

School of Public Policy and Administration
Faculty of Liberal and Professional Studies

AP/PPAS 3762 3.00 M

Canada's Labour Market Policy

MERITOCRACY IS NOT MERITORIOUS

Winter 2023

Thursday 2:30-5:30 pm

CLH 110

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*Power concedes nothing without a demand.
It never did and it never will.
~ Frederick Douglass*

1. **Overview: You think you will hate your job?**

I bet you will. But is it the way it has to be? Do you have a say? Will you be heard? Can you change it? We will find out more in our time together.

The course is a great fit for students who hate to live as corporate drones to help the rich get richer and the powerful get more powerful.

If you want to do some good in your career not just for yourself but for others so no one is left behind, you will find the learning experience in the course rewarding.

Here's the synopsis of the course on my university academic page: "The Winter 2023 course of Canada's Labour Market Policy would explore public policy responses to today's misguided push for meritocracy." For my teaching philosophy, see <https://profiles.laps.yorku.ca/profiles/thwong/>.

If you read my academic page and maybe even my twitter feed, you will find that I have a particular point of view. Of course please feel free to decide whether you agree or disagree with it or not.

If you agree with it, I would very much hope that you will enjoy learning how to put theory to practice.

More importantly, if you disagree with it, I would very much hope that you will enjoy learning how to learn from a point of view that is different from yours. After all, that's what university is for.

To be clear, the course does not argue that merits don't matter. Given past experiences, students who attend all classes in full, do all the in-class work properly as required and all the after-class work properly as required will more likely or not on the balance of probabilities be given a B.

You will find that the course is very different from any course you have taken before. In a way that is likely not to be expected by you, the course would cover how government policies and programs concerning labour supply and demand could form and shape your life as a worker through the lens of the collective power of all workers.

The policies and programs include education and training, job creation, employment and unemployment, minimum wage v living wage, discriminations including discrimination against immigrants and collective bargaining.

To protect the privacy of all so students are free to speak their minds and to make the most of the unique design of the course, no class will be recorded.

2. Learning Outcomes: How You Can Live a Happier Life

The course is designed with lifelong learning in mind. If you are interested in learning how to find answers to questions on your own independently, if you are interested in learning how to evaluate your learning progress on your own independently, and if you are interested in learning how to manage a heavy workload on your own independently, you will enjoy the course.

You might think having a happy work life is way down your list of priorities. You think you have to work. Like everyone else. Non-negotiable. Whatever the job is. You might even think the only reason you are going to York is to get a job later. If not, what's the point, right? Yes, even if you hate your job, you will do it. Even if you want out. E.V.E.R.Y.D.A.Y. Everyone thinks so, you tell yourself.

Is that all there is in your life? What if work isn't what it seems. What if you *could* have a choice in deciding what you want to do and what you don't want to do, but you *aren't* given that choice. What if the way how your work life is structured does not need to be what you think it needs to be.

You can have a say. You can learn to want to live a happier life. You can start here.

The course is about labour market policy in Canada, but it is about a lot more than that. You will learn something about the interactions between the state and the market, in this case the labour market. You will learn how to ask questions to learn more about public policy, in this case labour policy. You will even learn what kind of questions to ask. But more importantly, you will learn what more you can learn.

The learning outcomes could be transformative if students want them to be, no matter what the subject of a course is. Being held hostage in the quagmire of post-truth delusions, we could safeguard a scintilla of hope that whatever left of our idealism is not destined for demolition by daring ourselves to ask: does it have to be this way?

If students are willing, at the end of our time together, students would be able to ask the tough questions needed in challenging the status quo. If you want to live a happy work life, start by asking what that might be for you, what you need to do to get that and what more you need to start doing.

You have to decide what your vision for your future will be. In addition, you have to decide what you need to do to get to where you want to be. Moreover, you have to decide what more you need. University education can't make your decisions for you, but university education can equip you with the capabilities to make informed, responsible decisions.

