

History 3N03/IBH 3BC3: Poverty, Privilege, and Protest in Canadian History (Winter 2026)

Lecture Schedule: Tuesday, 8:30-10:20am & Thursday, 8:30am to 9:20am
Professor: Teaching Dr. Maxime Dagenais
Assistants: Office: Matt Montrose
Office Hours: LRW 4020
Contact Information: By appointment
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Land Acknowledgement:

McMaster sits on land shared between the Haudenosaunee confederacy and the Anishinaabe nations, which was acknowledged in the Dish with One Spoon wampum belt. This is a course about Canadian history, and the experiences and stories we will explore are intertwined with conversations about on-going colonialism and its effects in the world around us and through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Course Description and Objectives:

At its core, Canada and Canadian history has been, and continues to be, shaped by a fundamental relationship between the privileged, i.e. those who hold political, economic, and social influence, and the impoverished, i.e. those who lack such influence. Those who benefit from privilege generally seek to preserve a system that protects their advantages and, perhaps more importantly, keeps them out of reach of the impoverished. Conversely, those without these privileges push for a system that would grant them access to the same political, economic, and social power, often via various forms of protest.

For this course, especially given my background as a historian of protest, I thought it would be interesting to structure our work around specific protest moments rather than follow a chronological approach. Each week, we will examine a particular protest, broadly defined: from armed uprisings to peaceful political mobilizations, to acts of survival in the face of state violence. After exploring each protest, we will analyze the structures of privilege and poverty that shaped it, the forms of oppression it exposes, and its short- and long-term outcomes, both good and bad. Each of these “moments” will help us uncover the political, economic, and social forces that sustained privilege and allowed various forms of social, economic, and political poverty to persist in Canada. We will also examine how marginalized communities have resisted and challenged the conditions imposed upon them by those who hold power. Throughout the course, we will pay close attention to how poverty intersects with gender, race, class, and status.

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

1. Identify the major social, cultural, political, and economic developments that have shaped poverty, privilege and protest in Canadian history in the 19th and 20th centuries.
2. Identify the histories, practices, traditions, and experiences of settlers, Indigenous communities, and newcomers.
3. Challenge some of the persistent myths of Canadian history.
4. Critically analyze and comment on the scholarship in this field of study.
5. Carefully research, read, and use primary and secondary sources to make persuasive arguments about historical topics and communicate those arguments effectively in writing.
6. Confidently engage in group discussions, provide a clear and coherent expression of your thoughts, and be open and considerate of others’ ideas.

Course Organization

This course is divided between lectures and class discussion sessions. On **Tuesdays**, I will give a presentation on a specific topic. Please consult the “Lecture outline” section below for a list of themes. **Thursdays** will be devoted to a series of active learning activities. These will consist of student presentations, i.e. each group will present the readings to the class and provide a suggested list of discussion topics, presentations followed by a class discussion, as well as debates. The active learning activities will not be graded, but they will count toward your overall participation grade. Their goal is to encourage and motivate you to actively engage with the course material and reflect on the past. See the list of readings in the course outline below. Lectures topics are posted below. **Some topics may change as I get to know the class and your interests better.**

Course Material

There is **NO** required textbook for this course. Instead, I will provide a list of journal articles and online resources you must read to prepare for each class and tutorial. In order to save you money, I’ve selected free articles that you can find online either through JSTOR, Érudit, Collections Canada, the Canadian Encyclopedia, Active History, Canada’s History, or the McMaster website. There’s a lot of free and easily accessible material online, let’s use it! In some instances, some of the articles are **unavailable online**. For those, I will upload them on Avenue to Learn.

Grading and Evaluation

In-Class Midterm Exam: February 10 15%

Research Project Proposal, including an annotated bibliography: February 26
10%

Each student will submit a 3-page research proposal, including an annotated bibliography. In this proposal, you must explain your topic, present a potential thesis, list several secondary and primary sources (if available), and outline a few questions you intend to explore.

Term Project: April 2 30%

For this project, I want you to find an entry in an online encyclopedia, such as *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, or even *Wikipedia*, and update it based on the most recent primary sources and/or scholarly research on the topic. You will choose a theme related to the history of Poverty, Privilege and Protest in Canada, this may be a person, a moment, an event, a decision, a political party, an organization, etc., that had an impact on this history. I want you to update the entry by explaining its significance for this history. Your main text should be about **1,500 words**. You must also submit a **750-word report** explaining your process: why your topic is important, how you approached updating the entry, and which sources (articles, books) you used and why.

Class Participation 20%

This grade will be based on the contribution that each student makes during the group discussion sessions and group presentations. To get these points, attendance is, obviously, mandatory. Attendance will be taken on Thursdays.

Final Exam: Exam period 25%

Please Note the Following Policies and Statements

Electronic Device Policy

Computers may be used to take notes, but to avoid distraction, I request that you turn off your wireless connections during class and seminar times. Please also turn off all other electronic devices, such as cell phones, which can distract you and your classmates.

Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work, including lectures, cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, be that the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

Late Work

Late assignments are liable to a penalty of 3 percent per day including weekends unless prior permission has been obtained from the instructor. No assignments will be accepted after the last day of classes.

Extensions

In general, requests for extensions will not be considered because you have the information needed to complete your assignments from the first day of classes. Please plan your academic work carefully. In unusual cases, assignment extensions may be considered in case of illness, emergencies, or family/personal crises. No extensions will be granted because of workload.

Student Success Centre's Undergrad Writing Centre

The Student Success Centre's Undergrad Writing Centre offers writing assistance that can help you achieve your writing goals. Everyone can improve their writing, and I highly encourage all students to take advantage of this service. Visit <https://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/academic-support/writing/> for more details.

Information on Plagiarism Detection

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. If you do not wish to submit your work to Turnitin.com you are required to notify me in the first week of classes to discuss alternative arrangements for submitting your assignment. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity for more details.

Academic Dishonesty

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 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.

Email Correspondence Policy

It is the policy of the Faculty of Humanities that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from each student's own

McMaster University email account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. Instructors will delete emails that do not originate from a McMaster email account.

Modification of Course Outlines

The University reserves the right to change dates and/or deadlines etc. for any or all courses in the case of an emergency situation or labour disruption or civil unrest/disobedience, etc. If a modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with an explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. Any significant changes should be made in consultation with the Department Chair.

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 note these regulations have changed beginning Fall 2015. You can find information at mcmaster.ca/msaf/. If you have any questions about the MSAF, please contact your Associate Dean's office.

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 e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religion and spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the Course Calendar or by their respective Faculty. In most cases, the student should contact his or her professor or academic advisor as soon as possible to arrange accommodations for classes, assignments, tests and examinations that might be affected by a religious holiday or spiritual observance.

Lecture Outline:

Week 1: Introductions & Discussion of Poverty, Privilege and Protest

January 6: Introductions & Defining of Poverty, Privilege, and Protest & Determining Discussion/Presentation Groups

January 8: No class

Readings: None

Week 2: The Burning of Montreal: Enslavement and Racialized Labour Exploitation in Early Canada

January 13: Discussion of Enslavement and racialized labour exploitation in early Canada

January 15: Group Discussion

Readings:

- Brett Rushforth, “A Little Flesh We Offer You”: The Origins of Indian Slavery in New France,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (October 2003).
- Amani Whitfield, “White Archives, Black Fragments: Problems and Possibilities in Telling the Lives of Enslaved Black People in the Maritimes,” *Canadian Historical Review* 101 (September 2020): 323-45
- Amani Whitfield: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TpksNZavzQ>

Week 3: Tecumseh’s Indigenous Nationhood: Rejecting the Settler-Colonial State, Dispossession, and Indigenous Poverty at the time of the War of 1812

January 20: Discussion of Settler Colonialism, Dispossession, Poverty, Nationhood, and Indigenous Resistance in Early Canada

Guest Speaker/Video: Dr. James Hill, University of Pittsburgh

January 22: Group Discussion

Readings:

- Wolfe, Patrick. “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native.” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8.4 (2006): 387-409.
- Robin Jarvis Brownlie, “The Co-optation of Tecumseh: The War of 1812 and Racial Discourses in Upper Canada,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 23: 1 (2012): 39-63.

Week 4: 1837-38 Rebellion: Privilege and Inequality in Early Settler Societies

January 27: Discussion of Power, Inequality, and Rebellion in Early Settler Societies: 1837-38 Canadian Revolution

January 29: Group Discussion

Readings:

- Maxime Dagenais, “[T]hose who had money were opposed to us, and those who were our friends were not the moneyed class.” Philadelphia and the 1837-38 Canadian Rebellions.” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 48 (Spring 2017): 1-17.
- Nathan Ince, “As Long as that Fire Burned”: Indigenous Warriors and Political Order in Upper Canada, 1837-42,” *Canadian Historical Review* 103: 3 (2022): pp. 384-407
- Robert Richard, “Bank War in Lower Canada: The Rebellion and the Market Revolution,” *Revolutions Across Borders: Jacksonian America and The Canadian Rebellion*, eds. Maxime Dagenais and Julien Mauduit (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2019).

Week 5: Beauharnois Canal Riot: Industrialization, Poverty, and the Growth of a Working-Class Consciousness

February 3: Discussion of the impact of Capitalism and Industrialization on Labourers

February 5: Group Discussion

Readings:

- Bettina Bradbury, “Pigs, Cows, and Boarders: Non-Wage Forms of Survival Among Montreal Families, 1861-91,” *Labour / Le Travail* 14 (June 1984): 9-46.

- Michael Goldfield and Bryan D. Palmer, "Canada's Workers Movement: Uneven Developments," *Labour / Le Travail* Vol. 59 (Spring, 2007), pp. 149-177
- Horner, Dan. "Solemn Processions and Terrifying Violence: Spectacle, Authority, and Citizenship during the Lachine Canal Strike of 1843." *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, volume 38, number 2, spring 2010, p. 36-47.

