MIT 3130F: FALL 2019

NETWORKED CAPITALISM

Networked capitalism is a digital vortex that sucks up human and natural energies, automates them to produce commodities, and sells and buys these commodities in a circulatory process that accelerates in speed and expands in scope. Thinking of networked capital as a kind of super-storm of the type created by anthropogenic climate change is a way to imagine the magnitude and dynamism of this system, created from human labour, which now threatens to detach from human scale and human ends.

Nick Dyer-Witheford, *Cyberproletariat* 2015 (adapted).

Professor: Dr. Nick Dyer-Witheford E-mail: ncdyerwi@uwo.ca

Office: FNB 4150 Office Hours: Thursday 1:30—3:30, and by appointment

Lecture: Thursday 9:30–12:30, FNB 3210

Required Texts: Adam Greenfield, *Radical Technologies: The Design of Everyday Life*, plus articles listed in the syllabus, available via OWL.

Description: The course examines new dynamics emerging from the interaction between digital networks and high capitalism. Topics include 5G networks, the Internet of Things, augmented realities, fablabs, cryptocurrencies, blockchains, robotics, machine learning and artificial intelligence. It surveys branching speculative futures for networked capitalism, ranging from exponential market growth to fully automated luxury communism to human extinction.

Evaluation: Reading questions 30%; Midterm Exam (in class essay) 25%; Final Essay (2500 words) 30%; Participation 15%.

Reading Questions: Each week in class you will answer in writing (10min) a basic question on that week's readings. 30% of your grade will be for your top six answers, each worth 5%. At least three answers must be submitted by Oct. 17.

Mid Term Exam: The mid-term exam will be an in class essay on the topics covered in lectures, readings and class discussion in the first half of the semester. It will be open book, insofar as you can bring notes, articles and texts, but no electronic devices will be allowed, other than for students with special accommodation. Any make-up exams approved for medical or other reasons will be taken in the special sessions scheduled by FIMS on a subsequent Friday, 1-4pm.

Participation: This is based on two factors. The first is attendance. The second is your constructive contribution to any discussions we might have. If you show up consistently but don't say anything during class you get a 5/15 on in-class participation. The other part of your participation grade is based on the quality and consistency of your contributions in class, in term of raising interesting questions, suggesting examples of the topics we examine, and constructive participation in discussion. At the end of the semester, you may, if you want, submit a short (1 para.) written summary of your contributions to the class.

Final Paper: Due in final class, Dec. 5. The final paper will be an exercise in critical thinking about the controversies and debates surrounding one or more of the issues addressed in this course. It will be due at the end of last class. A list of possible topics will be circulated following the mid=term exam. You may also propose your own topic, but this *must* be supported by a short essay-plan discussed in person with the instructor no later than week seven; essays on self-chosen topics submitted without such a discussion will not be accepted. All papers are required to demonstrate an active engagement with the course material; papers that could have been written without attending classes and doing the readings will receive zero marks. So too will papers that are, even with slight alterations, submitted for other courses, a practice that will be treated as an academic offence.

Course Objectives: Students will come away from this class with a clear understanding of the intersection between networks and markets that characterizes contemporary capitalism, and of contending assessments of its costs and benefits. They will have an introductory understanding 5G networks, the Internet of Things, augmented realities, fablabs, cryptocurrencies, blockchains, robotics, machine learning and artificial intelligence, and will be able to apply the concepts of various schools of political economy to analysis of how technologies are being deployed today and the social controversies arising from this process.

Attendance Policy: Attendance in class is mandatory. Students who do not attend lectures regularly will not do well in the course. Those who miss a substantial portion of the course may be banned from submitting the final assignment.

Late Paper Policy: Late assignments will lose 2% per day, unless the student has a documented medical or family emergency. At the discretion of the instructor, a request for an extension may be granted for a legitimate reason; such requests must be made at least one week before the due-date.

Grading Policy: Elective courses have no class average requirement. At the same time, 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 that student work is expected to meet.

Grade Return Students will receive graded work worth no less than 15% at least 3 days prior to the deadline for withdrawal without academic penalty. This year, the date by which students are to have received at least 15% of their grade in a first semester course is November 9, 2019. See: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/evaluation_undergrad.pdf.Please note, students are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of the grades they have received in their courses.

Plagiarism: University Senate regulations state: "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 (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Western Academic Calendar)." The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.

Prerequisites: University Senate regulations state: "Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

Mental Health: Students who are in emotional and/or mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western. For a complete list of options on how to obtain help please visit: http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/

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: Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities, https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the semester, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence.

Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

• during exam periods,

• absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,

• assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,

• if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are NOT met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate, if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact the FIMS Undergraduate Student Services Office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation. 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 required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Consideration_for_absences.pdf and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_ policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

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.

Privacy Policy: We adhere to an Ontario Provincial Government privacy legislation known as "FIPPA" (Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act). As such we cannot email you a grade or discuss a case with you via the internet unless we know it is you. As such, we will only answer UWO emails. For further information please see: http://www.uwo.ca/privacy/links.html

Laptops and Electronic Devices: If the use of Laptops becomes a distraction I reserve the right to ban their use from the classroom. Make sure your phone is turned off upon entering class. If you take a call or a text in class (even if you leave the room to respond to that call or text) you will be asked to leave.

WEEKLY TOPICS & READING SCHEDULE

N.B.: The schedule is subject to change. As are the readings listed therein. Attendance at the first class, Sep. 5, is important, because changes may be made depending on students expressed interest in particular topics.

September 5 Introduction
Reading: Nick Dyer-Witheford, "Vortex"; John Harris "Our Phones and Gadgets"

September 12 Networked Capitalism
Reading: Greenfield, Introduction and Chapter 1: Shannon Mattern, "Networked Dream Worlds"

September 19 Internet of Things
Reading: Greenfield, Chapter 2; Alina Selyukh "Optimized Prime"

September 26 Augmented Reality
Reading: Greenfield, Chapter 3; Soshana Zuboff, "Pokémon Go! Do!"

October 3 Fabricators
Reading: Greenfield, Chapter 4; Johan Söderberg, "Cloud Factory"

October 10 Cryptocurrencies
Reading: Greenfield, Chapter 5; James Bride, ""Bitcoin and the Money Myth"

October 17 Blockchains
Reading: Greenfield, Chapter 6; Rachel O' Dwyer "The Bank of Facebook"

October 24 Mid Term

October 31 Automation
Reading: Greenfield, Chapter 7; Kim Moody, "High Tech, Low Growth: Robots and the Future of Work"

November 7 Reading Week No Classes. Research and read resources for final essay.

November 14 Machine Learning
Reading: Greenfield, Chapter 8; Ana Lucia Gonzalez, "The 'Microworkers' Making your Digital Life Possible"; Angela Chen, "Ghost Workers".

November 21 Artificial Intelligence
Reading: Greenfield, Chapter 9; Nick Srnicek, "Platform Monopolies and the Political Economy of AI"

November 28 Stacks
Readings: Greenfield, Chapter 10: Benjamin Bratton, “The Black Stack”; Tiziana Terranova, “Red Stack Attack.”

December 5 Endgames
Reading: Greenfield, Conclusion, plus articles TBA depending on the direction of class discussions.
Final paper due in class.

NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Fall 2019

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

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

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: Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

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- during exam periods,
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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 required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see Policy on Academic Consideration For Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs
and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

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.

Grading at FIMS

- 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 4th 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
Student Development Centre:
www.sdc.uwo.ca
Psychological Services:
www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych
Services for Students with Disabilities:
www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd
Accessibility Information:
www.accessibility.uwo.ca/ Writing Support Centre:
www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing
