation in shaping public discourse.
8. **Practice ethical and collaborative communication:** Work effectively in groups to plan, research, and present communication projects while holding each other accountable.

REQUIRED MATERIALS AND TEXTS

This course has no required textbook. All readings for this course are freely available on Avenue to Learn (A2L), through the McMaster Libraries website, or publicly online.

Case studies and examples will be provided on A2L when applicable. No additional materials or fees are required.

CLASS FORMAT

This course meets in person for three hours each week.

Mondays: a 2-hour lecture where we introduce course content.

Wednesdays: typically a 1-hour workshop where we apply content we learned in Monday's lecture to individual and small group activities. These sessions offer time for students to work on assignments individually and with their groups (depending on the type of assignment). Weeks 2 and 5 will be "mini lectures" rather than workshops.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Component	Weight	Due Date
Assignment 1 – Rhetorical Analysis (Group – Audiovisual Recording)	15%	Week 5 (Oct 6)
Midterm Test	22.5%	Week 6 (Oct 21)
Assignment 2 – Conflict Management Assessment (Individual)	17.5%	Week 7 (Oct 31)
Assignment 3A – Story Circle Presentation (Group – In-Class)	10%	Week 11 (Nov 24 – regardless of presentation date)
Assignment 3B – Storytelling Analysis (Individual)	20%	Week 12 (Dec 3)
Workshop Participation	15%	Wednesdays (Sept 10 – Nov 26)

ASSESSMENTS

Assignment 1: Rhetorical Analysis (15%) – Monday October 6 (11:59pm)

For this assignment, your group will listen/watch a public speech and analyze it using communication concepts introduced in our course. This assignment has a set of questions you are going to answer through a video recording. This video submission is meant to challenge each group's thinking about how communicating verbally requires an adjustment from communicating through writing, in both speech and nonverbal behaviour. This video recording requires the use of visuals (e.g., PowerPoint) to help communicate your answers. Each group will submit one video recording on A2L. Students will also be individually submitting a self- and peer-evaluation of the group work to ensure every group member is held accountable for their efforts. This peer-evaluation will be anonymous to your group members, only the professor will read it.

Midterm Test (22.5%) – Monday Oct 20 (4:30pm – 6pm IN CLASS)

We will be having an IN-PERSON midterm test during the October 20th lecture. The test will cover content from Weeks 1-5 in multiple choice and short answer format. Students are required to write on this date (either in the lecture hall or in an accommodated setting). A test study guide will be provided a few weeks before the test with “key terms” to study. This midterm test will be 1.5 hours in length during our regularly scheduled Monday class time at 4:30pm.

Assignment 2: Conflict Management Assessment (17.5%) – Friday Oct 31 (11:59pm)

For this assignment, you are going to individually watch one of the preselected pair of film/tv scenes demonstrating conflict in the workplace and analyze them using management strategies introduced in our course. Each student is submitting their own writeup on A2L.

Assignment 3A: Story Circle Presentation (10%) – Monday Nov 24 – Monday Dec 1 (In-Class)

For this assignment, you will work in a group to develop and perform a story circle presentation that uses storytelling as a tool for communication. Working together, you will either tell individual connected stories or create a collective narrative that promotes a person, organization, or product. The goal is to demonstrate how storytelling fosters empathy, builds interpersonal understanding, and can persuade an audience to act. Each group must include one visual or multimedia element, and ensure that all members actively participate. The presentation will be 10 minutes. This collaborative project emphasizes creativity, oral communication, and group dynamics while laying the foundation for your individual analysis in Assignment 3B.

Assignment 3B: Storytelling Analysis (20%) – Wednesday Dec 3 (11:59pm)

This assignment builds directly on your group’s story circle presentation in Assignment 3A. Rather than retelling your group’s story, you will critically evaluate it as a form of storytelling and compare it with another storytelling campaign, organization, or figure. Your paper must apply course concepts to analyze your group’s narrative choices, considering how effectively the story fostered empathy, persuasion, or understanding. You will then compare your group’s storytelling strategies with those of another storytelling example, identifying similarities, differences, and relative effectiveness. To support your analysis, you must reference course readings linked to your chosen concepts. This assignment emphasizes academic analysis, application of theory, and critical reflection on the power and limits of storytelling in interpersonal communication.

Workshop Participation (15%) – Every Wednesday (4:30pm – 5:30pm IN CLASS)

You will be graded each Wednesday for your participation in workshop activities and discussions. The goal of this assessment is to encourage students to apply course concepts while inviting diverse ideas and perspectives so that we can learn together. This grade will essentially be a pass/fail each week for a total of 15% across the semester (11 Wednesday workshops). Students will also be assessed on their feedback/participation to other group storytelling presentations in our final classes.

