

The University of Western Ontario  
Faculty of Information and Media Studies

**MIT 1025G**  
**First Year Foundations for MIT**  
**Course Outline -- Fall 2018**

**Instructor Information**

**Dr. Sandra Smeltzer**

Office Hours: After class (2:45 pm - 4:45 pm-ish) or by appointment (FNB 4048)  
Phone: 519-661-2111 x86112 (it's much better to see me in person or to email me)  
Email: ssmeltze@uwo.ca

**Course Information**

Lecture: Monday, 12:30 a.m. to 2:30 pm in AHB-1R40

Tutorials: Mondays and Tuesdays

TA Office Hours: Please consult with your TA.

**Prerequisites**

There are no prerequisites for this course.

**Course Description**

MIT 1025F (First Year Foundations for MIT) is a course designed to introduce students to foundational skills they will need throughout their university careers. We will focus on teaching the fundamentals of three key areas: research methods, critical thinking, and writing. The course will provide students with instruction in the basics of finding and evaluating sources, developing arguments, critical thinking, essay development as well as writing, rewriting, and revision. It will also cover academic style and formatting, plagiarism and other issues in essay writing.

**Objectives and Outcomes**

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Critically read and unpack a text
- Identify and analyze arguments

- Find and evaluate scholarly and mainstream sources focusing on media and media-related issues
- Construct an argument/thesis and support it with appropriate evidence
- Understand the fundamentals of essay development
- Understand the fundamentals of good, clear writing
- Learn the basics of academic style, formatting and citation, and
- Have a foundation for further development of critical thinking and writing skills.

*“Some people resist critical thinking because they believe critical thinking is the same as criticism — criticism of others, or criticism of oneself. There is no necessary relationship between critical thinking and criticism. As bell hooks has said: ‘there is a useful distinction to be made between critique that seeks to expand consciousness and harsh criticism that attacks or trashes’ (hooks, 2010, p. 137)” (Mary Heath, 2012, p. 14).*

### **Course Materials**

Required textbook: *The Power of Critical Thinking: Effective Reasoning about Ordinary and Extraordinary Claims*. (Fourth Canadian Edition), Lewis Vaughn, Oxford University Press, 2016. Available in the UWO bookstore.

Other readings and supplemental materials will be on our OWL course website (all readings are listed on this syllabus).

### **Assignments / Evaluation / Guidelines**

Notes:

- The details for assignments will be posted on the OWL course website no later than two weeks prior to the due dates.
- The assignments must follow the MLA, APA, or Chicago style for citations and general formatting. You can choose whatever style you want, but you **MUST** ensure that you use the style properly. All assignments must be in Word (**not** PDF), 12-point, double-spaced, Times New Roman font.

#### **1. Tutorial Participation/Attendance/Engagement (20%):**

- Students must come to tutorials prepared, having done all the readings and attended lecture. Students are expected to engage meaningfully in tutorial discussions.

**Due Date:** Ongoing.

## 2. Summary of a text (15%):

- Read Mary Heath's "On critical thinking". It is available in the Resources section of our course OWL site, and here: <https://dulwichcentre.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/critical-thinking-.pdf>
- Write a 300-word summary of the article \*in your own words\*. The summary should be a clear account of the author's central argument. The main argument may be based upon, or supported by, subordinate or secondary arguments. Identify those and the evidence used to support them. Does the author have a conclusion (or conclusions)?
- Write 150-200 words discussing your scholarly opinions of the article in an academic manner. Total word count for this assignment: 450-500 words (approximately).

**Due Date:** Friday, October 5<sup>th</sup> by midnight to your TA.

## 3. Brief Proposal (10%):

- A two-page document (500 words) that describes the focus of your paper / your research question(s). You must include an initial list of sources (properly formatted in MLA, APA, or Chicago) AND include a brief explanation for your choices (200 words). Total word count: 700 words (approximately)

**Due Date:** Friday, Oct. 19<sup>th</sup> by midnight to your TA.

## 4. Introduction and Outline (15%):

- i) The draft introduction to your paper (200-300 words).
  - ii) An outline of your proposed arguments and tentative conclusion(s) (600-700 words).
  - iii) An annotated bibliography.
- Total word count: 1100 words (approximately)

**Due Date:** November 9<sup>th</sup> by midnight to your TA.

### 5. Pop quizzes (10% - best 2 of 3):

- Three pop quizzes of concepts and ideas. Scheduled during your tutorials and/or class.

