

## Fall 2018 MIT 3100f 001: Information and the Public Sphere

Dr. , Associate Professor, FIMS Office hours: Wednesdays 2-3pm  
Office: 4139 FIMS Nursing Building or by appointment—email me  
Email: [Romayne.SmithFullerton@uwo.ca](mailto:Romayne.SmithFullerton@uwo.ca) (best way to reach me)

### Teaching Assistants:

Victoria O'Meara (email: [vomeara@uwo.ca](mailto:vomeara@uwo.ca)) Office hours: TBA

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Classes: We meet Wednesdays from 330pm - 620pm in Health Sciences Building, Room 35.

*Information and the Public Sphere* will explore a variety of issues and ideas related to public sphere(s) and the flow of information. Working from the definitions of 'public' and 'public sphere' articulated initially by Walter Lippmann and John Dewey, and later by Jurgen Habermas, the course will explore links amongst media, information, space, technologies and publics from historic to contemporary time.

### The objectives of MIT 3100 are:

- 1) To introduce students to theories of, and debates about, the concept of the "public sphere"
- 2) To relate these ideas to institutions, practices and controversies, in such fields as public and private media, library & information science, and journalism.
- 3) To engage students as 'citizens' and encourage their awareness of some of the contemporary issues covered by a variety of media in numerous ways

### Assignments:

#### Grading Option A

Written response piece about <i>Spotlight</i> (assigned in class Week 2 and due Week 3/Sept. 26)	15%
Group Research Project (assigned in class Week 3; due Week 10/Nov. 14)	15%
Midterm Scantron (in class Week 9/ November 7)	30%
Final take-home examination (covers entire term; return in person at scheduled exam time)	40%

*OR Alternatively,*

#### Grading Option B

Written response piece about <i>Spotlight</i> (assigned in class Week 2 and due Week 3/Sept. 26)	15%
Group Research Project (assigned in class Week 3; due Week 10/November 14)	20%
Midterm Scantron (in class Week 9/November 7)	25%
Final take-home examination (covers entire term; return in person at scheduled exam time)	40%

\*PLEASE NOTE: If you want to avail yourself of Option B, **you must tell your teaching assistant, in writing via email with a copy to me, by no later than October 17, 2018.** Otherwise, you will be assessed according to Option A. Option A is the default. This choice is not appealable, and you may not change options after October 18, 2017.

### Texts:

Custom course package--consult our OWL site and other online resources posted in this syllabus and on OWL.

### Important Information:

- Because I will share my numbered lecture slides with you via our OWL site after every class, there is no need for detailed note-taking, so laptops and other electronic devices—including phones—are not allowed. If you wish to use your laptop, you **MUST** make an appointment with me and we will discuss this together. If I agree to allow you to use your laptop, you **MUST** sit in a designated area in front of your teaching assistant, and you agree we can check your browser history if asked. I recognize that

sometimes, life's happening, and upon occasion, you may need to check your phone during class. Please treat this like a necessary trip to the washroom: leave the room as quietly as possible, and return when you are finished. No exceptions. Other behavior is rude and will be called out.

- While every attempt will be made to follow the topics and readings as outlined below, it is possible that changes to the readings or the weekly themes may be amended or adjusted. Please note that any such changes will be noted on OWL and made clear to you in class. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are up to date with any and all changes made to our schedule.
- Most of the grading for this course will be done by our teaching assistants. Should you have a concern about your grade, here is the procedure you **MUST** follow: first, there is a moratorium on discussing a grade for 24 hours. After 24 hours, you must outline your concern(s) in writing stating why you want the mark to be reconsidered, and give this to your teaching assistant. Then you must meet with her to discuss the situation. If you and she cannot agree on the grade, you may request, in writing, that I consider the matter further. I will regrade your work; however, please note that I can leave the grade as it is, or change it up or down.
- Late assignments will be deducted 2% per day, and weekends count as two days. Both the individual *Spotlight* assignment and the group assignment are due at the **beginning of class** on the due date. If you cannot come to class, they can be submitted by 4pm on the due date via Drop Box on OWL, but you must seek permission to submit electronically. If you submit via Drop Box without my permission, your assignment will be marked a day late even if it is submitted on time.

## COURSE OVERVIEW:

**\* Please note that readings for each week are available on our OWL site under the name/number of each week. To avoid embarrassment be sure to read them before class in case I were to ask you a question about them...**

**Wk 1 9/12:** Introduction to the course; distribution of syllabus and outline of expectations.

### **Overarching Theme Weeks 2-4: *Defining terms and explaining concepts***

**Wk 2 9/19:** In class viewing of *Spotlight*. [**Written response to movie is assigned and is due Week 3—one week from today, in class**]. *Spotlight* raises topics that will be picked up throughout the course: What can/ought news media do for their communities? What is a community? What does it mean to be a 'citizen' and why does it matter? What are the historic and contemporary definitions of public/public sphere/public right to know? What are the distinctions (historic and contemporary) between public and private sphere(s)? Who gets "heard"? Do citizens have choice(s) in terms of information, and [how] can they resist the prevailing *status quo*?

