

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
Winter Term 2020**

1. Course Information

Time & Place: Tuesdays, 1:30 – 4:20 pm – FNB 3220
Office Hours: FNB 4079, TBA
Telephone: (519) 661-2111 x 85616
Email: 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

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 (7 January 2020).

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

Social justice; Information inequalities; 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; Online Activism; 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. 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%
Case Study 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.

Case Study Presentation

The case study presentation (approximately 30 to 40 minutes) follows and focuses on the previous week's topic. The goal of this exercise is to supplement the course topics and readings with an in-depth exploration of a current and topical case study. 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. Presenters should also post all presentation materials on the course website, either on the day of the presentation or shortly thereafter.

The case study presentation grade is based on:

1. Content (What): Evidence of detailed exploration of case and its relevance to the theme(s) in question
2. Style (How): Style of presentation, ability to engage and lead audience, clarity of presentation.
3. Tangibles: Quality of handout, presentation materials, and additional readings

NOTE: The case study presentation can be either a solo or two-person assignment. There are eight possible presentation dates.

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 January 21 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 February 25 or March 3. The third and final essay (worth 25% of final grade) is due on either March 24, March 31, or April 7. These papers can focus on the current week's readings and/or integrate key themes and ideas from previous weeks' readings. Outside readings can be used, but are not required. All assignments must be uploaded in MS Word format in the appropriate area under the "Assignments" heading on the course website no later than 11:55 pm on the due date.

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 March 31 or April 7 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 March 3. Doctoral students will also give a 20-30 minute presentation to the class based on their paper on April 7. 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

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.