At university you learn to become not only a productive employee but also an informed and responsible citizen. Like university studies in general, the course is designed to develop your capabilities in critical thinking, information literacy, effective communication as well as your sense of your responsibility.

Critical thinking: A big challenge in your daily experience is to live with ambiguity. The world is not neatly organized, and it won't organize itself for you. But you can make sense of what you initially see as disorganization for yourself if you want to. Hopefully this course will give you ample opportunities to learn to face the messy world.

Information literacy: In our society another big challenge is to live with information overload. The massive information flow does not come with navigation manuals or handouts or PowerPoint slides.

But you can separate the signals from the noises if you want to. Hopefully this course will give you ample opportunities to learn to separate the good from the bad information.

Effective communication. Whether some ideas become entrenched often rests on how they are argued. Agenda setting is cruel as at times the most compelling arguments beat the most sensible ideas. But you can be precise and concise in making your arguments if you want to. Hopefully the course will give you ample opportunities to learn to cut to the chase.

A sense of your responsibility. University education is to enlighten, not to indoctrinate to conform. Sadly, nowadays our society allows university education to become just a big broken promise. But if you want to, you can help make things right by working hard to be responsible – starting as responsible learners – by solving the problems you are asked to solve on your own rather than just giving up and asking others to solve them for you. Hopefully the course will give you ample opportunities to learn to nurture your sense of responsibility.

On how to pursue the above learning outcomes in this course, here are three actionable suggestions:

- *Pay attention.* Once you start paying attention, many seemingly unanswerable questions will end up as decipherable. Whenever something does not go your way, ask yourself “What have I missed and what should I look at?”
- *Prepare relentlessly.* Students are expected to do most of their work outside the classroom after the end of each class, and they are expected to demonstrate their outside work with their engagements inside the classroom. Whenever something does not go your way, ask yourself “What more should I do?”
- *Own it.* When you have a problem, look for the solution. Whenever something does not go your way, ask yourself “What have I done wrong and how can I do better?”

Your course grade is just a reflection of your performance in the course. A grade is just a grade. In five years no one will care about what you get as a student in this course. But people do care what you can do and who you are as a human being.

Students will earn the grades they get and will get the grades they earn. Thus, students are expected to take full responsibilities for studying and keeping up with the fast pace of the course. No special consideration will be given to students who don't get the grades they want due to reasons not required to be considered by university policies.

Students shouldn't negotiate for marks they didn't earn, and all academic queries on marks if warranted should be made on an academic basis. For example, claiming that you have worked very hard or you have never received such a low grade won't be sufficient. By the same token, claiming that you need such a grade to advance to the next level, keep your scholarship or graduate or get a job won't be sufficient either.

3. Course Materials: Here and Now

No one can predict the future accurately but we all could learn from the past to not only understand the present but also make an educated guess about the future. In working through the course materials, students will gain a sense of the convergence of the past, the present and the future.

The design of the course content is to balance between the need to stay as current as possible and the hope to keep students engaged. The course materials are by and large experimental, i.e. definitely not the usual materials students would expect. Given the learning trajectory of the students as shown in their work, an evolving set of materials including links to news stories, academic journal articles, polls, government as well as think tank reports would be assigned throughout the course to optimize the learning experience of students.

The key question you are required to ask yourself concerning the content of each class is this: what do you think the governments should do for not only you but for all?

Delving into quantitative data (statistical snapshots, polls) and qualitative data (news stories, op-eds) along with contextual analyses (think tank reports, government papers, academic journal articles), you will have the opportunity to decide what you want to learn and how you want to learn it within the confines of the pedagogical design of the course.

4. Teaching Approach: Use What It Is to Probe What It Could Be

The set of issues planned to be covered in the tentative schedule at the back of this outline will be reviewed as a cohesive set in the first class. As no class is designed to be missed, students are advised to attend all classes in full. Based on past experiences, no student can fully recover from missing even just part of a class.

