

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 2024**

1. Course Information

Time & Place: Online; Optional synchronous classes (recorded) on Tuesdays, 1:30 to 3:30 pm Eastern time; Zoom link on OWL course site
Office Hours: By appointment (FNB 4079 or via Zoom)
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.

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 Topics and Readings

Please note that all the course readings are available on the course website and/or via Western Libraries. It is the responsibility of students to make their own copies of readings. Details about the readings will be on the final course syllabus, which will be posted on OWL no later than Monday, January 8, 2024.

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

- *Module 1: Defining Information Equity and Social Justice* (Jan 8 to 26): Introduction to Information Equity and Social Justice; Inequality in a Capitalist Economic System
- *Module 2: Digital Divides* (Jan 29 to Feb 23): Critical Librarianship; Digital Divide; Information Poverty
- *Module 3: Communities and Contexts* (Feb 26 to Mar 22): Information Dystopia; Information Services for Immigrant Communities; Indigenous Knowledge; The Global South
- *Module 4: The Emerging Information Equity Environment* (Mar 25 to Apr 12): Misinformation, Disinformation & Power; Online Activism; Libraries and Information for Social Change

5. Methods of Evaluation

MLIS Grade Guidelines and Late Assignments

The MLIS Student Handbook contains criteria used to grade assignments:

https://intranet.fims.uwo.ca/graduate/academic_programs/mlis/mlis_grading.html. Late assignments will be penalized at 5% per day, unless appropriate documentation was provided. Assignments that are more than five days late will not be accepted.

Course Requirements

To complete this course, MLIS students must do the following assignments:

Reflection Paper (due Jan 26)	20%
Current Event Analysis (due dates ongoing)	10%
Critical Essay (due Feb 23)	20%
Annotated Bibliography (due March 22)	20%
Case Study Analysis (due April 12)	30%
Total	100%

For PhD students, the following grading scheme is in place:

Critical essays (2 required, 20% each, flex dates)	40%
Additional Reading Write-Ups (due dates ongoing)	20%
Final Paper Preview (due March 15)	5%
Final Paper (due April 12)	35%

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.