COURSE SCHEDULE

IMPORTANT: *All weekly readings should be completed BEFORE their assigned classes. If you can’t complete all the readings for the week, try to arrive having read at least one.*

Week	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments/Tests
1A	Mon. Sept 8	Introducing Interpersonal Communication - Lecture	- No readings	
1B	Wed. Sept 10	Introducing Interpersonal Communication - Workshop		

2A	Mon. Sept 15	Systems of Representation - Lecture	- Hall (2013). "The Work of Representation? (Sections 1-1.3)" (pp. 1-10) - Dixon (2019). "Semiotics: Roland Barthes" (pp. 1-15)	
2B	Wed. Sept 17	Verbal vs. Non-Verbal Communication - Mini Lecture	- Guerrero (2014). "Interpersonal Functions of Nonverbal Communication" (pp. 53-69)	
3A	Mon. Sept 22	Power and Persuasion - Lecture	- Herrick (2016). "An Overview of Rhetoric" (pp. 1-23)	
3B	Wed. Sept 24	Power and Persuasion - Workshop	- Poggi (2023). "Persuasive Discourse" (pp. 40-50)	
4A	Mon. Sept 29	Writing for Public Speaking - Lecture	- Hall (2024). "Public Speaking, Presenting, and Performing" (pp. 150-188)	
4B	Wed. Oct 1	Writing for Public Speaking - Workshop	- King Jr. (1963). "I have a Dream" (link on A2L)	
5A	Mon. Oct 6	Intercultural Communication and Listening - Lecture	- Ting-Tooney & Chung (2012). "What is Intercultural Communication Flexibility" (pp. 23-37) - Beall (2010). "Perspectives on Intercultural Listening" (pp. 225-236)	Assignment 1 DUE: Rhetorical Analysis (15%) – MONDAY OCTOBER 6 (11:59pm)
5B	Wed. Oct 8	Conflict Management - Mini Lecture	- Hynes (2023). "Strategies for Managing Conflict" (pp. 98-109)	
XX	Mon. Oct 13	NO CLASS - READING WEEK	- No readings	
XX	Wed. Oct 15	NO CLASS - READING WEEK		

6A	Mon. Oct 20	Midterm	- No readings	MIDTERM TEST (22.5%) – MONDAY OCTOBER 20 (4:30- 6pm)
6B	Wed. Oct 22	Intercultural Communication and Listening; Conflict Management Workshop		
7A	Mon. Oct 27	(Digital) Storytelling Lecture	- Couldry, N. (2008). Mediatization or Mediation? Alternative Understandings of the Emergent Space of Digital Storytelling (pp. 373-391).	Assignment 2 DUE: Conflict Management Assessment (17.5%) – FRIDAY OCTOBER 31 (11:59pm)
7B	Wed. Oct 29	(Digital) Storytelling Workshop	- Archibald & Xiem (2018). Indigenous Storytelling (pp. 233- 241). <u>Listening:</u> - First Nations Experiences. <i>Residential Schools</i> (Historica Canada – on A2L)	
8A	Mon. Nov 3	Podcasting Lecture	- McHugh (2022). Creating a Hit Narrative Podcast, Part 1 (pp. 156-182).	
8B	Wed. Nov 5	Podcasting Workshop	<u>Listening:</u> - Episode 1: Knowing Phoebe. <i>Phoebe’s Fall</i> (The Age – on A2L).	
9A	Mon. Nov 10	Social Media Communication Lecture	- Jensen & Helles (2017). “Speaking to the System: Social Media and Many-to-One Communication” (pp. 16- 24).	
9B	Wed. Nov 12	Social Media Communication Workshop	- Schlosser (2020). “Self-Disclosure Versus	

			Self-Presentation on Social Media” (pp. 1-6).	
10A	Mon. Nov 17	Journalistic Communication (and Fake News) - Lecture	- McCombs & Shaw (1972). “The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media” (pp. 176-187).	
10B	Wed. Nov 19	Assignment 3 Workshop	- Cooke (2017). “Posttruth, Truthiness, and Alternative Facts” (pp. 211-221)	
11A	Mon. Nov 24	Storytelling Class Presentations - Pt. 1	- No readings	Assignment 3A DUE: Story Circle Presentation Visuals (10%) – MONDAY NOVEMBER 24 (3pm) – every group Day 1 - Assigned groups will present.
11B	Wed. Nov 26	Storytelling Class Presentations - Pt. 2		Day 2 Assigned groups will present
12A	Mon. Dec 1	Storytelling Class Presentations - Pt. 3	- No readings	Day 3 Assigned groups will present
12B	Wed. Dec 3	NO CLASS		Assignment 3B DUE: Storytelling Analysis (20%) – WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 3 (11:59pm) - everyone

NOTE:

Any important announcements, including changes in due dates, will be announced in-class and posted on our course website.