Week 6: Mid-Term Examination

February 10: **Mid-Term Examination**

February 12: No class

Week 7: READING WEEK! No Classes

Week 8: The Edmonton Residential School Riot: State Sponsored Racialized Oppression, Marginalization, and Poverty

February 24: Discussion of the Canadian Settler State, Oppression, and the Impoverishment of Indigenous Peoples

Guest Speaker: Dr. Nathan Ince, Université de Sherbrooke

February 26: Group Discussion

Readings:

- Daschuk, James. "Some Reflections of My Own on *Clearing the Plains*." *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association / Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, volume 26, number 2, 2015, p. 70-81.
- Mosby, Ian. "Administering Colonial Science: Nutrition Research and Human Biomedical Experimentation in Aboriginal Communities and Residential Schools, 1942-1952." *Histoire sociale / Social History*, vol. 46 no. 1, 2013, p. 145-172.
- Allyson Stevenson, "Demanding the Right to Care for Their Own Children," in *Métis Rising: Living Our Present through the Power of Our Past*, eds. Yvonne Boyer and Larry N. Chartrand (Vancouver Purich Books, 2022), 148-170.

Week 9: Humiliation Day & John Boychuk's Resistance: The War on Newcomers. March 3: Discussion of Immigration/Anti-Immigration, Enemy Aliens, Imprisonment at the time of the World Wars.

Guest Speaker: Dr. Kassandra Luciuk, Dalhousie University

March 5 Group Discussion

Readings:

- Pamela Sugiman, "Memories of Internment: Narrating Japanese Canadian Women's Life Stories"
- Timothy Stanley, "John A. Macdonald, "the Chinese" and Racist State Formation in Canada," *Journal of Critical Race Inquiry* 3, no. 1 (2016): 6-34.
- Chaktsiris, Mary "Identifying the Enemy in First World War Canada: The Historiography and Bureaucracy of Enemy Alien Internment and Registration." *Canadian Military History* 28, 2 (2019)

Week 10: The Persons Case: Women vs the Patriarch State

March 10: Discussion of Gender, Household Labour, Precarity, and how Women pushed back
March 12: Group Discussion

Readings:

- Margaret E. McCallum, "Keeping Women in Their Place: The Minimum Wage in Canada, 1910-25," *Labour / Le Travail* 17 (1986): 29-56.
- Sarah Carter, "My vocabulary contains no such word as defeat": Clara Lynch and her battle for her Alberta homestead, 1900-1909."
- Katherine McKenna, "Class, Race and Gender Roles in Early British North America" in Nancy Janovicek and Carmen Nielson, eds. *A Companion to Canadian Women's and Gender History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017, p. 110-129.

Week 11: The Winnipeg General Strike: The Working Class, Poverty, Repression in the Early 20th Century

March 17: Discussion of Labour Movements, Labour Protests, and State Repression in the 20th Century.

March 19: Group Discussion

Readings:

- Erik Strikwerda. "Married men should, I feel, be treated differently": Work, Relief, and Unemployed Men on the Urban Canadian Prairie, 1929-32." *Left History* 12, no. 1 (2007): 30-51.
- Dunsworth, Edward. "Green Gold, Red Threats: Organization and Resistance in Depression-Era Ontario Tobacco." *Labour / Le Travail*, vol. 79, 2017, pp. 105-42. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44820373>. Accessed 9 Dec. 2025.

Week 12: The Quiet Revolution, the FLQ and the Oka Crisis: La Nation Québécoise at the Crossroad of Privilege and Poverty

March 24: Discussion of Quebec: Maîtres chez nous, the rise of the Welfare State, and Oppression

March 26: Group Discussion

Readings:

- Donald Cuccioletta and Martin Lubin, "The Quebec Quiet Revolution: A Noisy Evolution."
- Felicity Taylor, "Mainmise, 1970: Situating Québec within Planetary Geographies"
- Knickerbocker and Nickel, "Negotiating Sovereignty: Aboriginal Perspectives on a Settler-Colonial Constitution, 1975-1983"

Week 13: Black Lives Matter: The Black Experience, Racism and Protest in 20th Century Canada

March 31: Discussion of systemic racism, the racialized experience, and racial capitalism in Canada.

Guest Speaker: The Matt Montrose, McMaster University

April 2: Group Discussion

Readings:

- Deckard, N. D., Akram, A. M., & Ku, J. (2021, February 23). Canadian universities: 10 years of anti-racist reports but little action. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/canadian-universities-10-years-of-anti-racist-reports-but-little-action-153033>
- McCausland, Julie Ann. "Racial capitalism, slavery, labour regimes and exploitation in the Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program." *Caribbean Quilt* 5 (2020): 55-61.
- Tretter, Eliot. "New Geographies of Racism: Canadian Urbanization, the Biopolitical, and Racial Capitalism." *Labour / Le Travail*, vol. 87, 2021, p. 185-198. *Project MUSE*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/lt.2021.0009>.

Week 14: Wrap up

April 7: Final Exam Review

Readings: None.