**Due dates:** it's a secret.

### 6. Finished Paper (20%):

- Your revised and polished paper (1600-1800 words, not including references).
- Note: for your final paper, you must include a separate title page with your name, date, course title, tutorial section number, and your TA's name. If you do not include all this information, you will be penalized in your mark.

**Due Date:** Friday, Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> by midnight to your TA.

### 7. Final Quiz (10%):

- **Due Date:** Dec 3<sup>rd</sup>, in class.

**Total: 100%**

### Evaluation

This course is designed as an interactive learning process. There is no final exam. It is expected that you will develop your critical thinking and writing skills over the course of the term. You must attend and contribute to your tutorials. You must complete your readings and come prepared for each class. You should participate in class and in tutorial with your peers in a collegial manner.

### Due Dates

Due dates are provided in this syllabus. **Extensions are NOT permitted unless you have medical reasons or other extenuating personal circumstances.** If you require an extension, refer to the Accommodation Policy below and contact your TA as soon as possible. All assignments will be graded out of 100 and late assignments will be penalized **10% per day, including weekends** (\*this is 10% out of the potential score of 100\*) Missed assignments without explanation or a doctor's note will receive a zero.

## **Statement on Use of Electronic Devices**

You CANNOT use phones in the classroom. If you do, you will be asked to leave the lecture and not return that day. I am very serious about this rule.

I would prefer you NOT to use laptops, iPads, and other electronic devices in the lecture. These devices not only distract you, but can also distract your classmates. Research indicates that active, focused listening and taking notes by hand facilitates better learning and retention. Please consult with your TAs regarding the guidelines for electronic device use in your tutorials.

## **Contacting the Instructor**

E-mail: Students should regularly check the course website and their UWO email accounts for important announcements such as additional information regarding class preparation, assignments, or class cancellations / changes.

Please allow a minimum 24-hour turnaround for an email response – and please do not expect quick responses over the weekend. Any email correspondence should have ‘MIT 1025’ in the subject headline. Use your UWO email account ONLY. No messages from Hotmail or Gmail accounts will be opened.

E-mails to the instructor, however, are best reserved for short questions that require a brief response. E-mail is not a useful pedagogical tool for explaining course concepts or providing detailed advice on assignments. These issues are best handled with a face-to-face discussion, so please request a meeting during my office hours or at some other time that is convenient for both of us. NOTE: We are not permitted to give out or discuss grades via e-mail.

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## **Fall Schedule**

\*Note that the specific details of each class may change depending upon timing, circumstances, and guest speakers.

### **Monday, Sept. 10: Introduction to MIT 1025**

- Syllabus and expectations. Class etiquette and rules. Grading. TAs.

**Monday, Sept. 17: All things academic-y. Tutorials start this week and are mandatory throughout the course.**

- How do you find academic sources? What are / are not academic sources? Why does it matter?
- Online resources vital to success in your undergraduate career.
- Reading:
  - 1) Chapter 2 of textbook: “The ‘Environment’ of Critical Thinking”

**Monday, Sept. 24: Tutorials only this week (no class – away at a conference).**

- No class. BUT you **\*DO\*** have tutorials this week!
- What is an argument? How do you recognize one? Fundamentals of analysis: decoding the argument, restating the arguments, commenting, and conclusions.
- Readings:
  - 1) Chapter 1 of textbook: “The Power of Critical Thinking”

**Monday, Oct. 1: Making sense of arguments (served with a side of plagiarism); What is a topic? What is a research question?**

- Readings:
  - 1) Mary Health, “On Critical Thinking” (2012).
  - 2) Chapter 3 of textbook: “Making Sense of Arguments”
  - 3) “Margaret Wentz: ‘A zero for plagiarism’” (<http://mediaculppost.blogspot.ca/2012/09/margaret-wentz-zero-for-plagiarism.html>)
  - 4) “The Troubling Case of Chris Hedges” (<http://www.newrepublic.com/article/118114/chris-hedges-pulitzer-winner-lefty-hero-plagiarist>)

**Monday, Oct. 8: Gobble gobble day**

- Thanksgiving (no class, no tutorials!)

