

**Instruments and Instrumentalities**  
**COMS 648, McGill University (“Bodies and Machines”)**  
**MUS 241R, Harvard University (“Sound Studies”)**

**Instructors:**

Emily I. Dolan, [edolan@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:edolan@fas.harvard.edu)

Jonathan Sterne, [jonathan.sterne@mcgill.ca](mailto:jonathan.sterne@mcgill.ca)

Please call us “Emily” and “Jonathan.”

Please tell us what you would like to be called.

**Dolan Office:** Music Building, Room [306 North](#)

**Sterne Office:** W280 Arts (3rd floor, west wing)

**In-the-Flesh Office Hours:** by appointment

**Phone or Skype Office Hours:** by appointment

“As a fiþele his wynges furde..Muriere Instrument neuere nas þan his wyngen were!”

-- The South English Legendary, 1290; earliest use of the word “instrument” in English.

“Thy mistress... hath played the trumpet in my bed”

-- Urban legend. Othello’s explanation for strangling Desdemona in Thomas Bowlder’s *Family Shakespeare* edition.

“Report: Saxophone Still An Okay Vehicle For Self-Expression” -- *The Onion*

“Two items, see photographs attached, were left at CIRMMT. If these items belong to you please see Yves Méthot to retrieve them.”

-- Email to the CIRMMT student listserv, 8 September 2015. Subject: lost and found.



### Seminar Description

What is an instrument? Today, in a variety of fields, the definitions of *instrument* and *instrumentality* are transforming. While retaining its older connotations of delegation, means to ends, and tool-use, the terms *instrument*–and *instrumental*–now also imply bigger, messier complexes of technologies, bodies and rationalities. In some places, like the dashboards in cars, once-separate instruments collapse into systems. In others, like operating rooms, music studios, and financial markets, they proliferate wildly.

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(4 January 2016 Draft: subject to minor changes.)

In this seminar, we will think transversally, across categories and contexts, to consider the form and meaning of musical instruments, technical instruments, and ideas of instrumentality.

Music and musical instruments will be a major focus, but we will also investigate instruments from other areas. How might thinking about instrumentality more broadly— by looking at the fork, the speculum, the computer mouse, and the clock—inform our understanding of music and its relationships to technology? Conversely, how might the history of musical technology help us understand and unpack the concept of instrumentality more broadly? Readings will draw from music, media studies, science and technology studies, sound studies, cultural studies, and related fields.

This is a distributed seminar: this means that it will be co-taught by Dolan and Sterne at their respective institutions at the same time each week. For some sessions, the two seminars will meet jointly, via a high-quality (we hope) digital link. For other sessions, the seminars will meet separately and we will share notes. Our syllabi will be similar but not necessarily identical. In March, the Harvard seminar will visit McGill; in April, the McGill seminar will visit Harvard. The workload of this seminar is focused on short weekly writing assignments, the study of an instrument-maker, and an end-of-term talk, rather than the typical 25-30 page seminar paper.

#### **A Disclaimer**

This is an experimental seminar format and we are both excited to see how this kind of distance collaboration works. We might encounter hiccups over the course of the semester and some elements that we have planned out might need to be nuanced or even radically changed as the semester unfolds. But we are also hoping that we can all reflect productively on seminar format and its pedagogical advantages, disadvantages, and challenges. This means we'll want feedback from you during the semester (please don't wait until the end of the semester to tell us something that might have been really helpful to do!). We also hope that this course inspires you to think of new ways of collaborating across institutional, disciplinary, and national boundaries in your future teaching.

#### **A Note on the Schedule**

McGill seminars are typically 3 hours long; Harvard seminars are typically 2 hours. We would like to ask that the Harvard students to keep the extra hour (4.30-5.30) after the official time slot seminar free. Given the complexity and size of the joint seminar, it will be imperative to have the extra time available for our digital meetings. But it is good to have this extra time even for our separate meetings: it might be useful to use the additional hour to go look at a particular object or just to let discussion unfold in a more leisurely fashion.