In the course, you will start learning how to process what it is to get at what it could be you will work through analyses of labour market norms, comment on current Canadian labour market policies and search for the future of work that you would like to have for everyone.

To encourage open and frank discussion, the course will not be recorded in order to try to protect all parties involved. Please note that informed consent is required to record anyone or anything during the course. Given the diverse offerings at York, no doubt students can find a suitable course with recordings that will suit their needs if a course with recordings will work best with their preferred learning styles.

Given the pedagogical design of the course, students missing any class will be at their own peril no matter how hard I try to accommodate their absence.

For security purposes, all students are required to use their York University email accounts perhaps through Outlook for all course correspondences. All such emails should be sent to taxlaw@yorku.ca. At times functions follow forms. To give you a sense of this part of the design of the course, the subjects of all your email submissions are required to have “3762-(your last name)-(your first name)-(your student ID)-(the subject of the email depending on the assignment)”. The “-” is a hyphen. Without the subject line, the email may not be found.

Students are expected to learn to find answers on their own.

If after exhausting all avenues you still think you cannot find answers on your own please follow the course email protocol as stated above to send an email to taxlaw@yorku.ca. Instead of individual replies, the subject matter of the questions, if warranted, will likely be brought up in class.

I am eager to talk shop all the time. But to make sure that any academic discussion with any student will be shared with all students in the course so all students can benefit from it, please follow course email protocol to email the questions to taxlaw@yorku.ca so I can incorporate your wonderful contributions into the development of our course for all students. I am confident that such an approach is more conducive to learning than, let’s say traditional office hours, given the pedagogical design of the course.

5. Evaluation: Less is more

The evaluation focuses on what students are expected to learn in university studies information literacy, critical thinking and effective communication as well as responsibility. Very specific submission and presentation protocols of work done for the course will only be explained in class.

Feedbacks to students' learning progress will be embedded weekly in class so students can learn from each other. That's why attending all classes in full is paramount.

Students who attend all classes in full and do everything as required for the course will likely get a B or above.

A final letter grade for the course will be given to each student at the end of the academic year based on the following components. All students are graded in comparison to each other in the course.

5.1. At least four articles proposed by each student for all students in the course to work through deemed to be acceptable to be linked to on eClass (20%).

As you can see in the class schedule near the end of the course outline, no readings are listed under the topic of each class. In each class a discussion of the topic for the following class will be held for students to gain a sense of what the following class could be about.

Each student will have until 11:59 pm EST the Tuesday before the class on Thursday to submit a link of a proposed article to taxlaw@yorku.ca from a York University student email account with the following subject line: "3762-proposed reading for class x [x refers to the number of the class in which the item will be discussed]."

Students are expected to start making submissions after Class 1. In the submission emails, students are expected to explain very briefly why the article is proposed. Students are encouraged to go beyond just googling for a news item that looks like it might fit the class.

One student can only make one submission for each class. Not all submissions will be used in class. Students will find out whether their articles are accepted on eClass when the package for the Thursday's class is posted. Proposed articles not used will not be counted as submissions.

Students with a link of an article accepted for use in the seminar will be engaged with a conversation about the proposed article in class.

Normally late submission will not be graded. To help reduce the stress levels of students, a discretionary decision is made to grade some but not all late submissions.

If a submission arrives after 12 am EST but before 1 am EST of the Wednesday before the Thursday class, the submission will be graded with a 30% penalty. That means if such a submission earns 50 marks, the 30% penalty will be 15 marks, and the marks recorded will be 35 marks.

If a submission arrives after 2 am EST but before 3 am EST of the Wednesday before the Thursday class, the submission will be graded with a 60% penalty. That means if the submission earns 50 marks, the 60% penalty will be 30 marks, and the submission marks recorded will be 20 marks.

If the submission arrives after 3 am EST of the Wednesday before the Thursday class, the submission will be given 0 mark.

5.2. Reading diary (40%).

As an attempt to help students develop a reading habit, students are asked to read a part of a designated Kindle book and log their work product on a special spreadsheet each day throughout the term.

