PROFESSOR       TEACHING ASSISTANTS
Dr. Jennifer M. Ostovich  TBA
Email: ostovij@mcmaster.ca
Office hours: By appointment.

Scheduled Class Time: Mon Weds Thurs, 5:30pm (virtual classroom).

Virtual Tutorials: Mondays at various times (see your schedule for your assigned tutorial time). In order to properly assess your tutorial performance, and to give you a sense of continuity with your TA, it is critical that you attend the tutorial you have been assigned in your official class schedule. Please email me at the start of classes or earlier to discuss switching to a different tutorial is your current tutorial is inconvenient. Once term has begun, switching will be difficult.

Class Meetings: Virtual classrooms are organized so that learning occurs either “synchronously” (during the scheduled class time, with students attending as they would a regular class) or “asynchronously” (students can access content at a time of their choosing). We will be making use of both methods this term.

Lectures will be pre-recorded and provided to you asynchronously. During some portion of our scheduled class time, I will be available on Zoom (or some similar platform TBA) for optional synchronous discussions, activities, and other learning enhancement opportunities. To be best prepared for these meetings, students are urged to watch the pre-recorded lectures prior to our scheduled class times. During one class per week (day TBA but the likelihood that these will occur on most Mondays), I expect to hold a short (synchronous) quiz that I will then debrief during that same class time. Please organize your schedules accordingly. Your tutorials will be held synchronously – that is, during your scheduled tutorial time – using a platform such as Zoom.

Website: http://avenue.mcmaster.ca

Course Description and Learning Outcomes. During the past decade, psychology and other scientific fields have suffered from highly publicized failures of replication. This replication crisis is due in part to unethical research practices, but in part to failures in designing and running methodologically sound research. The purpose of this course, therefore, is to provide you with a solid foundation for doing, understanding, and applying research in your personal and professional lives. By the end of this course, you will be able to do the following:

▪ Understand why empirical reasoning is superior to other forms of reasoning when evaluating information.
▪ Recognize and explain the basic units of research (e.g., hypotheses, theories, variables, validity, and reliability).
▪ Identify the strengths and weaknesses of different research designs.
▪ Understand researchers’ ethical obligations.
▪ Understand the reasons behind replication failures, and how psychologists are addressing them.
▪ Critically assess research and the conclusions drawn from that research.
▪ Make decisions about whether and how to apply research findings in the real world.

Please note: This syllabus, including scheduling, topic order, topics themselves, assessments dates and times, and assessment strategy is subject to change if circumstances warrant (i.e., administrative complications that prevent us from following the current syllabus).

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Readings.

Recommended (optional) textbook. This is an open source (free) textbook that you can use to help you understand lecture content that you’re struggling with, or to reinforce lecture content independent of whether you’re struggling (this helps with encoding and understanding). I will not be providing information on which chapters to read when, but the chapter titles are pretty self-explanatory, so I’m sure you will easily figure it out.


Other readings. You will be assigned primary source readings, accessible through the McMaster Library system, during the term.

Evaluation. Your final mark will be based on your performance on:

(1) Weekly quizzes
(2) A critical thinking assignment about the replication crisis
(3) A research design assignment
(4) Tutorial attendance and participation
(5) A final exam assignment

All quizzes and assignments will be given online. The current (June 2020) plan is for some of these to be presented with real-time time constraints (e.g., 20 minutes to complete a quiz presented during class time), and for others to have longer time allowances (e.g., two weeks to complete the research design assignment). This plan may change; you will be notified on our Avenue to Learn webpage if this happens.

You will be provided with a detailed description of the evaluation scheme as Fall term approaches.

Topics. Each of the following topics should take about one week; most will have a related tutorial given the same week. I will update this syllabus with exact dates as Fall term approaches. I will also check in with you regularly as we proceed through the term to help you keep on top of things.

Topic 1. Empirical Thinking: What is it, and Why is it Better Than Other Forms of Thinking?
Topic 2. The Scientific Method, Theories, and Hypotheses.
Topic 4. Research Ethics.
Accessibility: 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.

If you have SAS accommodations that will impact how you interact with this course, then please get in touch with me so that we can discuss how I can best meet your needs.

Communication Policy: E-mail communications must originate from your designated McMaster e-mail account. Should we need to communicate with you about individual matters, the e-mail will be sent to your McMaster account. You should monitor this account regularly. E-mail sent from third-party providers (yahoo, hotmail, cogeco, sympatico, etc.) will not be received.

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, 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 credit has already been assigned been granted in another course)
- Improper collaboration in group work
- Copying of using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations

Authenticity/Plagiarism Detection: This course will 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) 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 visit www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Courses With An On-Line Element: Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), 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.

**Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work:** 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”.

**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.

**Course Modifications:** The instructor reserves the right to modify elements of the course during the term. In the event of such a modification, reasonable notice and communication with students will be given with explanation, a revised course outline will be posted on Avenue, and students will be given the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

**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). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

**Final Grade Calculations:** I am considering using something called “specifications grading” that calculates your final grade somewhat differently than what you are used to. This scheme involves asking students to choose what final grade they are interested in earning and telling students what they must do to earn that grade. Research suggests that this scheme has a positive impact on the depth of student learning and that most students in fact prefer this scheme to the current percentage-based scheme. However, implementing this scheme is very complex, and I cannot present you with all of the relevant information quite yet (June, 2020). If I choose to implement specifications grading for this course, all aspects of its implementation will be fully described and explained to you. In the meantime, this post, written for educators rather than students (I couldn’t find one written for students) may satisfy some of your curiosity about my plans: [https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2016/01/19/new-ways-grade-more-effectively-essay](https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2016/01/19/new-ways-grade-more-effectively-essay).

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2 The instructor reserves the right to adjust final marks up or down, depending on overall performance in the course.