



ST. JEROME'S UNIVERSITY

St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo

Department of History

HIST 391 Winter/2020

The Black Death

Thursdays 2:30-4:20 SJ1 3020

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Jolanta N. Komornicka
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Black Death of the fourteenth century dramatically changed just about every aspect of medieval society. There are those who even argue that it is what inaugurated the beginning of the modern world. Over the course of the term, we will examine what the Black Death was, how it came to western Europe, and how it impacted the social, religious, political, and economic lives of the people of the fourteenth century. The course has been designed to reflect the way you are most likely to do research in a work environment: being able to quickly get up to speed on an unfamiliar topic, to answer questions or contribute background on it, and to find ways to convey it to an audience without such background. The way that we will be putting those into practice is through developing a game.

Games have a curious relationship to real human interactions and the business of living. On the one hand, games form the basis of some of the most compelling metaphors we use to describe human interactions. To give just a few examples, we refer to historical circumstances as “zero-sum games,” “horse races,” “gambles,” or “slam dunks.” Clever strategists “play 11-dimensional chess” against their opponents. On the other hand, games also often explicitly seek to model and reflect human life, be that in the moralizing fables built into Snakes and Ladders or the military structure of Chess. The fact that games model aspects of human life are part of what make them compelling.

This complex relationship and the fascination that humans have with games make them powerful tools for teaching and learning history. Like popular history books, blogs, articles, museum exhibits, and movies, games are often a form of popular history. Historians, however, rarely seize the opportunities they offer.

Games are perhaps the easiest way to teach history. Like theoretical models, they also offer the historian ways of reflecting on the past. In the same sense that a theoretical model may reveal aspects of the past otherwise invisible, games can give players an enhanced and experiential perspective on aspects of the past. At the same time, theories about the past (or games) may also obscure or leave out other critical aspects. For example, a Marxist perspective may reveal the importance of class or the kind of work someone does as a significant driver of their attitudes or behaviours. Such a perspective will be less valuable for understanding their religious beliefs, which may also inform their behaviour. Thus a theoretical perspective, or a game, may (and should) also lead to discussions of the ways in which such models both succeed and also fail to reflect the realities of the past.

In this course, students will develop an expertise on a focused aspect of the Black Death through a combination of the seminar readings, discussions, and an independent research project. Students will have some common readings that everyone does for discussion, but increasingly readings and sources will be divided up and you will rely on each other to contribute to the discussion. Each student will be assigned an aspect of the Black Death (medicinal treatments, theories of causation, economic repercussions, etc.). You will be responsible for reading in your own area and for bringing examples to class from that area when we discuss topics, especially in the last half of the semester. You will also be writing a paper on your new research specialty. Students will learn to work together with the instructor to create a game that models some aspect of the Black Death. Finally, they will evaluate the game they have produced in light of their knowledge of the period.

GAME MODEL

As much as it might be desirable, there is not adequate time to attempt to develop the basic mechanics of the game during the course. In part this is because the readings need to be built in advanced around a rough model. In part, the unpredictable process of game development makes it necessary to reduce the prospect of disorder so that we can finish on time and have a satisfying and more or less finished product.

In this case the game (name TBD, but for now called *Buboes*) will be a simple deck-building game focusing on the building of resources towards a variety of win conditions. (For non-game-players, all I can say is that this will make sense in time!) For ease of testing and production we will aim to have typical games last only 30-40 minutes and a deck of only a hundred or so cards.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

As a student in this class, you will:

- develop your ability to research unfamiliar topics
- use primary and secondary sources to answer questions (or find questions) other than what they were intended to answer

- think creatively about ways to convey material
- communicate clearly and analytically both in writing and in speech
- engage in an act of public history, akin to building a museum exhibit

REQUIRED TEXTS

Joseph P. Byrne. *The Black Death* (Greenwood, 2004). ISBN-13: 978-0313324925

Note: This book was published a decade before new research emerged that has given us new evidence regarding the Black Death. Therefore, I will be providing some corrections to the text as we go along.

