

LIS 9325: Accessibility & Information Environments

Summer 2024

Course information

GRADLIS9325 Accessibility and Information Environments

Class meets: in-person, Wednesdays 9:00-11:50 in FNB 2230

Course website: [BrightSpace](#)

Enrollment restrictions: Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in the Master of Library and Information Science program at Western

Instructor information

Heather Hill, Associate Professor (she/her)

Email: hhill6@uwo.ca (please add 9325 to the subject line)

Office hours: by appointment via zoom or in-person

Course description

This course will introduce future information professionals to the theories and practices surrounding disability and accessibility in a variety of information settings. Students will develop an understanding of legislation and organizational policy around accessibility. In addition, students will analyze the accessibility of both the physical and online environments of various organizations.

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

1. articulate a variety of theoretical and practical approaches to accessibility (PLLO 1, 2)
2. define the needs of underrepresented and underserved populations in relations to policy, services, and resources in the information setting (PLLO 2, 3, 4, 6)
3. analyze accessibility in both the physical and virtual information environments and make recommendations for improvement (PLLO 6, 7, 8)
4. reflect on and critique their own perceptions and misperceptions of disability and accessibility (PLLO 3,6,7)

Course materials

All required readings are available electronically through the course BrightSpace. These readings will give us the basics, but you'll need to consult additional materials for assignments.

Methods of evaluation (tentative)

Assignment	Weight	Approximate Due Dates
Reflection Essay #1	5%	week 2
Group Library Accessibility Audit - draft	15%	week 5
Group Library Accessibility Audit - final	27%	week 7

Teamwork/collaboration assessment	5%	Week 8
Group Library Worker Resource - draft	15%	week 10
Group Library Worker Resource - final	28%	week 13
Reflection Essay #2	5%	week 13

Course policies and other helpful information

Class accessibility and inclusion - If you need a reasonable (or even unreasonable) accommodation, please let me know and I'll try make it happen. This goes triply for folks with non-visible disabilities or who pass or mask or compensate. No need to do that here.

Accessible Education Western (AEW)

Support services - Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to [Wellness & Well-being](#) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

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.

[Indigenous Student Centre](#) - For culturally relevant, wholistic and strength-based programs and services geared toward Indigenous students at Western. See also, [Indigenous Initiatives at Western](#).

[FIMS Graduate Library](#) - For help with research in FIMS graduate programs, consult with the FIMS Grad Library staff.

Communication – Like you, I get a lot of email. Help me find your message faster. Include the course number in the subject line and it will send me an alert. If the course number is not there, it may take me longer to see your message. I keep some boundaries around email. I read and respond to email during set blocks of time Monday-Friday.

Attendance – The text below is the official statement, but here’s the thing – I want you to contribute to our class as your thoughts and ideas are important to our discussion and learning. If something comes up – you may get sick or need to care for family – let me know what’s up.

This course requires a lot of collaboration, if you end up missing more than 3 classes, you will be at risk of not passing the course because you haven’t been a part of that work.

Attendance (official FIMS MLIS policy) – As there are generally no formal written examinations in the MLIS program, attendance at and participation in classes is an essential part of the learning experience and provides part of the basis for academic assessment of a student’s knowledge. Students should therefore notify the instructor if they need to be absent from class due to inclement weather, conference attendance, serious illness, family emergencies or co-op or other job interviews. If the situation involves more than one absence, particularly in more than one course, the student should contact FIMS Graduate Student Services at 519-661-2111 Ext. 88494. Attendance requirements also include punctual arrival at classes. Late arrivals are discourteous, disruptive and unprofessional.

Grading

The overall criteria for grading for the two main projects this term will be decided by us together after we have time to get to know each other and consider the work that’s ahead for us this term. The [MLIS Grade Grading System](#) is a resource we can begin our conversation from.

For the initial and end of term reflection papers, there are criteria in the assignments area as to what types of work constitutes what type of grade.

Late work - Normally, I'm ok with late work. But this term there is less flexibility because you are working with a group and class time will be focused on helping you improve the drafts. For the library audit and the resource project, we need those in on schedule so that we can provide adequate feedback.

For the reflections, I can provide more flexibility if you need a few extra days. There are no penalties here, but I need to know what our plan is.

Other information relating to coursework

[Statement on academic offences](#) - Scholastic offenses are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy.

Generative AI tools, like ChatGPT, can provide support for learning new genres of writing and/or working in English as a foreign language. As information professionals, you are expected to become familiar with new and emerging technologies entering the work environments. (See MLIS Program Level Learning Outcomes 4, 6, and 8)

If you choose to use a generative AI tool in preparing an assignment, we recommend using it for

the earliest stages and to reflect critically on the prompt you use and the quality, trustworthiness, and appropriateness of the content created.

If you use a Generative AI tool for any aspect of assignment preparation, include your prompt(s) and the AI content generated as an appendix to the assignment. The tool used should also be clearly indicated. Wording in the assignment submitted is expected to be your own: If you use any of the AI content directly in your assignment, you must acknowledge that content fully and clearly to avoid a scholastic offense.