

IBH 4AB6/B and 4CE3 – Community Engaged Capstone

Winter 2025

Teaching Team:

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Office Hours: In-person – CNH 325 Wednesdays 2:30-3:30 by appointment
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Class Time

Wednesdays, 11:30-2:20 pm

Course Description

This course aims to help you build knowledge of Hamilton as a community, and both express and develop your skills in community engaged research and activism. This class is built around semester-long reciprocal research projects conducted with our various community partners. The projects in this course require you to integrate your business and humanities skills. Thus, on multiple levels, this course gives us the chance to reflect on the integration of business and humanities across your degree.

Course Objectives and Learning Goals

- Build knowledge of Hamilton as a community, as well as the best practices of activism and community engagement within specific environments
- Unify the functional knowledge you gained during this program, such as social entrepreneurship and community engagement and provide you with a working knowledge of how community-focused organizations function on many different levels
- Understand and articulate the principles, ethics, and core attitudes related to community participation as defined in McMaster's Principles of Community Engagement
- Reflect on the integration of business and humanities in this course and across your degree
- Develop skills for effective community engagement including the following:
 - Effective and purposeful communication
 - Observation, analysis, and primary and secondary research skills
 - Reflexive assessment
 - Collaboration in planning and implementation of projects
 - Conflict resolution

Course Materials and Things to Purchase

There are no required texts to purchase for this class. Readings are provided through A2L.

Community Partners & Projects

This year we have 6 community partners and 9 projects. You will have choice in which project you work on, and we encourage you to make your selection based on the skills, commitment, and experience you can bring to support the project's success.

Project #1 – Climate Tech Startup Funding Strategy

- Partner: MION Forest
- Summary: This group will identify and apply for grants that support cross-border climate innovation.
- Deliverables: Grant Funding strategy report and draft grant application materials.

Project #2 – Climate Tech Startup Pilot Operations Strategy

- Partner: MION Forest
- Summary: This group will act as an operations team to build the **"Spring Deployment Playbook"** that allows us to execute “Spring Planting Sprints” in May and June.
- Deliverables: Operations, Management, and Marketing Strategies report.

Project #3 – Interdisciplinary Museum Program Expansion

- Partner: McMaster Museum of Art and the Department of Family Medicine
- Summary: The Art of Seeing Program has been successful for over 15 years in training physicians and students locally. They are seeking opportunities to expand the program nationally at the same time that some of the key individuals are retiring.
- Deliverables: Comprehensive strategic report.

Project #4 – Interdisciplinary Museum Program Branding

- Partner: McMaster Museum of Art and the Department of Family Medicine
- Summary: The Art of Seeing Program has been successful for over 15 years in training physicians and students locally. How can it align with the McMaster brand and find its niche in current markets?
- Deliverables: Branding and positioning report.

Project #5 – Inclusive, Disability-Affirming Children’s Stories: Market Research and Strategy

- Partner: Rainbow Junction
- Summary: Local author and businessperson Angie Butt is developing her line of children’s books and resources as a support for families with children with disabilities and for increasing representation of children with disabilities in the wider children’s book market.
- Deliverables: Market research and strategy report.

Project #6 – Inclusive, Disability-Affirming Children’s Stories: Ethical + Sustainable Business Models

- Partner: Rainbow Junction
- Summary: Advising Rainbow Junction on successful business models for the line of children’s books and resources. How can this business reflect the values espoused by the books and characters?
- Deliverables: Business model options and recommendations report.

Project #7 – Municipal preparedness plans for rapid population influxes

- Partner: CityLab: The City of Hamilton and Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council
- Summary: This project shall undertake research and analysis to provide information on the municipal requirements that the City of Hamilton should consider to develop a plan for future rapid population influxes due to world events.
- Deliverables: Summary document, Infographic.

Project #8 – Community Benefits Protocol development for the City of Hamilton

- Partner: CityLab: The City of Hamilton and Hamilton Community Benefits Network
- Summary: Students will analyze survey results, assist with a few engagement sessions, and compile “What We Heard” reports based on community input. The work builds on an internal review of existing City initiatives completed by the Fall 2025 Semester in Residence cohort and offers an opportunity to contribute directly to shaping inclusive, community-focused policies.
- Deliverables: Community engagement summary reports

Project #9 – Increasing Youth Voter Turnout

- Partner: CityLab: The City of Hamilton and Healthy and Safe Communities
- Summary: There is a general decline in voter turnout, particularly among the youth population. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the City of Hamilton is collaborating on this project to undertake research to review ways to increase youth voter turnout.
- Deliverables: Summary document, Infographic

Assignments and Evaluations

Detailed explanations of all assignments will be provided on Avenue to Learn.