Rosemary Horrox. *The Black Death* (Manchester UP, 1994). ISBN-13: 978-0719034985

Other readings will be available on Learn or through e-reserve (accessible through the Learn site). There will also be a game manual on Learn.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

Grade Breakdown

| <i>Assessment</i> | <i>Due Date</i> | <i>Weighting*</i> |
|------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Participation in discussion | Throughout | 15% |
| Participation in RTTP game | Weeks 7-8 | 8% |
| Participation in game design | Throughout | 20% |
| Research updates (x3) | Feb. 6, 27, Mar. 12 | 18% |
| Research paper | Apr. 20 | 29% |
| Game Review | Apr. 3 | 10% |

*Regarding Weighting

Please look again at the weightings listed above. You have the option of reweighting your assessments. If you choose to do so, you have 10% to play with. If you decide you want to reweight things based on your own assessment of yourself as a student, knowing your own strengths and weaknesses, you may do so by taking some points from one category and applying them to another (but again, you only have 10% to play with). There are a few rules to follow if you decide to do this:

- 1) You don't have to do this at all, nor do you have to use all 10%.
- 2) The total for all assessments together must equal 100%.
- 3) No assessment can be worth less than 4%.
- 4) No assessment can be worth more than 25%.

There is an online Getting to Know You "Quiz" on Learn. In that there is space to inform me

whether you've chosen to reweight your assignments or not. When the quiz closes on January 23rd, your weightings will be locked in for the term.

This course is a bit different from others you've taken before. The first 6 weeks will look largely normal: during our two-hour meetings, time will be split between a lecture and a discussion based on the readings. The second 6 weeks move in to "game time." In weeks 7 and 8, students will engage in an immersive role-playing game designed to make you think critically about the implications of the Black Death on daily life in a single community. Students will be asked to engage with the readings, but also use them to make arguments supporting or detracting from plague-response measures. The game involves giving prepared speeches (2-3 minutes long). The game also offers a means of focusing our attention on how games can be used to teach and impart historical information in a fun and engaging way. Weeks 9-12 turn to designing a game as a class. Through this experience, students will grapple with how to communicate complicated ideas effectively and engagingly, while considering how individuals came to the question of the Black Death differently and how multiple elements (religion, economics, politics, medicine, etc.) influenced each other. In order to create the game, students throughout the term will engage in a research project, whose information and insight they will share with the group.