**Wk 3 9/26:** **The death of news: does it matter? And does anyone care: are we consumers or citizens?**  
*Readings:* Romaine Smith Fullerton, "While newspapers are on the decline, journalism doesn't have to be," J-Source.ca, available at <http://www.j-source.ca/article/while-newspapers-are-decline-journalism-doesn't-have-be> ; Chantal Hebert, "Canada's national fabric is paying price because of depletion of journalistic resources," *National Post*, available at <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2016/01/21/canadas-national-fabric-is-paying-price-for-depletion-of-journalistic-resources-hbert.html> ; Michael Schudson, "Why Democracies Need an Unlovable Press," Read only p. 1-5, and excerpt available at <https://www.amazon.ca/Why-Democracies-Need-Unlovable-Press/dp/0745644538>; SAMARA's research report, "Message Not Delivered: The Myth of Apathetic Youth" online at

<http://www.samaracanada.com/research/active-citizenship/youth-are-not-apatetic-infographic>

**Written response assignment for *Spotlight* due at beginning of class today.** Group Project assignment handed out, and discussed in class. In third hour, meet with your group to discuss how to proceed.

**Wk 4 10/3: Defining the Public Sphere:** Introduction to Jurgen Habermas. *Readings:* Habermas, “The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedic Article”; Cheri Ketchum, “If a Radical Screams in the Forest, Will She Be Heard? The Hegemony of Instrumental Rationality” (on OWL)

**Wk 5 10/10: Reading week—no class.**

**Overarching Theme Weeks 6-11: *Talking the talk about who speaks (and for whom)***

**Wk 6 10/17: Public Sphere: Gendered and Plural?** Guest Lecturer: Victoria O’Meara. *Readings:* Nancy Fraser [a critique of Habermas], “Rethinking the Public Sphere” and Mary Ryan, “Gender and Public Access” (on OWL).

**Wk 7 10/24: What do feminist voices look/sound like when “consumer” replaces “citizen”?** Guest lecture: Dr. Kate Hoad-Reddick. *Readings* TBA.

**Wk 8 10/31: Public versus Private: public people in private trouble; private people in public trouble (Rob Ford, persons accused of serious crimes)** *Readings:* Romyne Smith Fullerton and Maggie Jones Patterson, “Not Naming Names?: Crime Coverage Rituals in Canada, Sweden and the Netherlands,” from *Covering Canadian Crime*; and Gemma Richardson and Romyne Smith Fullerton, “Media’s Role in the Rob Ford ‘Crack Tape’ Scandal,” from *Scandal in a Digital Age*. (On OWL).

**Wk 9 11/ 7:** midterm in class

**Wk 10 11/14: \*Trigger Warning:** Today’s subject matter may be disturbing to some. If you choose not to come to class today, please see Alternate Work Week 9 below. **Public or private? Sexual Assault and Mainstream Media: From Jian Ghomeshi to #metoo.** *Readings:* Ghomeshi—a timeline: <http://globalnews.ca/news/1647091/timeline-sex-assault-allegations-arise-after-cbc-fires-jian-ghomeshi/> and then various perspectives. First, from *Calgary Herald*: <http://calgaryherald.com/opinion/columnists/klassen-feminism-is-on-trial-as-lurid-details-drawn-out-in-ghomeshi-case> ; then, in contrast, The Overcast: <http://theovercast.ca/real-take-away-message-news-jian-ghomeshi/> and from *Feminist Current*: <http://www.feministcurrent.com/2016/03/24/ghomeshi-conversation-guilty-not-guilty/> . From *Bitch Media*: <https://bitchmedia.org/post/jian-ghomeshi-s-case-is-not-about-a-kink-it-s-about-abuse> and from the old tried, and true, *Macleans*: <http://www.macleans.ca/society/the-jian-ghomeshi-verdict-is-in-but-the-story-isnt-over/>

**Wk 10 11/14: Alternate work:** Historical Concepts of a/the public(s); links between reading public(s) and democracy--a conversation between Walter Lippmann and John Dewey (mediated by James Carey) *Readings:* Lippmann, “The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads”; Dewey, “The Public and its Problems”; and Carey, “Reconceiving ‘Mass’ and ‘Media’.” (on OWL).

**Wk 11 11/21: Canada’s Indigenous Peoples and the Public Sphere:** Fullerton and Patterson, “‘Killing’ the True Story of First Nations”; Fullerton, Whitehouse, and Patterson, “Covering White ‘Just-us’:

What did Journalists Really Say about Ipperwash?"; and *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action* (on OWL).

**Group Projects in their entirety must be to your teaching assistant by beginning of class TODAY or they are late. Any other submission arrangement must be arranged with me or your TA.**

**Overarching Theme Weeks 12 & 13: *Seeming choice and the possibilities of resistance--even possible?***

**Wk 12 11/28: Facts in a Post-Fact World; Fake News; How Free is the Public Sphere in an Era of Algorithms?** *Readings:* Stanley Fish, "What Makes an Interpretation Acceptable?"; Jonathan Albright (2017) "Welcome to the Era of Fake News," *Media and Communication*; and Robin Caplan and Danah Boyd, "Who Controls the Public Sphere in an Era of Algorithms?" *Data & Society*, 05/13/2016. (all on OWL).

