Global Peace and Social Justice
PEACJUST 1VM3 & IBH 1BD3
Pass the Mic: Conversations on Justice
Fall 2026

McMaster University

HUMANITIES

Instructor Information

Alpha Abebe
Email: abebea@mcmaster.ca
Office Hours:
By Appointment

Course Information

Lectures: In Person, Wednesdays 4:30PM - 6:20PM
Tutorials: TBA

Location: See Mosaic for building and room number

Course Dates: 09/08/2026 - 12/10/2026
Units: 3.00
Course Delivery Mode: In Person
Course Description: Exploration of diverse topics related to peace, justice and resistance through interactive guest lectures from esteemed thinkers and leaders from McMaster and the wider community. Community-based learning is integrated by attending public events. The course is anchored by conversations on how we are positioned by/how we can position ourselves in relation to past and present social issues. Lecture, tutorial and event attendance (three hours); one term

Instructor-Specific Course Information

Course Description:

In this course we will explore topics, theories, and empirical examples related to peace and justice drawing upon esteemed McMaster scholars and national/ international visiting speakers. We will cover a lot of ground in this course as we are introduced to innovative, multidisciplinary perspectives weekly. The course will begin by introducing you to key themes in the study of peace, social justice, and rights and equity. The rest of the course will comprise mostly of guest speakers who will assist us in exploring and critically engaging with significant contemporary issues and the various approaches to achieve justice and sustainable peace.

Among the questions to be explored are: How do we address complex problems that plague the world? How can we address historical and ongoing legacies of structural racism, sexism, ableism, colonialism, and other 'isms' in the present? How do we define 'community' and accountability in a world that seems increasingly divided and in conflict? Do we have responsibilities to our local, national, and global 'communities'? How can we continually reflect on our own social locations and identities in our efforts to create positive change in the world?

Important Links

- Mosaic
- Avenue to Learn
- Student Accessibility Services - Accommodations
- McMaster University Library
- eReserves
- Open Education Resources

Important note regarding in person lecture attendance

In this course we will be studying texts (written, visual, aural) and listening to guest lectures that take up histories of racial, economic, colonial, gender, and bodily injustice. The course intentionally includes materials that respond to current

events/contexts, with the intent to open up space for the recognition of (not a solution for) the anxiety, grief or frustration that many students might be feeling, in different ways and to different degrees, in response to current/emerging events.

Participating in class and tutorial discussions can be challenging, particularly in your first year of university. However, without active participation and self-reflection in a course like this, you will not benefit from the gathering of researchers from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, lived experiences, and perspectives, as they draw us into productive conversations on interesting questions and issues of these times. It is therefore extremely important to attend lectures and tutorials as often as possible and to be mentally engaged and open to learning and sharing.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Introduce you to global peace and social justice concepts through perspectives of McMaster scholars and national/international visiting speakers
- Involve you in conversations about some of the most urgent social, political, and cultural issues of our times
- Encourage you to examine your social locations and ethical responsibilities through reflexive and critical thinking
- Equip you with critical reading and writing skills
- Challenge you to exercise curiosity and openness to thinking, learning, and unlearning about the world you inhabit; and to listen.

Required Materials and Texts

Please sign in with your MacID here to view your booklist

Technology required:

The following web-based platforms will be utilized in this course (note: additional online tools and/or platforms may be introduced during the course):

1. **Avenue to Learn (A2L) for course readings, announcements, assignment**

submissions and grades: http://avenue.mcmaster.ca
2. **Microsoft Teams for recorded lecture uploads, activities and some announcements (invitation/code for the class team will be provided).**
3. **Zoom for synchronous course lectures and discussions (zoom will be used only in the event that any lectures are delivered virtually, including campus closures): https://zoom.us/**

Reading material:

Electronic copies of all required course readings will be posted on A2L. See course schedule below for course readings.

Class Format

In Person

Course Schedule:

Classes will be a mixture of Instructor-led lectures, guest lectures, class discussions and interactive activities. Weekly readings will be posted on A2L. The schedule below is subject to change.

*Note: Portions of this course may be delivered virtually pending events such as campus closures, health precautions, or guest speaker availability. Any changes to the course delivery format will be communicated to students with as much notice as possible.