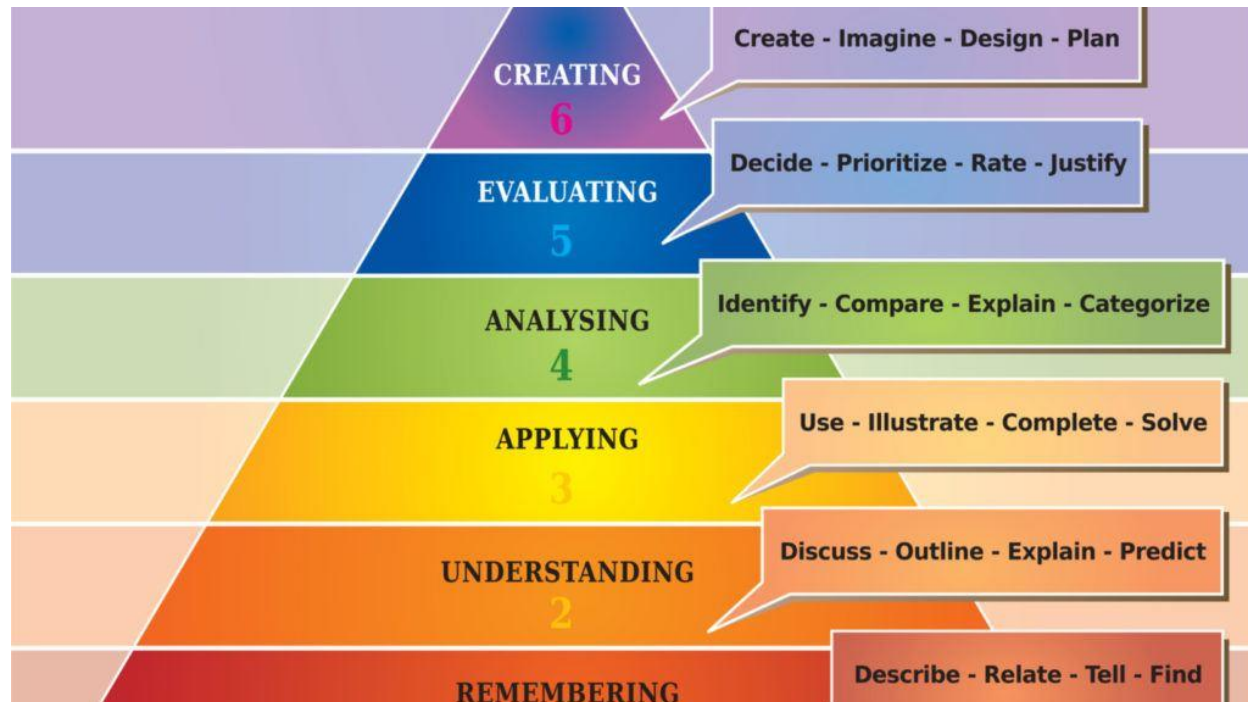
Participation in Discussion

DUE: Throughout. **In Class.** **WHAT:** All students are expected to attend class regularly and on time, having done their readings, ready to listen and contribute to discussion. Your mark is a combination of your attendance and your informed and active contribution. "Informed" means that you have done the readings. "Active" means that you have brought the results of that engagement into classroom discussion in the form of questions, observations, or answers to questions. The classroom is a collegial environment, meaning that everyone maintains standards of mutual respect. TLDR; attendance is required, but is not sufficient for a passing grade.

Discussion questions are part of your participation grade. A solid discussion question is NOT something that can be answered with a Yes/No. It should encourage comparison, analysis, reflection, or a combination thereof. I use Bloom's Taxonomy as a rule-of-thumb for evaluating your questions. Refer to the image below. A question on the level of Remember, where you are effectively just quizzing your fellow students to recall names/dates/facts will earn no higher than a C. The next level is around a B, then B+, A- and so on. These are not absolutes, as depending on how you ask the question and the response it generates in class I may award more points. An A+ level question is very hard to effectively ask early in the term and is something to aim for only as we move into game creation.

You must have your questions written out in advance of class (printed or hand-written is fine).

You will submit them to me at the end of class for evaluation.



Participation in RTTP Game

DUE: Weeks 7 and 8. In Class. WHAT: For two class sessions, we will hold an in-class role-playing game. Students will be assessed on their preparation and contributions. See the paragraph at the start of this page. There is a game manual on Learn; more information on the game will be covered in class.

Participation in Game Design

DUE: Throughout. In and Out of Class. WHAT: Throughout the semester we will be compiling a list of what material we would want to convey to someone for them to gain an understanding and appreciation for the Black Death. We will eventually be producing one game as a class, weaving together information from our common and individual readings for ideas and details. Each member of the class will be involved in submitting written work (background, game materials, rules, etc.) as part of this exercise. The class will make a playable prototype by the last week of class.

In other words, this course requires a qualitatively different sort of participation than is typical in most undergraduate history courses. It will require some group work (but all grades are individual), out-of-class time to test and develop certain aspects of the game (which is why we only have 2 contact hours per week, as opposed to 3), and raw practical work like printing and cutting cards for testing. A willingness to participate in these group activities is critical to the success of the course and will thus form part of your grade.

Students will be expected to make concrete contributions to the game. These will vary according to the sort of game the class develops, but may include producing historically accurate artwork, maps, game pieces, sound, or graphic design, finding relevant quotations from the period or place where the game is set, assembling sets of historical scenarios (or inventing accurate ones), working to research and develop the game mechanics, or writing game instructions. Everyone will also be expected to participate in testing the game to assure that it works as designed. This work may be done in groups or independently according to student preferences, but must be documented for grading. Time spent on the project must be documented in each class in the folder that is available to all students in the class. At the end of the class, a **brief portfolio including both evidence for the contributions and an accounting of the hours it took to produce it must be submitted to the instructor on the last day of class.**

A folder will be available in every class for students to document their time. Everyone will have access to that folder so that they can continually assess their own contributions against others in the class.

This portion of the grade will work from a baseline of 80%. An average contribution (generously interpreted) will receive that grade so that it is possible for everyone to receive 80% for this if the contributions are roughly equal. Those whose contribution is exceptional in terms of time or imaginative content will get more. The grade will also be reduced where a student falls well below the group average.