The special Excel spreadsheet is available on eClass as the off-line logbook for the exercise. The designated book will be discussed in the third class. No other file format will be accepted.

The deadline for submission will be 11:59 pm EST Friday March 10. Students are required to use their York University email account to submit the provided Excel workbook to taxlaw@yorku.ca with the following subject line: 3762-diary.

Normally late submission will not be graded. To help reduce the stress levels of students, a discretionary decision is made to grade some but not all late submissions.

If a submission arrives after 12 am EST March 11, 2023 but before 1 am EST March 11, 2023, the submission will be graded with a 30% penalty. That means if such a submission earns 50 marks, the 30% penalty will be 15 marks, and the marks recorded will be 35 marks.

If a submission arrives after 2 am EST March 11, 2023 but before 3 am EST March 11, 2023, the submission will be graded with a 60% penalty. That means if the submission earns 50 marks, the 60% penalty will be 30 marks, and the submission marks recorded will be 20 marks.

If the submission arrives after 3 am EST March 11, 2023, the submission will be given o mark.

5.3. Capstone project (40%).

As an attempt to encourage students to think through labour market policy issues, students are asked to prepare a 1,000-word essay on a designated topic based on three sets of class notes students are expected to prepare after all classes.

Class note preparation will be discussed in the first class. A template will be provided. Students are required to use the template to take good notes on the content package for each class after each class for use in their capstone projects. Students are expected to start preparing their notes after Class 1.

In a particular window in each class students will be asked to submit the notes they compile on a previous class by submitting the notes in a PDF to taxlaw@yorku.ca with the subject line: 3762-note-[last name]-Class[number]. The number refers to the previous class. Class notes will only be accepted in specific windows in classes. Students must use the template available on eClass for their notes, and students must answer all questions of the template for their notes for each class. There's no reason why students cannot convert their class notes based on the MS Word template into PDF given that MS Word is provided to all students for free as part of MS Office by the university. The class notes are used to keep track of the learning progress of students. The class notes submitted in class are not graded.

The capstone project topic along with very specific submission protocol will be provided in class after the submission of the diary. Students cannot choose their own capstone topic given the pedagogical design of the course.

The deadline for the submission of the capstone project will be 11:59 pm Tuesday April 18. Students are required to use their York University email account to submit the Capstone Project to taxlaw@yorku.ca with the following subject line: 3762-capstone. Very specific submission protocol must be followed as discussed in class.

Normally late submission will not be graded. To help reduce the stress levels of students, a discretionary decision is made to grade some but not all late submissions.

If a submission arrives after 12 am EST April 19, 2023 but before 1 am EST April 19, 2023, the submission will be graded with a 30% penalty. That means if such a submission earns 50 marks, the 30% penalty will be 15 marks, and the marks recorded will be 35 marks.

If a submission arrives after 2 am EST April 19, 2023 but before 3 am EST April 19, 2023, the submission will be graded with a 60% penalty. That means if the submission earns 50 marks, the 60% penalty will be 30 marks, and the submission marks recorded will be 20 marks.

If the submission arrives after 3 am EST April 19, 2023, the submission will be given 0 mark.

6. Tentative Schedule: Learning by doing

Remember, students are asked to do the bulk of the work for each class only *after* each class. The full package of the following class will be posted on eClass shortly before that class. Again, a rundown of the topics of the classes as a cohesive set will be provided in the first class.

Module I: Contextualized Highlights

Jan. 12. Class 1 The rat race: are you just trying to keep up with the Jones?

Jan. 19. Class 2 Freedom: well, you have to punch in and punch out, so?

Jan. 26. Class 3 Work: isn't it mind-numbing?

Feb. 2. Class 4 Unemployment: you know EI can't pay the rent, right?

Module II: Deep Structure

Feb. 9. Class 5 Class: you feel like you can't escape from the economic class you are condemned to?