### Important Dates

It would be much easier to coordinate this seminar if McGill and Harvard's semester schedules perfectly matched up! As it is, our semesters begin and end at different times and our spring breaks do not overlap either. Since we aren't meeting digitally each week, this is not a problem. Below are the main dates to keep in mind.

**McGill Term:** 7 January- 15 April

**Harvard Term:** 25 January - 27 April

**McGill Spring Break:** February 28- March 6

**Harvard Spring Break:** March 12- March 20

**Cambridge to Montreal Visit:** 22 March

**Montreal to Cambridge Visit:** 19 April

### Schedule of Classes

A link to help you do the readings:

Paul Edwards, How to Read a Book, <http://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/howtoread.pdf>

#### **January 12 (McGill only)**

Tomlinson, Gary. "Some First Principles," *A Million Years of Music: The Emergence of Human Modernity*, 23-50 (Jonathan will spend time on pp 45-50 especially). Cambridge: Zone Books, 2015.

#### Recommended:

Tresch, John, and Emily Dolan. "Toward a New Organology: Instruments of Music and Science." *Osiris* 28 (2013): 278-98.

Sterne, Jonathan. "What Do We Want? Materiality! When Do We Want It? Now!" In *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality and Society*, edited by Tarleton Gillespie, Pablo J. Boczkowski, and Kirsten A. Foot, 119-28. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014. (Apologies, it's an uncorrected proof).

#### **January 19 (McGill only) To Be Decided, But How About:**

Rodgers, Tara. "Tinkering With Cultural Memory: Gender and the Politics of Synthesizer History." *Feminist Media Histories* 1, no. 4 (n.d.): 5-30.

Weheliye, Alexander. "'Feenin': Posthuman Voices in Contemporary Black Popular Music." *Social Text* 20, no. 2 (2002): 21-47.

Slack, Jennifer Daryl. "The Theory and Method of Articulation in Cultural Studies." In *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues*, edited by David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, 113–29. New York: Routledge, 1996.

### **January 26: Discussion; Mini-lectures "How I Got into Instruments and What I Can Get Out of It" + Hermeneutic Reverse-Engineering**

Shapin, Steven. "Pump and Circumstance: Robert Boyle's Literary Technology." *Social Studies of Science* 14, no. 4 (November 1, 1984): 481–520.

Meintjes, Louise. "The Recording Studio as Fetish." *Sound of Africa!: Making Music Zulu in a South African Studio*, 71–108. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Stanyek, Jason, and Benjamin Piekut. "Deadness: Technologies of the Intermundane." *The Drama Review* 54, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 14–38.

### **February 2 Keyboards and Keyboards**

Moseley, Roger. "Digital Analogies: The Keyboard as Field of Musical Play." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 68/1 (2015): 151–228.

Jain, Sarah S. Lochlann. "Keyboard Design." *Injury: The Politics of Product Design and Safety Law in the United States*, 86–123. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.

Pinch, Trevor. "Why You Go to a Piano Store to Buy a Synthesizer: Path Dependence and the Social Construction of Technology." In *Path Dependence and Creation*, edited by Raghu Garud and Peter Karnøe, 381–402. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2001.

#### Recommended:

Kursell, Julia. "Visualizing Piano Playing, 1890–1930." *Grey Room* 43 (Spring 2011): 66–87.  
Kittler typewriter

#### Optional Additional Groundhog Day Assignment:

Write a short analytical response to the film *Groundhog Day* (1993) in terms of the themes of instrumentality we're exploring this term: mastery, agency, knowledge & information, etc.

### **February 9 Time and Process**

Nakamura, Lisa. "Indigenous Circuits: Navajo Women and the Racialization of Early Electronic Manufacture." *American Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (2014): 919–41.