One critical element in participation will be reading the third Research Update (see below) of one of the other students in the class, in preparation for discussions in Week 10. The goal will not be to evaluate the Update, rather you will assist in the process of extracting valuable elements from the research for the game.

Research Updates

DUE: Feb. 6, Feb. 27, Mar. 12. In Class. WHAT: You will begin your research starting week 3. Every 2 weeks, you will submit research updates, for a total of 3. These are due in class as printed papers. Your updates should include a **brief summary** of what you read and, more importantly, what you see as **the most important points**, the **implications of the ideas** in the readings, and **questions that arise** from the readings. Your updates should also include a **list of sources**, formatted as a Chicago Manual of Style bibliographic entry. Your third update for March 12 (Week 9) should include the material from Weeks 5 and 7. Extra points may be awarded for going beyond what's listed above to consider **how a game could incorporate either the most important points or the implications of the ideas.** You will submit this third update on Learn in addition to as a print-out in class. The third update will be assigned to another student as part of the reading for class on March 19.

On March 19th, everyone will be giving short presentations about their research to the class. Highlight the important information you've discovered, connections you've noticed, and ideas you have about what will or won't fit into the game. Your presentation is your first opportunity to teach your specialty (Opportunity 2: the game; Opportunity 3: your research paper). You are

welcome to create slides or handouts or whatever else you think would be useful. Keep your presentation to 5 minutes (I will cut you off firmly at 6), so that everyone has a chance to speak. Remember that you are not alone in these presentations – one other student has read your research update and their job is to help you out during the presentation, offering connections and underscoring what they've found to be particularly interesting information. You can choose to coordinate or not, as suits you.

After March 12th, any further research you do will be incorporated directly into the game and your research paper – further update papers are not required. There is a rubric on Learn that I use for marking the updates. Use it as a guide for what makes a good Research Update.

For weeks 4-7, you are to read at least 1 scholarly article or one book chapter from a scholarly book per week. For weeks 8-12 (and beyond), you are to read at least 2 scholarly articles or half a scholarly monograph per week. The expectation for your research paper is that you will have a mix of articles and books in your bibliography, the majority having been published after 1980. **Your research paper should have a minimum of 14 unique sources** (i.e., multiple chapters from the same book written by the same author do not count as a separate source).

Chicago Manual of Style formatting is explained in brief at the following URL. This is the style I expect your Update and Research papers to follow:
https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html

Research Paper

DUE: Apr. 20 at noon. On Learn. WHAT: You will write a 15-page research paper based on your research topic. The paper will analyze your topic in relation to the Black Death and one other research topic from the course, examining how the other topic influenced the development of yours. For example, if your research topic was Burial Customs, you might look at how the topic Theories of Transmission influenced the way people handled the bodies and the personal belongings of the deceased. All the Research Updates shared for Week 10 will be available on Learn, and an invaluable resource for you as they will give you a jump-start on the research for the final paper. There is a rubric on Learn that I use for marking the papers. Use the rubric as a guide for what makes a good paper.

Game Review

DUE: Apr. 3 at 10pm. On Learn. WHAT: Like any theoretical model, a game that models a historical circumstance will have virtues and failings. In this written assignment, students will be asked to reflect on the game, identifying the ways it is and is not effective at communicating the historical realities it is meant to represent. To put it another way, is this a successful piece of public history?

Keep in mind this may refer to various aspects of the game: the mechanics of the game and how they reflect social realities; the selection of 'characters' for the game; the quotations or anecdotes on the cards; and the visual aspects of the game. Keep in mind as well the goals we set for what is most important to communicate to a broader public about the Black Death in the

mid- to late-fourteenth century. Did we accomplish these goals? Are there further questions that this game suggests? (Such as, what would a game about medieval leprosy look like?)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Readings are listed for the date they are due. Note that this course only meets for 2 hours per week. Because this is a research course, you are expected to use that 3rd classroom hour toward the work required for the class. This includes working collaboratively on the game outside of class.

Starting week 2 students will be reading primary sources from the Horrox book, in addition to what you come across in your individual research (after week 3). I will assign selections from Horrox that everyone will read. Beginning week 2, students will sign up to read additional selections. You are responsible for contributing that additional knowledge to the classroom during our discussions.