Feb. 16. Class 6 Race: is systemic racism haunting you?

Mar. 2. Class 7 Gender: you see that it's not just race as gender discrimination is everywhere too?

Mar. 9. Class 8 Power: as a worker you think you have any?

Module III: Fundamental Challenges

Mar. 16. Class 9 Income inequality: why should the fat cats make x times more than you make?

Mar. 23. Class 10 Wealth inequality: why should the fat cats have a net worth that make yours look nonexistent?

Mar. 30. Class 11 Political inequality: just because they can pull it off?

Apr. 6. Class 12 Justice: are you willing to just take it or do something about it?

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[ADDITIONAL CONTENT PROVIDED BY UNIVERSITY]

Adapted Standardized Information from York University

Land Acknowledgment

York University recognizes that many Indigenous Nations have longstanding relationships with the territories upon which York University campuses are located that precede the establishment of York University. York University acknowledges its presence on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations. The area known as Tkaronto has been care taken by the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat. It is now home to many First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities. We acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This territory is subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region [see <https://www.yorku.ca/laps/land-acknowledgment/>]. For a video, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNZi301-p8k>.

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Please note that this is a seminar that depends on remote teaching and learning. There will be no in-person interactions or activities on campus. Zoom, eClass and the university's email network will be used in this seminar.

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Zoom is hosted on servers in the United States and Canada. Recordings done since May 1, 2022 are stored in Canada. For more information, please refer to the notes on Zoom Privacy and Security provided by Information Security at York. If you have privacy concerns about your data, provide only your first name when you join a session. The system is configured in a way that all participants are automatically notified when a session is being recorded. In other words, a session cannot be recorded without you knowing about it.

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Please review the technology requirements and FAQs for eClass [<https://lthelp.yorku.ca/95440-student-faq>].

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For undergrad emails, see <https://google.info.yorku.ca>.

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We strive to maintain academic integrity to the highest extent possible. Please familiarize yourself with the meaning of academic integrity by completing SPARK's Academic Integrity module at the beginning of the seminar [<https://www.yorku.ca/unit/vpacad/academic-integrity/>]. Breaches of academic integrity range from cheating to plagiarism

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(i.e., the improper crediting of another's work, the representation of another's ideas as your own, etc.). All instances of academic dishonesty in this seminar will be reported to the appropriate university authorities, and can be punishable according to the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty [<https://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/policies/academic-honesty-senate-policy-on/>].

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All materials prepared for PPAS 4130A at York University are the intellectual property of Professor Thaddeus Hwong unless otherwise stated. This can include but is not limited to the following materials: spoken and written presentations; assignment handouts and instructions. Seminar materials should only be used by students enrolled in PPAS 4130A. As a student in PPAS 4130A, you may not publish, post on an Internet site, sell, or otherwise distribute any of this work without the instructor's express permission. Unauthorized or commercial use of these materials is strictly prohibited. Copying this material for distribution (e.g. uploading material to a commercial third-party website, or online sharing of seminar material with people outside of the seminar) may lead to a charge of misconduct under York's Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities [<https://oscr.students.yorku.ca/student-conduct>] and the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty. In addition, you may face legal consequences for any violation of copyright law.

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While all students are expected to satisfy the requirements of their program of study and to aspire to achieve excellence, the university recognizes that persons with disabilities may require reasonable accommodation to enable them to perform at their best. For more information about this policy, please refer to these guidelines and procedures: Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities [<https://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/policies/academic-accommodation-for-students-with-disabilities-policy/>]. The university encourages students with disabilities to register with Student Accessibility Services [<https://accessibility.students.yorku.ca>] to discuss their accommodation needs as early as possible in the term. An Accessibility Counsellor will help you establish recommended academic accommodations, which will then need to be communicated to Professor Hwong as necessary. Please let Professor Hwong know as early as possible in the term if you anticipate requiring academic accommodation, so that your accommodation needs can be discussed and considered within the context of this seminar.