Course Evaluation

Assignments

1. Critical Reflections (250 words each × 4 @ 5% each): 20%
    - Deadline: Ongoing (at least one must be submitted before **October 27th**, and all must be submitted no later than **December 8th**)
2. Event Attendance and Commentary (400–500 words): 20%
    - Deadline: **November 6th**
3. Tutorial Attendance and Participation: 15%
    - Deadline: **Ongoing**

4. Trace a Question (900–1000 words): 20%
    - Deadline: **November 21st**
5. Take-Home Final Exam: 25%
    1. Deadline: **TBA**

Course Evaluation Details

1) Critical Reflections (250 words each x 4 @ 5% each): 20%

To facilitate sustained reflection on weekly course materials and to encourage more student interaction during the live sessions, every week (starting week 2), you will have the opportunity to post a reflection on the course material on a dedicated thread on MS Teams (the discussion threads will be divided by Tutorials). The Critical Reflections MUST be written on that week's assigned readings AND that week's lecture or speaker. Reflections can do ANY of the following: reflect on a concept discussed in the course materials; elaborate on an interesting aspect of one the course materials; reflect on a question raised by one of the course materials/guest lecture; OR reflect on the relevance of the topic/reading/guest lecture to the issue under discussion.

Posts must be made by the Tuesday at midnight (11.59 pm) following the week you are writing about. Each student is required to submit a maximum of 4 Critical Reflections by the end of the term, and the final one must be submitted no later than December 8th (the week after the last guest lecture). You can submit only ONE post per week. You must submit at least ONE reflection by October 27th.

You are welcome to constructively and informally engage with your peers' posts on the thread by answering questions and offering your thoughtful perspectives on the issue. Do recognize that some of your peers might have very little or very advanced understanding of the week's topic. Some weeks you might be learning about issues that are completely unfamiliar to you; other weeks you might be studying topics that you are very passionate about it. By bringing into light a range of important issues through the course materials and drawing students into conversation through the Critical Reflections, the course seeks to foster students' understanding of significant topics of local and global interest, encourage critical inquiry, and value the knowledges that students bring

into the classroom.

Please approach the Critical Reflections with a willingness to share your perspective on a topic and with the openness to gain a better understanding of others' perspectives. It is important to be respectful and considerate in your discussions.

Each Critical Reflection is worth 5% of the final grade and marked for: completion following the guidelines above (2 marks) and demonstration of careful reading and thinking (3 marks).

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2) Event attendance and commentary (400-500 words): 20%

Community-based learning is integrated in this course through student participation in public events on campus that relate to issues of global peace and/or social justice. Mandatory attendance is required in at least one of these two events (you are of course encouraged to attend both): the annual Mahatma Gandhi lecture or the annual Gandhi Peace festival.

- The annual Gandhi Peace Festival will take place on Saturday, October 3, 2026.
- The annual Gandhi Lecture on Nonviolence will take place on Thursday, October 1, 2026 featuring Branka Panic, the founding director of AI for Peace. More information on Branka can be found here: https://www.aiforpeace.org/book

Students are encouraged to engage meaningfully and critically with all aspects of these events, including the ideas and perspectives presented by speakers, the framing of the events, and the ideas and legacies associated with Gandhi and nonviolence. Critical engagement does not require agreement, endorsement, or disagreement.

Event attendance will count towards 10% of your grade and a commentary on the event will be worth an additional 10% of your grade). Further details and guidance will be provided during the course, including evaluation criteria for the commentary.

NOTES: If you are unable to attend any of these events, it is important that you get in touch with the Instructor or your TA asap (prior to the assignment deadline) to decide on an alternative event to attend so that you can fulfil the requirements of this assignment

in a timely manner. If you do not attend an event and do not make timely alternate arrangements with your TA or the Instructor, you risk receiving a 0 for this assignment.

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3) Tutorial attendance and participation: 15%

50-minute live tutorials will be held weekly and led by Teaching Assistants. Students are expected to attend weekly synchronous tutorial sections and actively participate in tutorial discussions. Attendance will be logged by each TA, and participation marks will be awarded based on the quality and frequency of your contribution to the discussion. In the tutorials, the TA will review lecture material and discussion board content. They will also offer you guidance on assignment preparation.

