

The University of Western Ontario  
Faculty of Information and Media Studies

**LIS 9136/9833: Information Equity: Social Justice in a Network Society**

**Graduate Course Outline  
Summer Term 2017**

**1. Course Information**

**Time & Place:** Tuesdays, 1:30 – 4:20 pm – FNB 2240  
**Office Hours:** FNB 4079, Thursdays 10 am – 11:45 am or by appointment  
**Telephone:** (519) 661-2111 x 85616  
**Email:** [apyati@uwo.ca](mailto:apyati@uwo.ca)

**2. Instructor Information**

Dr. Ajit Pyati  
Associate Professor  
Faculty of Information and Media Studies (FIMS)  
FIMS website: [http://www.fims.uwo.ca/people/profiles/ajit\\_pyati.html](http://www.fims.uwo.ca/people/profiles/ajit_pyati.html)

**3. Course Description**

This course focuses on issues and critical perspectives surrounding equitable access to information, the relationships between information and social change, and social equity and justice in the information professions. Libraries and information services are framed within larger social, political, cultural, and economic contexts and power structures. Course topics include issues such as the *digital divide* and *information poverty* within both North American and global contexts.

*Learning Outcomes*

Upon successful completion of readings, assignments, and class participation, students will be able to:

1. Critically examine the context (social, political, cultural, economic, etc.) and power structures of library and information services  
(Program level learning outcomes: 3 & 5.)
2. Analyze how social inequities can manifest in the provision of information services (Program level learning outcomes: 2,3,5,8)
3. Develop an awareness and sensitivity to information equity issues, with an understanding of how to become critically reflective and socially aware information professionals (Program level learning outcomes: 3, 7, 9)

## 4. Course Materials

### *Course Readings*

Please note that all required readings are on the course website. It is the responsibility of students to make their own copies. Optional readings are given for some weeks – while not required, these readings supplement the required readings and can help in the writing of topic reports. Details about the readings will be on the final course syllabus, which students will receive on the first day of class (9 May 2017).

Topics covered in this class include (but are not limited to):

Social justice; Information inequalities; Information society; Informational capitalism; Libraries and democracy; Digital divide; Information services for immigrant communities; Aboriginal information and library issues; International information issues; Networked media and new information inequalities; Role of libraries in facilitating social change; etc.

## 5. Methods of Evaluation

### *MLIS Grade Guidelines and Late Assignments*

The MLIS Student Handbook contains criteria used to grade assignments:

[http://intra.fims.uwo.ca/students/handbooks/mlis/mlis-handbook-04.htm#P251\\_25303](http://intra.fims.uwo.ca/students/handbooks/mlis/mlis-handbook-04.htm#P251_25303). Late assignments will be penalized at 5% per day, unless appropriate documentation was provided. Late assignments should be left in the FIMS drop box next to the main office. Assignments that are more than five days late will not be accepted.

### Grading Scheme (MLIS Students)

Critical essays (3 required, 15%; 25%; 25%)	65%
Team Presentation	15%
Online posts	10%
In-class Participation	10%

\* Please note that late assignments are subject to a 5% deduction each day the paper is overdue. Papers will not be accepted more than 5 days past the due date. If you have a legitimate/serious reason for turning in an assignment late, I can make an exception, but please let me know well in advance.

### *Team Presentation*

The student presentation (approximately 30 to 40 minutes) follows and focuses on the previous week's topic. A major goal of this exercise is to supplement the course topics and readings with examples of current events, issues, and themes that pertain to professional practice. It should focus on themes from the readings and expand on them, through the use of appropriate examples. The presentation is meant to be an exercise in leading the class in a thoughtful and stimulating manner. As such, it should be informative, substantive, and lively. The student leaders need to distribute a 1 page outline (double-sided) of the discussion to the class, which should include at least 2-3 additional readings/resources that complement and add to the knowledge of the week's topic. Use of presentation slides, overheads or other teaching aids will be useful. Team members

should also post all presentation materials on the course website, either on the day of the presentation or shortly thereafter.

