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 2023

1. **Course Information**

Time & Place:	Tuesdays, 1:30 – 4:20 pm, FNB 3220
Office Hours:	Wednesdays, 11 am – 12 pm, FNB 4079
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. Details about the readings will be on the final course syllabus, which students will receive on the first day of class (10 January 2023).

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
The MLIS Student Handbook contains criteria used to grade assignments:
https://intranet.fims.uwo.ca/graduate/academic_programs/mlis/mlis_grading.html

GRADING SCHEME (MLIS Students)

Reflection Paper	10%
Online Posts (2 required, 5% each)	10%
Critical Essays (2 required, 20% each)	40%
Case Study Analysis	30%
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 in advance.

Reflection Paper

The first three weeks of the course have provided an overview of information equity and social justice issues. For this assignment, you will need to reflect on at least two readings from these first three weeks, and write a reflection paper on how they have affected your understanding of issues you care about, as well as possibly how they might affect your approach to this course and to your future work. Think of it like an introductory paper that gives you a chance to reflect on foundational ideas in the course as well as your own ongoing professional development. There is a guide to writing a reflection paper from Trent University, which some of you might find useful: https://www.trentu.ca/academicskills/how-guides/how-write-university/how-approach-any-assignment/how-write-reflection-paper

The paper should be in the range of 4 to 5 pages, double-spaced, using a standard font and size. It will be due for everyone by 11:55 pm on **January 24.** Please use APA 7th edition for the in-text citations and reference list.

Here are the grading criteria:

- Reasoned analysis and sound understanding of readings
- Well-articulated reflections on key themes; integration of analysis and reflection
- Clarity and quality of writing, including style and grammar

Critical Essays

Two critical essays (in the 6 to 7 double-spaced page length) are due throughout various points of the semester, in order to provide a more flexible workload. The first essay (worth 20% of the final grade) is due by 11:55 pm on **February 14 or February 21**. The second essay (worth 20% of the final grade) is due by 11:55 pm on **March 14 or March 21**. These essays can focus on the week's readings and/or integrate key themes and ideas from previous weeks' readings. Please use the readings from the course as the main focus for these essays, with outside readings (if you choose to use them) used mainly to support the argument. All assignments must be uploaded in <u>MS Word</u> format in the appropriate area under the "Assignments" heading on the course website no later than 11:55 pm on the due date. Please use APA 7th edition for the in-text citations and reference list.

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
- Your own well-articulated argument(s) about key themes and issues
- Clarity and quality of writing, including style and grammar

Case Study Analysis

The case study analysis is meant to be a capstone project for the class. The goal of this assignment is to supplement the course topics and readings with an in-depth exploration of a current and topical case study related to information equity and social justice issues. This case study should relate to at least one of the themes covered in the course, and can be related to professional practice, librarianship, relevant current events, etc. While not required, it is advised to discuss the choice of case study with the instructor beforehand.

The case study analysis will take the form of a paper in the length of 8 to 10 double-spaced pages, with a thorough and detailed analysis of the case in question along with analysis and integration of key readings and themes from the course. As such, a paper like this one will have at least 8 to 10 references (including outside readings and readings from the course). The assignment is due by 11:55 pm on **April 11**. Please use APA 7th edition for the in-text citations and reference list.

The case study analysis grade is based on:
- Content (What): Evidence of detailed exploration of case and its relevance to the

information equity and social justice theme(s) in question; Quality of sources used to develop case; Analysis of course readings and outside sources; Integration of course topics and themes with exploration of case;

- Style (How): Quality and clarity of writing, grammar, organization

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 two 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.

Participation

For a course like this one to be successful, active, thoughtful, and meaningful participation from students is essential. As such, please come to class having done all the readings and come prepared with questions, thoughts, reflections, and/or anything else you feel will be helpful for class discussion. Think of your engaged participation as a way to enhance the learning experience not just for you, but also for all of your classmates and the collective experience of the classroom as well.

In addition, students are encouraged to submit topical posts as the urge strikes them – links to pertinent articles, websites, etc. are always welcomed under the "Further Discussion" tab in the Forums section of the OWL site. This gives a chance for students to have control over the direction and content of certain online discussions.

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 **April 11** and should focus on a specific information equity/social justice 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 7**. Doctoral students will also give a 20-30 minute presentation to the class based on their paper on **April 11**. 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.

8. **Accessible Education Western (AEW)**

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with **Accessible Education Western (AEW)**, a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both **AEW** and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

9. **Enrollment Restrictions**

Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in the Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) program, as well as any student that has obtained special permission to enroll in this course from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student's home program.