1. Project Bid Assignment, Jan. 21:10%
2. Project Plan by Group, Feb. 4: 10%
3. Midpoint Project Submission, Feb. 24: 15%
4. Final Project Presentation, Apr. 1: 20%
5. Final Project Report, Apr. 1: 20%
6. IBH Pillar Activity reflection, date TBA: 10%
7. Final reflection, April 10:15%

Late Work Policy

We do not have late penalties in this class, but we do have firm due dates and there are consequences for work that is turned in after those deadlines. Our overall policy is that we are committed to treating each other as human beings with complex demanding lives. We are prepared to be flexible, but we need to be responsible to each other within that flexibility. If you are having trouble or getting behind, talk to us. Learning to communicate clearly about our needs and expectations is an important part of our evolution as scholars and as people. We can help. We know the university policies and procedures that can be turned to your benefit. We all need help sometimes.

All individual assignments (*with the exception of Assignment #1, which has a tight turnaround*) have a one week grade period. If you cannot complete your assignment on time, then you have one week after the due date to complete the work with no questions asked. We assume you are working away and managing your own time. If the work is not in one week after the due date, then you need to be in touch with Dr. Balcom, to explain what is going on and make a plan.

Group projects are more complicated. In a group project, you are responsible to your group members and your community partners to complete the work as scheduled. If you are struggling or behind as an individual, you need to let your group know. If the problem is bigger

than can be handled inside the group, then go to your teaching team support or Dr. Balcom. The same basic principles – treat each other as humans in a difficult situation - apply, but it just is more complicated to arrange for later submission of work when your teammates and your community partners are relying on you. Just stay in touch.

How do we assess writing in your assignments?

In general terms, you should know that when we grade your written assignments, we pay attention to your analytical and factual content, and also to the quality of your written expression. The production of clear, technically proficient and well-organized prose is an essential skill that you need to work on and refine during your time at McMaster.

You are welcome to meet with the teaching team to discuss improving your writing, but we also encourage you to use other resources on campus available through the Student Success Centre:

<https://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/academic-skills/> You might also explore the online tool Grammarly, which will point out errors in your prose and suggest corrections. You can access a free version of Grammarly at <https://www.grammarly.com/>.

In your individual assignments in this class, it is always acceptable to write in the first person when that approach is appropriate to the story you are conveying and the argument you are making. However, and as we will discuss in class, writing in the first person is NOT a substitute for making arguments without evidence and examples

Your community partner may specify format and approach to writing in your deliverables. For example, in all projects, literature reviews and environmental scans should be written in plain language (vs. academic speak). We will talk about this a class workshop.

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 stated 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.

Use of Generative AI in Project deliverables for Community Partners

You will need to have an explicit conversation with your community partner about the parameters for using or not using Generative AI tools in work in project deliverables which the partner may further distribute. Workplaces and organizations are developing their own guidelines, and you will need to follow. If you are using Generative AI (after consultation with your partner) then our rules about citation will apply.

Citations

Business academics use Chicago Style (Author-date). Check Content > Student Resources for links to a formatting guide for Chicago Style and for a document explaining why, how, and when we use citations in academic writing. But, to be truly clear - we are more interested THAT you use citations where appropriate (and we will help with that) than we are interested in becoming the comma police. And, we expect you to present a professional project to your community partners that uses citations where needed and in proper format – according to the preferences of your community partner.

[The university has developed specific citation guides for the use of generative AI in academic work.](#) If you are using AI tools (see the policy above and the specific instructions for your assignments), then you will need to follow these guides.

Weekly Schedule

Course Schedule Date	Activities	Assignments Due
January 7 – NO CLASS		
January 14	Introduction to Course and Teaching Team Self-Assessment and Goal-Setting Introduction to Community Projects Preparation for Project Bid	
January 21	Principles of Community Engagement Experiential Learning & Critical Reflection	Assignment #1 – Project Bid
January 28	Project Planning First Community Partner Meetings	
February 4	Methods Workshop – Literature/Environmental Scan Working Session – Project Plan	Assignment #2 – Group Project Plan
February 11	Methods Workshop – Plain Language & Accessible Documents	
February 18 – Reading Week (NO CLASS)		
February 25	Mid-point check-in with teaching team	Assignment #3 – Mid-point check-in materials
March 4	Mid-point check-ins with community partners	
March 11	Community Project Workshop – Troubleshooting and Collaborative Brainstorming	
March 18	TBA	
March 25	Working session	
April 1	Final Showcase	Assignments #4 and #5 – Final Presentation & Final Report
April 10		Final Reflection due

APPROVED ADVISORY STATEMENTS

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

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 online 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.

Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the [Policy on Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work](#).

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, Avenue to Learn and/or McMaster email.