Effective discussions require preparation and participation. Come to class with the readings done and something to say. Every student should **prepare at least one discussion question** based on the readings or a combination of the readings and their research. You can expect me to cold-call on you to contribute (i.e. ask) your question should deathly silence fall upon the room. The reading schedule also has a list of activities/questions related to the game development. We will also be discussing these aspects in class. Reflect on them prior to entering the classroom. Review my evaluation criteria for discussion questions above.

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| Week 1 Jan. 9 | Introduction to the Course and Modern Epidemiology of the Black Death | |
| | Readings | --- |
| | Activity | Lecture: Modern Epidemiology of the Black Death Games, learning, and public history |
| | Questions | What aspects of medieval life and history can be studied through the Black Death? How does one translate the complexities and nuances of history into an accessible, engaging, and accurate forum for the public with minimal loss of historical information? |

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| Week 2 Jan. 16 | Black Death on the Move and Learning through Games | |
| | Readings | Byrne, Ch. 1-2 Horrox, pg. 3-13, #1, 2, 9, 11 Ibn al-Wardī, “Risālah al-Naba’ ‘an al-Waba’” (Doc. 8, pg. 173-77 of Byrne) |
| | Activity | Lecture: China to Europe Begin to develop three lists: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The indexes by which we might evaluate the role and impact of the Black Death in medieval society 2. Axes along which we can compare and contrast these indexes 3. What are the most important messages we want to give about the Black Death in the Middle Ages? |
| | Questions | What are the 5 critical things that need to be part of a game about the Black Death? What is the message we want to give about life in the midst of the Black Death? |

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| Week 3 Jan. 23 | What’s Causing All the Death? | |
| | Readings | Byrne, Ch. 5 Horrox, pg.95-110, #18, 20, 29, 68 Signed-up Horrox source (SuHS) # _____ |
| | Activity | Lecture: Blame Discussion of the suggested model for <i>Buboes</i> . Sign up for research topics. (you should start reading at least 1 scholarly article or one book chapter per week for your research at this point) |
| | Questions | Do we need to revise our three lists? What are the fields of history we want to focus on in the research projects? The goal is to arrive at a more or less representative or balanced list. |

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| Week 4 Jan. 30 | How Do We Cure It? | |
| | Readings | Byrne, Ch. 3 Horrox, #56, 58, 59 Ibn al-Khatib, "A Very Useful Inquiry into the Horrible Sickness" (Learn) SuHS # _____ Individual Research |
| | Activity | Lecture: Medical Interventions Possible testing of other comparable games. |
| | Questions | Do we need to revise our list of key messages? |

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| Week 5 Feb. 6 | Some Dance while Others Despair *** RESEARCH UPDATE 1 DUE IN CLASS *** | |
| | Readings | Byrne, Ch. 6, 7 Horrox, #19, 29, 52 Game Manual pg. 17-20 SuHS # _____ Individual Research |
| | Activity | Lecture: Coping and Surviving Discussion of model and development of basic version of the deck. Introduction to the RTTP Game and distribution of roles. |
| | Questions | Do we need to revise our list of key messages? |

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| Week 6 Feb. 13 | OMG | |
| | Readings | Byrne, Ch. 4 Horrox, #55, 120, 123 SuHS # _____ Individual Research Role Sheets |
| | Activity | Lecture: Religion Discussion of model and development of basic version of the deck. Discussion of what can be communicated visually, through quotes or scenarios as opposed to the mechanics. |
| | Questions | Do we need to revise our list of key messages? Any questions or concerns regarding the RTTP game? |

***** Feb. 20 No Class – Reading Week *****

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| Week 7 Feb. 27 | The Black Death Comes to Norwich *** RESEARCH UPDATE 2 DUE IN CLASS *** | |
| | Readings | Game Manual (Learn) Individual Research |
| | Activity | Game Day 1 Speeches Vote on best proposals |

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| | Questions | Do we need a change of venue? What's causing the plague? What can be done to prevent it from coming to Norwich? Who has the best explanation for what's causing the plague and what's the best solution? |
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| Week 8 Mar. 5 | The Black Death Comes to Norwich | |
| | Readings | Individual Research (you should start reading at least 2 scholarly journal articles or ½ a monograph each week as part of your research from this point forward) |
| | Activity | Game Day 2 Speeches Vote on actions to take |
| | Questions | What can you and your fellow town council members do to save Norwich from being decimated by the plague? What actions ought to be taken? |