Canales, Jimena. "Moments of Contact." *A Tenth of a Second: A History*, 87–115. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Simondon, Gilbert. "Technical Mentality." *Parrhesia*, no. 7 (2009): 17–27.

Balsamo, Anne. "Taking Culture Seriously in the Age of Innovation." *Designing Culture: The Technocultural Imagination at Work*, 1-25. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011. (see also: <http://www.designingculture.org/release-0711/flashroot.html> )

Recommended:

TBA (but probably Lewis Mumford on clocks and Sara Sharma on the politics of time)

## February 16 Bodies and Techniques

Elias, Norbert. "On Behavior at the Table." *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, 72-109. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Maltham: Basil Blackwell, 2000.

Mauss, Marcel. "Body Techniques." *Sociology and Psychology: Essays*, 95-123. Translated by Ben Brewster. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979.

Murphy, Michelle. Immodest Witnessing, Affective Economies and Objectivity. *Seizing the Means of Reproduction: Entanglements of Feminism, Health and Technoscience*, 68-101. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

Recommended:

Macho, Thomas "Second-Order Animals: Cultural Techniques of Identity and Identification," *Theory, Culture and Society* 30, no. 6 (2013): 30-47.

Siegert, Bernhard. "Cultural Techniques: Or the End of the Intellectual Postwar Era in German Media Theory." *Theory, Culture & Society* 30, no. 6 (2013): 48-65.

## February 23 Instrumentality for Whom?

Ahmed, Sara. "Orientation Toward Objects." *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 25-63. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Williamson, Bess. "Electric Moms and Quad Drivers: People with Disabilities Buying, Making, and Using Technology in Postwar America." *American Studies* 52, no. 1 (2012): 5-29.

Horkheimer, Max. "Means and Ends." *Eclipse of Reason*, 1-39. New York: Continuum, 1947.

Recommended:

Evil Media excerpts

## March 1 (Harvard only; McGill on Spring break): Instrument Interview Presentations and Discussions

## March 7: Control!

Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. "Daemonic Interfaces, Empowering Obfuscations." *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory*, 59-96. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011.

Berlioz, Hector; Hugh McDonald trans. *Berlioz's Orchestration Treatise: A Translation and Commentary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. (selections)

Wiener, Norbert. *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society*. London: Free Association Books, 1989. (selections)

Recommended:

Striphas, Ted. "Algorithmic Culture." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 18, no. 4-5 (August 1, 2015): 395-412.

**March 14 (McGill only; Harvard on Spring break): Instrument Interview Presentations**

**March 22: (Harvard to McGill) Agency** For this week, instead of applying readings to new research, pick one prior reading, and use one of this week's reading to think through the author's rendering of agency.

Born, Georgina and Joe Snape, "Max, Music Software and the Mutual Mediation of Aesthetics and Digital Technologies." Paper in progress. Please send them your comments!

Foucault, Michel. "Questions of Method." In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, edited by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, translated by Colin Gordon, 73-86. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Gupta, Akhil. "Poverty as Biopolitics," *Red Tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India*, 3-39 (notes 293-300). Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

Recommended:

Latour, Bruno. Excerpts from: *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-network-theory*. Clarendon Lectures in Management Studies. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

For those who can attend, there will be some optional additional activities outside of regular class time on the 22nd.

**March 29: Innovation and Resistance:**

Patteson, Thomas. "A New, Perfect Musical Instrument: The Trautonium and Electric Music in the 1930s," from *Instruments for New Music*. Berkeley: California University Press, 2015, 114-167.

Akrich, Madeleine. "The De-Description of Technical Objects." In *Shaping Technology, Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, edited by Wiebe Bijker and J. Law, 205-24. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992.

Geoghegan, Bernard Dionysus. "From Information Theory to French Theory: Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss, and the Cybernetic Apparatus." *Crit. Inq. Critical Inquiry* 38, no. 1 (2011): 96-126.