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4) Trace a Question (900-1000 words): 20%

Throughout this course, we will encounter different ways of thinking about peace, justice, inequality, resistance, and social change. This assignment asks you to follow one question that interests you and consider how your thinking about it develops over the course of the term.

The goal is not necessarily to answer your question. Your question may become more complicated, change direction, or lead to new questions.

Part 1: Early Question Checkpoint

Early in the course, you will identify a question that you are genuinely interested in exploring. Your question should relate to peace, justice, inequality, resistance, social change, or another theme connected to the course.

For example:

- What responsibilities do we have for injustices that do not directly affect us?
- What makes some forms of resistance seem legitimate and others illegitimate?
- Does raising awareness lead to meaningful social change?

[Note: You are highly encouraged to develop your own question not use the examples above].

During tutorial, you will write down your question and a brief explanation of why you

are interested in it and what you currently think about it. Your TA will keep a record of your question early in the course. The early question checkpoint is a required part of this assignment. Students who do not complete the early question checkpoint may still submit the final essay, but will not be eligible to receive full marks for the assignment.

We may return to these questions informally in tutorials during the term. As you move through the course, pay attention to moments when a reading, lecture, guest speaker, or class discussion makes you reconsider your question or see it differently.

Your documented question is a starting point, not a commitment to argue a particular position. You may change your mind, revise the question, or decide that you were asking the wrong question in the first place. However, you should avoid starting from scratch with an unrelated question, as the goal is to follow a train of thought and learning.

Part 2: The Essay

For your final assignment, write a 900-1000 word essay tracing what happened to your question over the course of the term.

Begin with the question you documented earlier in the semester and your thinking about it at that point. Then consider how your encounters with course and external source material affected your understanding of the question. Your essay should address the following:

A. Where did you start?

What made you ask this question? What did you initially think about it? What assumptions, experiences, or prior knowledge shaped your starting point?

B. What complicated your thinking?

Your essay must meaningfully engage with:

- at least one assigned course reading
- at least one other course encounter, such as a lecture, guest speaker, or tutorial discussion
- at least one credible external source connected to your question and the development of your thinking about it

Explain what each encounter contributed to your thinking. For example:

- Did it challenge an assumption you were making?
- Did it introduce something you had not considered?
- Did it make you less certain about something you previously believed?
- Did it help you see a limitation in your original question?
- Did you encounter different perspectives that were difficult to reconcile?
- Did it lead you to ask a different question?

Do not simply summarize your sources or course materials. Explain what they contributed to your thinking. What did they make you reconsider, question, notice, or understand differently?

C. Where are you now?

Return to your original question. Would you ask it in the same way now? Why or why not?

Explain what has changed in your thinking and what remains unresolved. If you would now ask a different question, tell us what that question is and how you arrived at it.

You do not need to arrive at a clear answer. Becoming less certain, changing the question, or recognizing that there are competing answers can all be signs of careful thinking.

Submission and evaluation:

- Cite all written sources appropriately using APA and include a reference list at the end of your essay.
- Your assignment should be written as a cohesive essay that addresses all of the components outlined above. Do not organize your submission as separate responses to each question or as a question-and-answer format.
- Full grading rubric and evaluation criteria will be shared during the course.

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5) Take Home Final Exam: 25%

The final exam for this course will be posted on A2L following the last week of lectures (exact date TBA). You will be given 7 days (including any overlapping weekend) to complete and submit the exam on A2L. You will be tasked with answering 3 out of 5

potential exam questions. Your answers will be written in long-answer format. The exam questions will be ones that ask you to synthesize and reflect upon topics and themes discussed in the course, including instructor lectures, guest lectures, and course readings. Since this is a take home exam, you are invited to use your notes and course material to complete the exam.

Further details about the exam, including suggestions for how to prepare, will be given during lecture sessions.