**Monday, Oct. 15: Fake news (Oh... this is going to be fun)**

- Readings:
  - 1) Chapter 4 of textbook: “Reasons for Belief and Doubt”

- 2) Amanda Robb. "Pizzagate: Anatomy of a Fake News Scandal"  
<https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/anatomy-of-a-fake-news-scandal-125877/>
- 3) Alice Marwick & Rebecca Lewis. "Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online" \***read only pp. 27-39**\* [http://centerformediajustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/DataAndSociety\\_MediaManipulationAndDisinformationOnline.pdf](http://centerformediajustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/DataAndSociety_MediaManipulationAndDisinformationOnline.pdf)

**Monday, Oct. 22: The Veracity of Online Data** (Oh... this is going to be interesting)

- Readings:
  - 1) Quan-Haase, A., & Sloan, L. (2017). Introduction to the handbook of social media research methods: Goals, challenges and innovations. In *The handbook of social media research methods* (pp. 1–9). London, UK: Sage.
  - 2) Yang, S., Quan- Haase, A., Nevin, A., & Chen, Y. (2017). The role of online reputation management, trolling, and personality traits in the crafting of the virtual self on social media. In L. Sloan & A. Quan- Haase (Eds.), *Handbook of social media research methods*. London: Sage.

**Monday, Oct. 29: Research Ethics** (Oh... this is going to be important)

- What is 'ethical research'? What do you need to consider when thinking about conducting research from Point A to Point B?
- Reading:
  - 1) Palys, T. and Atchison, C. (2008). "Ethics in Social Research". In *Research Decisions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives*. pp. 69-106.

**Monday, Nov. 5: Understanding Arguments: Reconstruction and preliminary evaluation.**

- Readings:
  - 1) Chapter 5 of textbook: "Faulty Reasoning"
  - 2) "War on cancer, like the one on drugs, has failed us" Stephen Skyvington  
<http://www.thespec.com/opinion-story/6761110-war-on-cancer-like-the-one-on-drugs-has-failed-us/>
  - 3) "Setting the record straight on the war on cancer" Steve Buist  
<http://www.thespec.com/opinion-story/6785876-setting-the-record-straight-on-the-war-against-cancer/>

**Monday Nov. 12: More Logical Fallacies + Media Studies / Critical Communications in Canada**

Reading:

- 1) Chapter 8 from the text book: “Inductive Reasoning”

**Monday, Nov. 19: The Nature of Evidence**

Readings:

- 1) Chapter 11 of textbook: “Thinking Critically about Health, Law and Ethics”
- 2) Barry Beyerstein, “Why Bogus Therapies Often Seem to Work,”  
<http://www.quackwatch.org/01QuackeryRelatedTopics/altbelief.html>
- 3) André Picard, “Why did Calgary cave to chemophobes over fluoridation?”  
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/why-did-calgary-cave-to-chemophobes-over-fluoridation/article28814768/>

**Monday, Nov. 26: Key elements of writing.**

**Monday, Dec. 3: In-class Quiz**



## Notes from the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Information and Media Studies

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### 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/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

### Academic Accommodation

#### *Medical Accommodation*

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or **assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade** must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation in the form of a Student Medical Certificate. It will be the Dean's Office that will determine if accommodation is warranted.

For **work worth less than 10% of the final grade**, the instructor will consider requests for academic accommodation on medical grounds made in a timely manner in writing or by appointment in office hours. Such requests need not be accompanied by documentation. The instructor may, however, decide to require documentation be submitted to the appropriate Academic Counselling office.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for accommodation on medical grounds, or for other reasons. All documentation must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.

For Western University policy on accommodation for medical illness, see:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf)

Student Medical Certificate (SMC): [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf)

### ***Compassionate Accommodation***

Academic accommodation (extensions, makeup tests and exams, additional assignments etc.) may be given to students on compassionate grounds. The situations for which compassionate accommodation can be given must be serious, including significant events such as death in the immediate family, trauma (fire, robbery, harassment, muggings, car accidents, etc.) or emergency situations.

Documentation is required.

If a member of your immediate family is seriously ill, obtain a medical certificate from the family member's physician and submit the documentation to your Academic Counsellor. If you have been involved in a severe accident, fire or some other exceptional crises, obtain a copy of the police report or be prepared to provide the necessary documentation upon request.

Generally, for deaths within a student's immediate family (parents, guardians, caregivers, siblings, spouses), bereavement leave is granted, upon provision of documentation. For deaths within a student's extended family, academic accommodation is given for one to three days, upon provision of documentation. Students seeking additional bereavement leave for religious or other reasons should contact their Academic Counsellors, and provide valid documentation.

### ***Religious Accommodation***

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance.