Recommended:

Bijsterveld, Karin, and Marten Schulp. "Breaking into a World of Perfection: Innovation in Today's Classical Musical Instruments." *Social Studies of Science* 34, no. 5 (2004): 649–74.

#### **April 5: Musical Boundary Objects**

Veal, Michael. recording studio chapter *Dub: Soundscapes and Shattered Songs in Jamaican Reggae*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 2007.

"Performing Performance: Interface Design, Liveness, and Listener Orientation," Butler, Mark J. *Playing with Something That Runs : Technology, Improvisation, and Composition in DJ and Laptop Performance*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Gordon, Bonnie. "The Castrato Meets the Cyborg." *The Opera Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (2011): 94–121

Star, Susan Leigh, and James R. Griesemer. "Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39." *Social Studies of Science* 19, no. 3 (1989): 387–420.

#### Recommended:

Eno, Brian. "The Recording Studio as a Compositional Tool, Part I." *Downbeat*, July 1983, 56-7.

Riskin, Jessica. "The Defecating Duck, or, the Ambiguous Origins of Artificial Life," *Critical Inquiry* 29 (2003): 599-633.

**April 12: Papers due this week, no seminar meeting, extra office hours.**

**April 19: McGill to Harvard:--end of term comment meetings. Visit instruments collections. Woo hoo.**

**April 26 (Harvard Only) Seminar Vote**

## **Course Requirements**

### **Etiquette:**

1. Full and complete attendance, attention, participation, listening and reading (of required texts). We expect the very best you can give.
2. Good faith and good humor toward your colleagues in the classroom. For both: disagreements are expected and encouraged, but please keep nitpicking to a minimum; personal attacks and intimidation are not acceptable under any circumstances. There will be a strict limit on seek-and-destroy hermeneutics. Follow the Golden Rule. Encourage basic questions as well as advanced ones.
3. Your job as a participant is to listen actively to what others have to say and advance the discussion. **If you are confident contributor** use your confidence for good and not evil. Help bring

others into discussion, refer to your classmates by name, and be positive about the contributions of those who do not say as much.

4. While personal anecdotes are allowed, keep in mind this is a PhD seminar. Others may disagree with your interpretation of your experience. This is encouraged and allowed. If you are not comfortable with this, do not share your story.

5. **Awkward Silences** and hesitation are okay. Don't feel you need to rush to speak and don't worry if you need a little time to articulate something. Contributing to class discussion is more than the frequency of the times your hand goes up and the number of words you say. If you are struggling to articulate something, that's probably a sign that you are saying something that is new and not obvious.

6. Difficult content: There's been a lot of talk in the press about content warnings and student comfort in the classroom. As your profs, we will never do anything intentionally to shock or traumatize students. At the same time, it's our job to discuss difficult subjects in class, and nobody can predict the effect some materials may have on someone. We will try and give previews of the kinds of content you will encounter before you encounter it. If we forget, feel free to ask. If you are having difficulty dealing with a class discussion or a reading or recording, you may raise the issue as part of the discussion (keeping in mind #4 above), or you may simply discretely step out of class. A note to us (the profs) would be helpful after the fact so that we know what happened and don't think you just got up and left.

### **Technology Policy**

This course will encourage the thoughtful use of scholarly technologies such as talking and reading, computers and the internet, pen and paper, projection and chalkboards, etc.

1. For our "talking about ideas" components, you will use a writing utensil and paper (unless you bring me a note from the Office for Students With Disabilities). The classroom will not be an environment of "ambient computing." If you need to open a computer (or any device with a microprocessor and internet connection) to look stuff up, you will do that and then close the computer.
2. We will discuss the politics of printing out readings vs. looking at them on screen. For written texts without significant multimedia components, I will expect you to print them out and bring them to class.
3. For classes where everyone meets together, we may use laptops, devices and VOIP and video services for small groups and collaborative discussions.
4. We will discuss this technology policy on the first day of class.