1. **Assignment 1: Rhetorical Analysis – Monday October 6 (11:59pm)**
2. **Assignment 2: Conflict Management Assessment – Friday October 31 (11:59pm)**
- 3A. **Assignment 3A: Story Circle Presentation – Monday November 24 – Monday December 1**
- 3B. **Assignment 3B: Storytelling Analysis – Wednesday December 3 (11:59pm)**

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments will be submitted online through Avenue to Learn in doc or docx format. Folders will be made available for each assignment.

Assignments that are not submitted by their appropriate due dates and times will lose 5% per day. After five days, deductions will stop accumulating. Students can contact the professor to ask for extensions. Assignments will only be accepted up until the next assignment is due. Extensions will be granted within reason when requested with sufficient notice. If students have concerns about assignments or missing work, they should contact the professor to assess alternative options. Students will have received at least 55% of their course grade by the final course drop date on November 21. Students who submit work late because of MSAF or other accommodations may not receive feedback by this date.

COMMUNICATION, FEEDBACK, AND REGRADE POLICY

The professor will contact students through Avenue to Learn when course information needs to be shared. Important course information will also be shared during lectures. If students have questions, they should contact the professor. Students are welcome to ask questions to the professor before, during, and after lectures. Please let them know if there are any concerns about course material or administrative items (in whatever capacity students feel comfortable sharing).

The following items will be posted on our A2L:

- Lecture slides
- Readings
- Multimedia materials
- Assignment instructions
- Assignment folders
- Assignment feedback
- Grades
- Course announcements

Regrade Policy

A student who believes that their assignment has been unfairly graded may ask the professor or TA who graded their work for re-evaluation. The student must email the professor about interest in re-evaluation after the "buffer period."

- Buffer period: students are unable to contact the teaching team with regrade requests until 48 hours after the release of grades. This allows students to think about their assignments deeply.

Students have 10 days from the end of the buffer period (two days after grade return) to inquire about the grade. For example, should the work be returned or the grade be made available October 10, the student has from October 12 (two days after buffer period) until October 22 (ten days later) to inquire in writing and start the re-grading process. The professor or TA (depending on who graded the assessment) will acknowledge receipt of a student request for re-grading within 3-working days, and decisions will be provided in a timely fashion.

The student must attach a 1-page written explanation (doc or pdf) detailing why they believe the work was unfairly/incorrectly graded, pointing to specific evidence in their assignment that justifies their reasoning. If the professor did not do the grading, they will provide the student with the TA grader's email address or forward the email to the TA. The TA grader will assess the student's rationale alongside the original assignment submission and will communicate their decision to the student via email with explanation. If a student is unsatisfied with the grader's re-evaluation, it can be sent to the professor for a final decision. **If a re-grading is granted by the professor, the student must accept the professor's mark as the new mark, whether it goes up or down or remains the same.** Continuing with the regrade or the appeal means the student accepts this condition of potential grade change.

REQUESTING RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC WORK

Inform the professor if you will be missing class. Otherwise, students are expected to attend lecture each week to follow along with the rest of the class. If students require accommodation for lectures, assignments, the course website, etc., they are strongly encouraged to contact the professor as soon as possible to ensure the appropriate supports are given. Students are not required to reveal the cause of their disability, symptoms, or treatment for their approved accommodations to be implemented.

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](#)" and the link below:

<http://ug.degroot.mcmaster.ca/forms-and-resources/missed-course-work-policy/>

GENERATIVE AI

USE PROHIBITED

Students are not permitted to use generative AI in IBH 3BD3. In alignment with McMaster academic integrity policy, it "shall be an offence knowingly to ... submit academic work for assessment that was purchased or acquired from another source". This includes work created by generative AI tools. Also state in the policy is the following, "Contract Cheating is the act of "outsourcing of student work to third parties" (Lancaster & Clarke, 2016, p. 639) with or without payment." Using Generative AI tools is a form of contract cheating. Charges of academic dishonesty will be brought forward to the Office of Academic Integrity.

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. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

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. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three 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.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

AUTHENTICITY/PLAGIARISM DETECTION

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. Avenue to Learn, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

COURSES WITH AN ON-LINE ELEMENT

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn, LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities policy.

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 should submit their request to their Faculty 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.

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.

The recording of lectures, workshops, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES

The University reserves the right to 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, Avenue to Learn and/or McMaster email.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COURSE POLICIES

Your enrolment in IBH 3BD3 will be considered an implicit acknowledgement of the course policies outlined above, or of any other that may be announced during lecture and/or on A2L. **It is your responsibility to read this course outline, to familiarize yourself with the course policies and to act accordingly.** Lack of awareness of the course policies **cannot be invoked** at any point during this course for failure to meet them. It is your responsibility to ask for clarification on any policies that you do not understand.