<http://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>. Additional information is given in the Western Academic Calendar.

## **FIMS Grading Policy**

The MIT program now has the following class average policy:

- All 1000-level MIT **required** courses (i.e., 1020E; 1025F/G; 1050A/B) will have a class average of between 67 and 72%.
- All 2000-level MIT **required** courses (i.e. 2000, 2100, 2200, 2500) will have a class average of between 70 and 75%.
- All 3000-level MIT **required** courses (i.e. 3000, 3100) will have a class average of between 72 and 77%. Elective courses and 4<sup>th</sup> year seminar courses have no class average requirement.

FIMS remains committed to rigorous academic standards, and to grading practices that give high marks only for high quality work. To this end, FIMS undergraduate instructors mark according to the Guidelines to the MIT Grade Range, using the full range of marks available. Please consult these Guidelines to see the standards work is expected to meet. [http://www.fims.uwo.ca/acad\\_programs/undergrad/mit\\_mpi/courses/grading/averages.htm](http://www.fims.uwo.ca/acad_programs/undergrad/mit_mpi/courses/grading/averages.htm)

## **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.

Other support services on campus:

Office of the Registrar: [www.registrar.uwo.ca](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca)

Student Development Centre: [www.sdc.uwo.ca](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca)

Psychological Services: [www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych)

Services for Students with Disabilities: [www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd)

Accessibility Information: [www.accessibility.uwo.ca/](http://www.accessibility.uwo.ca/)

Writing Support Centre: [www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing)

Learning Skills Services: [www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning)

Indigenous Services: [indigenous.uwo.ca/](http://indigenous.uwo.ca/)

International and Exchange Student Centre: [www.sdc.uwo.ca/int](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/int)

Career Centre at Western: [www.success.uwo.ca/careers/](http://www.success.uwo.ca/careers/)

## **Guidelines to the MIT Grade Range**

These guidelines are benchmarks, and are not to be followed as rigid regulations. They will be adjusted as appropriate to take into account the level of the course and any specific instructions given by a professor. As well, competency in English language usage (including spelling and grammar) may be taken into account in the assignment of grades by individual instructors. Note that the 70-79 grade range is broken into two divisions, as this is the grade range into which a large number of students fall.

### **90-100 (Outstanding, A+)**

The report shows sparkling originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic. Sophisticated synthesis and analysis of the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the topic are demonstrated. Mastery of complex material and ideas is immediately evident. The topic is treated with sensitivity and subtlety of thought. The quality of the writing and background research is exemplary.

### **80-89 (Excellent, A)**

The report shows originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic; it gets to the heart of the matter with comments and/or questions. It is clearly focused and logically organized. The quality of writing makes the report immediately understandable. Mastery of complex material and ideas is demonstrated. The report is of appropriate length, while preserving the priorities and emphasis of the material, so that the result is meaningful, not simplistic.

### **75-79 (Very Good, B+)**

The report shows above average analysis, critical thinking and independent thought. Claims are supported by ample evidence and the components of the topic are well-researched and presented. The topic is addressed in reasonable depth and/or breadth and covers material appropriate to the course. The analysis is organized around focal points and the argument is easily followed. The report demonstrates an above average ability to write in an intelligible style and to condense material meaningfully and with a concern for priorities of that material.

### **70-74 (Good, B)**

The report shows an attempt at analysis and critical thinking. Claims are supported by reasonable evidence. The topic is addressed in some depth and/or breadth, with references to the appropriate literature and course material. The analysis is organized around focal points. The report is generally well written and well argued.

### **60-69 (Competent, C)**

The report demonstrates adequate comprehension of the topic. The report is on topic and is a reasonable summary of material covered in the course, but goes no further. Facts are

stated accurately; the quality of writing is sufficiently intelligible with enough elaboration and enough connections made between ideas to permit a reader to understand the point of the report.

**50-59 (Marginal, D)**

The report shows less than adequate comprehension of the topic and of the material covered by the course. The report is a less than adequate summary of sources and/or is considerably off-topic. Facts are stated inaccurately or ambiguously; the writing style is difficult to follow; there is insufficient elaboration to permit reader's comprehension of relations among ideas; little judgment is shown in selecting detail for inclusion in the report.

**Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)**

The report demonstrates a failure to comprehend the topic. The material is disorganized and unintelligible. The report clearly does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment.

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*Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Attawandaron peoples who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local First Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region, there are eleven First Nation communities and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America).*