### **Stuff You Will Do In This Class (and % of semester grade):**

#### **I. Participation in Class Discussions (20%)**

Talk about the reading and writing you did. See above and below.



## **An Experiment in Collective Reflection**

To encourage exchange across the two halves of this seminar, we will randomly assign you into smaller subgroups (which will be a mix of Harvard and McGill students). At least every other week (though more often if you are so inclined), you all will share reflections on the class discussion and readings within your subgroup on Canvas.

This should be short: think in terms of a one-paragraph email to your friends. There is no specific due date: it should be done once a week.

## **Gatherers**

In each given seminar, two students will be the designated gatherers. This means that one student will take notes, jotting down the major questions and discussion threads that emerge during the meeting. The other gatherer will keep a keen ear out for references to other material not listed on the syllabus and will track down full references (either by contacting the person who mentioned it or using library/Google resources).

We are **not** expecting a transcription of the entire seminar discussion: that would be both exhausting for the note takers and would prevent them from participating in discussion. Instead, we are looking for a 1-3 page (and no more) list of themes; bulleted lists are okay. These notes will be shared between the seminars.

Gatherings should be posted to the course website by Friday of each week.

## **II. Learn to Use a New Instrument (0%--you can thank us now)**

This does not need to be a musical instrument. Keep a journal recording your experience with this instrument. You will not be evaluated on your ability to learn the instrument or anything else. "It's the journey, not the destination, man." There will be a section of the Canvas site devoted to this where you can share your experiences. If possible, aim to contribute at least four times over the course of the semester (i.e., once a month).

## **III. Interview an Instrument Maker (10%)**

We ask that, in pairs (and possibly a trio depending on enrolment), you find a local instrument maker and conduct an interview and write up a short report that you will post for the class to read, and each class will discuss the results of their interviews collectively the week that the other class is on spring break. Anyone anywhere warm in the other class should send pictures of palm trees. Interviews will have some shared questions, determined collectively by the seminar (Montreal and Cambridge versions may differ), and of course some questions may be specific to your instrument or maker.

You may already know an instrument maker or you may require some assistance tracking someone down. We're happy to help! On Canvas, Harvard students can find a list of instrument makers local to the Boston area (McGill students are welcome to look at this too!) Jonathan does not have a comprehensive list but knows of a lot of instrument makers in Montreal.

#### IV. Ongoing Instrument Project (70%)

Over the course of the semester, you will work on a particular instrument, around which you will assemble a dossier of sources and a portfolio of your own writing.

##### 1. (25 January, McGill/1 February Harvard): The commitment.

By noon on your institutional due date, you must submit a proposed topic to both profs for your semester project. The 1-2 page document will offer a 1-paragraph description of what you intend to research, and a list of potential places to go looking for primary source materials that matches well with the kinds of materials discussed in the readings. Please also list 5 secondary sources you can consult, ideally other scholars in your field (or a related field) who have written about your topic.

Note: This commitment is not provisional; once we approve it (and we may ask you to modify), you are committed to it for the entire term, though you can take it anywhere you like.

Your topic should be broad enough to keep you interested for the whole term, narrow enough to actually yield something like a conference talk or a journal article.

Your chosen instrument can be as general as “the speedometer,” “a cane,” or as specific as “Prince’s sign-shaped guitar”; the important thing is that there is a good deal of documentation about your instrument readily available to you. We will also provide you with a “treasure hunt” document to help you think up places to find primary sources. Over the course of the semester, we will ask you to build up a trove of documents and artifacts relating to your instrument.

Importantly, your topic does not have to be completely original. You can research something that’s already been researched. There is no burden of originality at all in object choice. In fact, we recommend avoiding the impulse to be too clever at this stage.

You are also disallowed from writing on your thesis topic. Choose something similar, allied, orthogonal or completely different to it, so long as you’re comfortable with the topic and it’s interesting to you. This will allow you greater room to experiment and also, free you of a certain amount of ego-investment in the topic.