The student presentation grade is based on:

1. Content (What): Evidence of detailed exploration of topic and use of pertinent examples
2. Style (How): Style of presentation, ability to engage audience, clarity of presentation.
3. Tangibles: Quality of handout, presentation materials, and additional readings

NOTE: The student presentation is a team (2-3 person) assignment. There are nine possible presentation dates.

Possible presentation dates: May 30, June 6, June 20, June 27, July 4, July 11, July 18, July 25, and August 1

### *Critical Essays*

Three critical essays (in the 5-6 double-spaced page length) are due throughout various points of the semester, in order to provide a more flexible workload. The first essay will be due on May 23 for everyone, and is worth 15% of the final grade. This first paper can cover topics from the first 3 weeks of the course. The second essay (worth 25% of final grade) is due either on June 20 or June 27. The third and final essay (worth 25% of final grade) is due on August 1 or August 8. These papers can focus on the current week's readings and/or integrate key themes and ideas from previous weeks' readings.

Critical essays are meant to be thoughtful reflections on key topics and ideas you find compelling in the course readings. Rather than a summary of the readings, I am looking for critical thinking, synthesis, and strong analytical writing in these papers. The following is the criteria for evaluating them:

- Identification of key themes, arguments, and ideas from selected readings
- Well-articulated reflections and arguments about key themes and issues
- Clarity and quality of writing, including style and grammar

### *Online Posts*

Online posts are meant as an opportunity to comment on and pose questions about topics and ideas arising from class discussion and readings. They also provide an opportunity to continue discussion outside of class. Students are required to do a minimum of 2 online posts, one in the first half of the class, and one in the second half of the class. Students should write their posts directly on the course website, and posts should be no more than one to two paragraphs in length (half a single-spaced page maximum). Sign-up sheets for these mandatory posts will be distributed during the first class.

In addition, students are encouraged to submit topical posts as the urge strikes them – links to pertinent articles, websites, etc. are always welcomed. This gives a chance for students to have control over the direction and content of certain online discussions.

### *Attendance*

Prompt attendance for the full class and active participation in discussion at all classes is required. Please come to class having read all the required readings, and be ready to discuss and engage with them in class. A concepts-based course such as this one requires constructive and engaged participation.

#### Grading scheme (PhD Students)

Critical essays (2 required, 15% each)	30%
Participation	10%
Additional Reading Write-Ups	10%
Oral Presentation of Final Paper	10%
Final Paper Preview	5%
Final Paper	35%

For Ph.D. students taking this course, a different grading scheme is in place. The requirements are as follows: Ph.D. students are required to each find 1-2 additional readings on their own for each week, and provide a brief description of the additional reading(s) to the instructor (1 page, single-spaced) which will also be posted on the course website. Ph.D. students will be expected to contribute to class discussions and present these additional readings to the class, building on the themes and topics brought up in the class.

In terms of the critical essay requirement, please refer to the Grading Scheme for MLIS students above. PhD students can choose the dates they want to turn in these papers, but should inform the instructor beforehand. Ideally, one essay will be submitted in the first half of the class and the other one in the second half.

The final term paper is due on either August 1 or August 8 and should focus on a specific information equity issue, while integrating key concepts and ideas presented in the course. A brief outline (1-2 pages) of your paper topic idea, along with a list of at least 7-10 references is due by July 11. Doctoral students will also give a 20-30 minute presentation to the class based on their paper on August 8. The final term paper is expected to be in the 20-25 double-spaced page length (exclusive of references), with extensive references and outside research.

This paper should be submitted as though for publication in a peer-reviewed academic journal within the LIS/information studies field. Style guidelines should be consistent with the journal of intended publication.

#### **6. Statement on Academic Offences**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

#### **7. Support Services**

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.