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| Week 9 Mar. 12 | All About Games *** RESEARCH UPDATE 3 DUE IN CLASS <u>AND</u> ON LEARN *** | |
| | Readings | Individual Research |
| | Activity | RTTP debrief Development and Creation of the basic version of the deck. Sign up for reading one other student's research update. |
| | Questions | What elements do role-playing bring forward that we might want to incorporate into our game? |

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| Week 10 Mar. 19 | What Are We Trying to Say? | |
| | Readings | Individual Research Read the Research Update you signed up for (Learn) |
| | Activity | Mini-Presentations on your research to-date and what you think should be included in the game. Your partner (who read your update) will help you out. Presentations must be no longer than 5 minutes. |
| | Questions | What pieces of information are essential? What is flavour? How can we find a balance? If you had one sentence to tell your grandmother something meaningful about the Black Death, what would it be? |

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| Week 11 Mar. 26 | It's the Economy, Stupid | |
| | Readings | Horrox, #100, 112, 114 SuHS # _____ Individual Research |
| | Activity | Lecture: Economic Impacts (may end up being posted on Learn) Game testing and development. Incorporation of visual and anecdotal details. |
| | Questions | What are our Intentions? In 1 page, what do we want to tell players of our game about what we're trying to do, the choices we made, and why we left certain things out? Who will volunteer to write up our list into a clear and |

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| | | clean Statement of Intent for future players? |
| Week 12 Apr. 2 | Why Do We Care? *** PORTFOLIO WITH EVIDENCE OF CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE GAME DESIGN AND HOURS DUE IN CLASS*** ***GAME REVIEW DUE ON LEARN TOMORROW, APR. 3, 10 PM *** | |
| | Readings | Individual Research |
| | Activity | Final Game Development and Testing |
| Apr. 20 | *** RESEARCH PAPER DUE ON LEARN, NOON *** | |

POLICY ON LATE WORK, MISSED ASSIGNMENTS, AND MAKE-UP TESTS

Work may be handed in late, with a 10% penalty per 24 hours. If you missed a class and want to make up what we did in the room, come speak with me and we will work out an accommodation.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to be in class on time and ready to start, with all required materials. I do take attendance, which factors into your participation grade. Lateness will result in a reduction in your participation grade for that day, and absence will earn you a 0 for the day.

ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY

You are permitted to use laptops and tablets in class. Please **do not use your cell phones** or mp3 players. Improper use of electronic devices (such as social media and other non-course related work) or the use of prohibited items will result in a 0 for participation that day. If your use of electronic devices becomes problematic, the instructor reserves the right to revise this policy as needed to ensure the best learning environment for all concerned.

CORRESPONDENCE

I am easiest to reach via email. I do my best to reply to emails within 24 hours during the week, 36 hours on weekends. When you email me, please include the course name and number along with your name. In addition, please extend the courtesy of beginning your email with a salutation and ending with a valediction (closing).

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the

University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.]

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/upload_file/PLCY_AOM_Student-Petitions-and-Grievances_20151211-SJUSCapproved.pdf. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the St. Jerome's Advising Specialist, Student Affairs Office, who will provide further assistance.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.] A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Discipline_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo Policy 71, Student Discipline, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm. For typical penalties, check the Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Appeals, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Appeals_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf.

Note for students with disabilities: AccessAbility Services, located in Needles Hall (Room 1401) at the University of Waterloo, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term, www.uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services/.

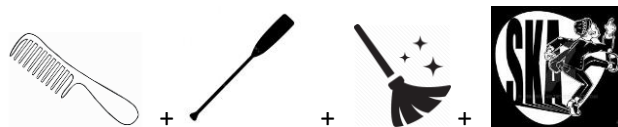
How do I pronounce your name?

As someone with a foreign name, I am sensitive to how frustrating it can be when someone gets your name wrong. Please don't hesitate to correct me until I get it right.

For my first name: In Polish, Js are pronounced as Ys. Hence Jola is pronounced like Yola.

As for my last name, which is a little trickier, here's a handy Rebus puzzle to help you out:

Komornicka =



(comb) + (oar) + (neat) + (ska)

The emphasis is on the penultimate syllable; in the case of the Rebus: Neat