##### 2. Weekly (except as noted): the dossier of sources.

Each week, you will acquire at least one artifact or document for your semester project in that has some relation to the week’s reading assignment. Some weeks we may give more direct guidance than others. If your object is not digital, you will find a way to document it digitally, and post your document to a folder on the course website.

You are, of course, welcome to collect more, but this is meant to be a process of weekly accumulation. Even if you collect a lot of documents in a single week, you are expected to keep at it week after week.

3. Weekly (except as noted): mini papers.

Each week (by Monday, noon), you will upload to Canvas a short paper of approximately 500-800 words (2-3 pages double-spaced in a standard font, excluding citations). The paper will make use of the document or artifact you acquired for the week (if you acquired more than one, focus on one, though others may be mentioned if necessary; you may also refer to material from previous weeks).

The paper must be written in the style of an author we have read for the week. Choose an aspect of one of the week's assigned reading to imitate and try your best to imitate it. Your job is to try and occupy the same discursive headspace as the reading, except with your own material. The relevant aspects of "style" here are up to your interpretation. Is it something about the author's prose style that is relevant? Her analytical approach or theoretical commitments? The types of source materials he uses? We are asking you to take an instrumental approach to the reading.

4. Weekly (except as noted): in-class readings.

Bring your paper to class (and your artifact if it's good for show-and-tell) and be prepared to discuss your choices. Most weeks, we will have one or more students read from their papers, which will lead us into a discussion of the assigned text for the week. We may revise or modify this practice as seems fitting for class discussion.

5. 12 April, 11.59pm: The "Not-Really-Final" paper (posted in the appropriate place on Canvas). By the time you reach this stage, you will have produced over 20 pages of text, in many different styles. For this project, you will revise them into a single 7-8 page double-spaced/ 2500-3000 word paper (roughly the length of a 15-20 minute conference presentation), with a coherent argumentative arc and style, in "your own" voice. This is strictly an exercise in writing and revision. No new research is expected; indeed new research will interfere with the main purposes of this assignment, which is to focus on writing.

6. Feedback will be delivered at a class "conference" at the end of term in Cambridge.

Everyone will read everyone's paper. However, you will also be assigned a small group, where members will all give feedback to one another on papers. Your goal is to identify what the paper is doing on its own terms and help the author to do more, or to do it better. What is the argument? How is evidence being used? What are the important stylistic elements? For students who cannot be physically present at the end of term conference, we will find a way to involve them in the small group discussions.

**Prof Feedback:**

You are encouraged to meet with your home prof to discuss your performance in the course.

You are encouraged to meet with either of us to talk ideas.

We will BOTH provide feedback on the initial proposal for choice of object.

Your first weekly response will receive a close read *with written comments* from your “home” prof. After that, we will not provide detailed written feedback but will read everything. If there is an issue with one of your responses, we will let you know.

You are welcome to set a meeting with one of us (in most cases the “home” prof makes the most sense) to get feedback on your writing. Ideally, you would pick 1-2 assignments for comment after having done a few.

Your final assignment will receive substantial written feedback from both of us.

### **Peer Feedback:**

You are encouraged to read other students’ weekly responses in preparation for class, or even after. Feel free to reply to them, as well. But this is not required and will not be evaluated except insofar as it follows class discussion rules.

For final projects, you will be asked (and given time) to provide substantial feedback on a classmate’s project. We might mix it up across national boundaries, or not.

### **The Course Website**

We will all use Canvas, via Harvard, for our course website (<https://canvas.harvard.edu>, then click the “XID” tab and log in with your name and password). There you will find PDFs of our readings, a copy of this syllabus, as well as a platform for online discussions. For McGill students, you will need to be manually added to the site. First, please visit <https://xid.harvard.edu/xid-apps/> and create an XID. Once you’ve created the XID, **please email it to both Jonathan and Emily and we will add you to the course.** You will access the course by logging on with you XID.