Undergraduate Grading Scale

Grade	Equivalent Grade Point	Equivalent Percentages
A+	12	90-100
A	11	85-89
A-	10	80-84
B+	9	77-79
B	8	73-76
B-	7	70-72
C+	6	67-69
C	5	63-66
C-	4	60-62
D+	3	57-59
D	2	53-56
D-	1	50-52
F	0	0-49

Graduate Grading Scale

Graduate Student Grading Scale (Except for MBA and Master of Finance)

Grade	Points	Equivalent Percentage	Pass/F
A+	12	90-100	P+
A	11	85-89	
A-	10	80-84	
B+	9	77-79	P
B	8	73-76	
B-	7	70-72	
F	0	69 and under	F

MBA and Master of Finance Grading Scale

Grade	Points	Equivalent Percentage	Pass/F
A+	12	90-100	P+
A	11	85-89	P

Grade	Points	Equivalent Percentage	Pass/F
A-	10	80-84	
B+	9	75-79	
B	8	70-74	
B-	7	60-69	
F	0	59 and under	F

Course Schedule

TOPICS AND READINGS:

Classes will be a mixture of Instructor-led lectures, guest lectures, class discussions and interactive activities. Weekly readings will be posted on A2L. The schedule below is subject to change.

*Note: Portions of this course may be delivered virtually pending events such as campus closures, health precautions, or guest speaker availability. Any changes to the course delivery format will be communicated to students with as much notice as possible.

As this course depends on the availability of guest lecturers, some guest speaker plans, readings and/or the order of lectures are likely to change. Please refer to announcements posted on A2L and Teams for the most up to date schedule.

WEEK	TOPICS	READINGS	DEADLINES & INFO
Week 1 Sept. 9	Introduction to the course (Course structure and content; syllabus overview and course expectations)	N/A	No tutorials this week

WEEK	TOPICS	READINGS	DEADLINES & INFO
Week 2 Sept. 16	Listening, Disagreement, and Learning Across Difference	hooks, b. (2003). "Democratic Education." In *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (pp. 41–50). Routledge.	
Week 3 Sept. 23	Making Sense of Social Problems, Rights and Justice (Definitions, Histories, Concepts and Critical Debates)	Young, I. M. (1990). "Five Faces of Oppression."	
Week 4 Sept. 30	NO CLASS: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation	No assigned reading	
Week 5 Oct. 7	Campus Regulations of Expression and Protest Guest speaker: Michael Asres		Trace a Question: Early Question Checkpoint completed in tutorial before Week 5
Week 6	NO CLASS: Midterm Recess		
Week 7 Oct. 21	#Migrant Politics: Stories of Migration Guest speaker: Natasha Martinez	Reading TBA	

WEEK	TOPICS	READINGS	DEADLINES & INFO
Week 8 Oct. 28	AI, Power, and Social Justice Guest speaker: Dr. Helen Beny	Reading TBA	**ASSIGNMENT:** At least one Critical Reflection must be submitted by date Oct 27th
Week 9 Nov. 4	Campus Regulations of Expression and Protest Guest speaker: Michael Asres	Reading TBA	**ASSIGNMENT:** Ev ent Commentary Due November 6
Week 10 Nov. 11	Unpacking EDI: Law, Business, and Social Change Guest speaker: Leticia Rose	Reading TBA	
Week 11 Nov. 18	Understanding the Far Right: Movements, Ideas, and Contemporary Politics Guest speaker: Dr. Maxwell Kennel	Reading TBA	
Week 12 Nov. 25	Sustainability, Justice, and Local Hamilton Action Guest speaker: Dr. Kate Whalen	Reading TBA	**ASSIGNMENT:** Tra ce a Question Essay due November 21

WEEK	TOPICS	READINGS	DEADLINES & INFO
Week 13 Dec. 2	Without Equity, There Is No Excellence in STEM Guest speaker: Dr. Kalaichelvi Saravanamuttu	Reading TBA	**ASSIGNMENT:** Final Critical Reflection deadline Dec 8
Week 14 Dec. 9	Course Review and Synthesis	No assigned reading	**FINAL TAKE-HOME EXAM:** Due during exam period, exact date TBA

Late Assignments

Unless otherwise stated, all written assignments are due by 11:59pm on the due date indicated on the course outline.

Late assignments will be subject to a 3% per day late penalty (includes weekends and holidays) for up to seven (7) days. After this date, no assignments will be accepted and a grade of zero (0) will be applied.

Extensions for course work that will not incur a late penalty must be approved by the TA or Instructor before the due date. Extensions are generally only granted for illness, emergencies, and extenuating circumstances. Note that this is distinct from the McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF) submission process.

Turnitin.com

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.

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.

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 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.

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.