**Wk 13 12/ 5: Humour and Sarcasm: How Pop Culture 'Helps' Democracy John Oliver and our Canadian Equivalents.** *Readings:* Painter and Hodges, "Mocking the News." Please also watch at least TWO episodes of "The Rick Mercer Report" available online at CBC.ca, and listen to Episode 10, "The Paradox of Satire" from Malcolm Gladwell's podcast, *Revisionist History*. It's available here, and takes half an hour to listen to: <http://revisionisthistory.com>

# NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Fall 2018

## Rights and Responsibilities

The conditions governing a student's ability to pursue their undergraduate education at Western are ratified by Senate and can be found on the Academic Policies section of the University Secretariat:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic\\_policies/rights\\_responsibilities.html](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/rights_responsibilities.html)

## 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 Turnitin 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.

## Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here:

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

## Medical Consideration

Students seeking academic consideration 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 consideration is warranted.

For work worth **less than 10% of the final grade**, the instructor will consider requests for academic consideration 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 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 consideration 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 consideration for medical illness, see:

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

and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:

[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 crisis, 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 should contact their Academic Counsellors with 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. Additional information is given in the [Western Academic Calendar](#).

## FIMS Undergraduate Grading Policy

The MIT, MPI and MTP programs now have the following class average policy:

- Normally, first year courses required for entry into an MIT or MPI module (MIT 1020E and MIT 1025F/G) are expected to have a course average between 68-72%.
- Normally, second year required courses (MIT 2000, 2100, 2200, 2500) are expected to have a course average between 70 and 75%.
- Normally, third year required courses (MIT 3000, 3100) are expected to have a course average between 72 and 77%.

**Elective courses and 4<sup>th</sup> year seminars have no recommended course averages.**

## Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>

## SUPPORT SERVICES – LINKS

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:

<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/)

## Appendix A: Suggested Grade Ranges in MIT, MPI and MTP

### 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.

## Appendix B: Guidelines of Academic Appeals for FIMS Students

### Grounds for Appeal:

The Faculty of Information and Media Studies does not view the appeals process as an opportunity for students to solicit a second opinion on a grade assigned to a particular piece of work. Appeals must pertain to the final grade in a course, and will only be entertained if sufficient grounds for appeal can be met, including: medical or compassionate circumstances, a defect in the evaluation process, bias, inaccuracy or unfairness.

### Stages in the Appeals Process:

**The first stage of the process is a discussion of the disputed grade with the appropriate Teaching Assistant (if applicable), and subsequently, the course Instructor.** For grades assigned to individual assignments, essays, lab reports, projects and tests completed throughout the term, the student first must appeal to the Teaching Assistant or Instructor of the course, within three weeks of the date on which the Instructor or Teaching Assistant returned the assignments to the class. The Appeals Committee will not hear any further appeals about the final grade in any course unless this first step has been taken.

**If completion of the first stage has not resolved the matter, the student may appeal the final grade in the course to the FIMS Appeals Committee.** Appeals of final grades must be **within the time frame indicated in the Undergraduate Calendar.** It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the appeal is submitted within the deadline. The student shall submit a formal letter to the FIMS Appeals Committee outlining the grounds for the appeal, the remedy sought and relevant materials including the information about when and with whom (Teaching Assistant and/or Instructor) the student met, as described in Stage 1. If the appeal involves a request for work to be regraded, the original marked work and a clean copy (if possible) must be included. If the appeal is commenced once the deadline has passed, it will not be considered either by the Appeals Committee or by the Associate Dean.

### **The FIMS Appeals Committee has the discretion to determine whether the grounds for appeal have been met.**

If the Committee deems that the reasons for the appeal are not legitimate, the Associate Dean will be informed. The appeal will be terminated and the student will be informed.

### **If the Committee decides that the grounds for appeal have been met, the following steps will be taken:**

1. the course Instructor will be shown the appeal letter and offered an opportunity to make a written response;
2. if work is to be regraded, a reader will be appointed who is competent in the area in question and was not involved in the assignment of the original mark. The reader will consider the work in question and will arrive at an independent evaluation. If there is a large discrepancy between the original mark and the regraded mark, a second reader may be appointed by the Committee. **If the appointed reader(s) arrive at a grade within five marks of the original, the original grade will stand.**

### **The FIMS Appeals Committee will review the evidence and will make a recommendation on the case to the Associate Dean Undergraduate.**

The Associate Dean Undergraduate will consider the recommendation from the Appeals Committee, and will make a decision. The student and the instructor will be notified promptly and in writing by the Associate Dean of the decision and of the change in grade, if any. Within the Faculty of Information and Media Studies, the Associate Dean's decision on the matter is final.

Further appeals are possible under certain circumstances to the Senate Review Board Academic (for Undergraduate students) or to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (for Graduate students) but the student should carefully consult the guidelines regarding such Appeals.