## **Other Policies**

**Travel:** While travel for the course is encouraged, it is not required. We will provide students with funds to cover bus tickets, as well as a nice reception at the other end. We are also hoping that students can host one another at each destination.

**French:** In Quebec, you have the right to submit your written work in French and many years some students in Jonathan’s seminars choose to do so. If you plan to write in French, please get in touch with Jonathan during add-drop so we can talk about how to handle it, as he is not particularly good at French. Normally it’s not a problem but since there is a writing-intensive component to the class, we should at least discuss how it will work.

Class discussions are in English, but native French speakers are encouraged to resort to French if you can't find the right word in English and we'll figure it out together. You are also welcome to read course materials in French (where they are available in French).

**Accommodation:** If you require special accommodations or classroom modifications of any kind, please notify both the professor and Office for Students with Disabilities by the end of the first week in which you are enrolled in the course. They are located in suite 3100 Brown Student Services Bldg., 398-6009 (voice), 398-8198 (TDD), [<http://www.mcgill.ca/osd/>].

**Nondiscrimination:** If there is something we can do to make the class more hospitable, please let us know. We value equality of opportunity, and human dignity and diversity. In accordance with our Universities' policies, we will not tolerate discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, ethnic or national origin, civil status, religion, creed, political convictions, language, sex, sexual orientation, social condition, age, personal difference or the use of assistive technology in negotiating that difference. Among other things, this means that you do not have to agree with your teacher, the assigned readings, or the majority of your classmates in order to do well in this course. You are, however, obligated to demonstrate an understanding of the course material *whether or not you agree with it*.

**Auditors:** Because of the size of this course, auditors may only participate if they commit to participate fully in the term, except for the travel and final presentation. This includes the weekly writing requirements.

#### **How to Interpret McGill's Inflated Graduate-Level Grades:**

- A: Good work
- A-: Satisfactory
- B+: There is a problem with what you submitted
- B: There is a substantial problem with what you submitted
- B-: Lowest possible passing grade in a graduate course; indicates a major problem but not a failure
- C+ or lower: Officially considered a "fail" by the Graduate Studies Office.

In rare cases, if your performance on any assignment is not satisfactory, you may be asked to do it again.

**You must complete all the major assignments to pass the course.**

Activities for which you must be present cannot be made up.

**It is your responsibility to make sure we receive any assignment you turn in.**

**It is also your responsibility to properly back up your work:** keep more than one digital copy and always have a paper copy of anything you submit (files get corrupted, equipment gets stolen, etc). I recommend syncing your important documents to a cloud storage service.

**Incomplete grades are generally not allowed at Harvard.** Jonathan wishes this were so at McGill. Instead, he has the following complex policy:

**The K contract:** At McGill, grades of incomplete are called “K” grades and they are only supposed to be assigned after the student and professor have agreed upon a contract. I do not give incompletes (“K” grades) except in truly extraordinary personal circumstances that can be documented. K grades revert to “F” grades at the end of the next term unless a contract extension is signed by both professor and student. Extensions also will not be granted except in truly extraordinary circumstances.

**The Passive-Aggressive K:** Should a student fail to turn in a final paper and fail to contact me well before my deadline for submission of grades, I will issue a K grade without a contract. Graduate studies, however, still expects a contract to be filed and it will be the student’s responsibility to make sure one is submitted. In these circumstances, should the paper be completed at a later date, it will receive a mark. However, students who receive a “K” in this fashion will not be eligible to receive an “A” or “A-” for the course. I will not sign an extension for a K grade that was granted without a contract, and no late paper will be graded without a K contract being in place beforehand. I also cannot promise comments on a paper submitted after a passive-aggressive K.

**Required Academic Integrity Statement:** McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information).

**McGill Special Required Emergency Syllabus-Eraser Clause:** In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.