

**Commerce 2BC3
Human Resource Management and Labour Relations
Winter 2026 Course Outline**

**Human Resources & Management Area
DeGroote School of Business
McMaster University**

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course introduces students to core concepts and issues within the study of human resources and labour relations. These fields essentially deal with the management and regulation of work. We will explore more macro dynamics that influence how people are managed and regulated in the workplace, as well as more micro dynamics which refer to the day-to-day realities of people management in organizations. Students will learn about core HR functions, basic principles of unions and collective bargaining, and the role of Canadian labour law in workplace dynamics. At the heart of this course are how power, conflict, and intersectionality impact people management in practice.

INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Dr. Sean O'Brady
Instructor

Email: obradys@mcmaster.ca, Office: DSB 406
Office Hours: By appointment

C02	Friday, In-Class Tutorial: 4:30pm-5:20pm Wednesday, Lecture: 4:30pm-6:20pm
C03	Wednesday, In-Class Tutorial: 12:30pm-1:20pm Monday, Lecture: 12:30pm-2:20pm
C04	Thursday, In-Class Tutorial: 2:30pm-3:20pm Tuesday, Lecture: 2:30pm-4:20pm
C05	Thursday, In-Class Tutorial: 10:30am-11:20am Tuesday, Lecture: 10:30am-12:20pm
C06	Thursday, In-Class Tutorial: 8:30am-9:20am Tuesday, Lecture: 8:30am-10:20am

Teaching Assistants: Toli Amare, Andrew Galatsan, Abishek Roy, Jian Yingjie

COURSE ELEMENTS

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

COURSE INFORMATION

Lectures: Listed above

Tutorials: None

Course Delivery Mode: In person

Course Description: *A survey of the core concepts and issues within the study of human resources and labour relations. Students will critically appraise how power, conflict, and intersectionality matter to the management and regulation of employment.*

IMPORTANT LINKS

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

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have:

- Obtained a critical understanding of human resource management, including its core functions and challenges facing HR professionals in a turbulent environment
- Developed an appreciation for labour relations, both as a tool for regulating conflict in the workplace and for its societal outcomes
- Understood core trends in HR practices and labour relations in Canada
- Recognized the importance of values and ethics to human resource management and labour relations
- Gained practical skills in human resource management and labour relations, acquired by participating in class exercises and group discussions

COURSE MATERIALS AND TEXTS

Barnetson, B., & Foster, J. (2024). The practice of human resource management in Canada. AU Press. <https://doi.org/10.15215/aupress/9781771994255.01>.

Additional readings will be made available on Avenue to Learn.

Course textbook and additional readings are open access resources, which are free for students.

CLASS FORMAT

The class will consist of weekly 2-hour in-person meetings, and 1-hour in-tutorial sessions. Class time will be dedicated to lectures, exercises, and group discussions.

COURSE EVALUATION

Missed tests/exams will receive a grade of zero unless the student has submitted and been approved for a Notification of Absence or MSAF-AR. Late assignments will be penalized 10% for each day they are late. Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

EVALUATION

GRADE COMPONENT	WEIGHT	DESCRIPTION
In-Tutorial Activities	20%	Participation in graded in-tutorial activities
Midterm	35%	Completion of a scheduled midterm exam
Final Exam	45%	Completion of a final cumulative exam scheduled in the exam period

COURSE OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

In-Tutorial Activities

Participation in the in-tutorial activities is worth 20% of your final grade. Students are expected to attend the tutorials, to participate in the activities, and to submit deliverables to the teaching assistant responsible for the tutorial. Where needed, instructions will be provided on A2L.

Midterm

The midterm covers material from sessions 1-5 and is worth 35% of your final grade.

Final Exam

The final exam is cumulative and covers material from all sessions and is worth 45% of your final grade.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Late assignments will be penalized 10% for each day they are late.

COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

Students who wish to correspond with instructors or TAs directly via email must send messages that originate from their official McMaster University email account. This protects the confidentiality and sensitivity of information as well as confirms the identity of the student. Emails regarding course issues should NOT be sent to the Area Administrative Assistants. All students must receive feedback regarding their progress prior to the final date by which a student may cancel the course without failure by default.

- *For Level 1 and Level 2 courses, this feedback must equal a minimum of 20% of the final grade.*
- *For Level 3 courses and above, this feedback must equal a minimum of 10% of the final grade.*

Instructors may solicit feedback via an informal course review with students by Week #4 to allow time for modifications in curriculum delivery.

Students who have concerns about the course content, evaluation methods, or delivery should first reach out to the course instructor. If your concern remains unresolved after speaking with the instructor, you may then reach out to the relevant Area Chair for further consideration.

REQUESTING RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC WORK

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.degroote.mcmaster.ca/forms-and-resources/missed-course-work-policy/>

* Non-Commerce students must follow the Missed Course Work protocols outlined by their home faculty and Program Office.

COURSE MODIFICATION

From time to time there may be a need to remove/add topics or to change the schedule or the delivery format. If these are necessary, you will be given as much advance notice as possible.

GENERATIVE AI

USE PROHIBITED

Students are not permitted to use generative AI in this course. 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](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

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. A2L, 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. email, Avenue to Learn (A2L), web pages, TopHat, MS Teams, 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.

ONLINE PROCTORING

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

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, tutorials, 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, A2L and/or McMaster email.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COURSE POLICIES

Your enrolment in Commerce 2BC3 will be considered to be 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.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Commerce 2BC3 Human Resource Management and Labour Relations Winter 2026 Course Lecture Schedule

WEEK	DATE	ASSIGNMENT
Session 1 <i>Introduction to HRM and labour relations</i>	Week Jan. 5-9	Readings: Barnetson, B., & Foster, J. (2024). <i>The Practice of Human Resource Management in Canada</i> . Athabasca University Press. (Chapter 1) Schenk, C. (2014). Unions and Democracy. Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives. https://www.policyalternatives.ca/wp-content/uploads/attachments/unions_and_democracy.pdf .
Session 2 <i>Employment Law</i>	Week Jan. 12-16	Readings: Barnetson, B., & Foster, J. (2024). <i>The Practice of Human Resource Management in Canada</i> . Athabasca University Press. (Chapter 2) Doorey, D. (2025). 'The Requirements for Notice of Termination and Just Cause in Canadian Employment Law'. OnLabor. https://onlabor.org/the-requirements-for-notice-of-termination-and-just-cause-in-canadian-employment-law/ . McKenzie-Sutter, H. (2022). 'Ontario's right to disconnect law too vague to help work-life balance, experts say'. CBC. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ont-labour-disconnect-1.6494010 .
Session 3 <i>Workflow, job analysis, and job design</i>	Week Jan. 19-23	Readings: Barnetson, B., & Foster, J. (2024). <i>The Practice of Human Resource Management in Canada</i> . Athabasca University Press. (Chapter 3) Parker, S.K., Andrei, D. & Van den Broeck, A. (2019b) Why managers design jobs to be more boring than they need to be. Harvard Business Review Digital Articles, 2–8.
Session 4 <i>HR strategy, planning, and recruitment</i>	Week Jan. 26-30	Readings: Barnetson, B., & Foster, J. (2024). <i>The Practice of Human Resource Management in Canada</i> . Athabasca University Press. (Chapters 4 and 5) Mattar, P. (2025). DEI Was Always Flawed, but the Backlash Is Truly Alarming. <i>The Walrus</i> . Found at: https://thewalrus.ca/dei-was-always-flawed-but-the-backlash-is-truly-alarming/ .
Session 5 <i>Selection and training</i>	Week Feb. 2-6	Readings: Barnetson, B., & Foster, J. (2024). <i>The Practice of Human Resource Management in Canada</i> . Athabasca University Press. (Chapters 6 and 7) Seale, A. (2025). AI is changing hiring, candidates are adapting. <i>GlobeandMail</i> . Found at: https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-ai-is-changing-hiring-candidates-are-adapting/ .

		Ferrazzi, K. (2025) The AI Recruitment Takeover: Redefining Hiring In The Digital Age. Forbes. Found at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/keithferrazzi/2025/03/27/the-ai-recruitment-takeover-redefining-hiring-in-the-digital-age/ .
	Week Feb. 9-13	<i>Exam Week/Personal Study Session</i>
	Week Feb. 16-20	Midterm recess
Session 6 <i>Wages and benefits</i>	Week Feb. 23-27	<p>Readings: Barnetson, B., & Foster, J. (2024). <i>The Practice of Human Resource Management in Canada</i>. Athabasca University Press. (Chapter 8)</p> <p>Sandi, et al. (2025). What the 2025 living wage rates reveal. Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives. Found at: https://www.policyalternatives.ca/news-research/what-the-2025-living-wage-rates-reveal/.</p>
Session 7 <i>Performance management, discipline, and termination</i>	Week Mar. 2-6	<p>Readings: Barnetson, B., & Foster, J. (2024). <i>The Practice of Human Resource Management in Canada</i>. Athabasca University Press. (Chapter 9)</p> <p>Wilson, J. (2023). Are employers doing enough to manage workplace stress? HR Reporter. Found at: https://www.hrreporter.com/focus-areas/leadership-succession-planning/are-employers-doing-enough-to-manage-workplace-stress/377850.</p>
Session 8 <i>Unions and collective bargaining</i>	Week Mar. 9-13	<p>Readings: Barnetson, B., & Foster, J. (2024). <i>The Practice of Human Resource Management in Canada</i>. Athabasca University Press. (Chapter 10)</p> <p>Subramaniam, V. (2025). Air Canada flight attendants scored a big win. Don't expect the same for other unions. <i>GlobeandMail</i>. Found at: https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-air-canada-flight-attendants-labour-movement-unions/.</p>
Session 9 <i>Union decline and revitalization</i>	Week Mar. 16-20	<p>Readings: Hudson et al. (2025). The case for pro-union public policy. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Found at: https://www.policyalternatives.ca/news-research/the-case-for-pro-union-public-policy-unionization-and-well-being-in-canadian-provinces/.</p> <p>Angus Reid. (2023). Union members boost the benefits of organized labour, but almost 40% say membership costs exceed gains. Found at: https://angusreid.org/unions-strike-labour-canada-ndp-conservatives-liberals/.</p> <p>Doorey, D., & Stanford, J. (2023). Union Density Lowers the Income Share Going to the Top 1%. Found at: https://jacobin.com/2023/10/union-density-wealth-income-inequality-collective-bargaining.</p> <p>O'Brady, S. (2021). What Canada can learn from Sweden about creating middle-class retail jobs. The Conversation. Found at: https://theconversation.com/what-canada-can-learn-from-sweden-about-creating-middle-class-retail-jobs-162486.</p>

		Saba, R. (2024). Unions face uphill battle organizing Amazon warehouses in Canada, experts say. <i>GlobeandMail</i> . Found at: https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-unions-face-uphill-battle-organizing-amazon-warehouses-in-canada/ .
Session 10 <i>International HRM and employment relations</i>	Week Mar. 23-27	Readings: Lucio, M. M. (2013). <i>International Human Resource Management: An Employment Relations Perspective</i> (Chapters 1, 3, and 13). Vernon, E. (2024). "Bananas Shouldn't Be So Cheap". <i>Vision Magazine</i> . Found at: https://northamerica.visionmagazine.com/bananas-shouldnt-be-so-cheap/ .
Session 11 Q&A	Week Mar. 30- Apr.3	<u>Q&A</u>
	Week Apr.6-7	Study break or make-up class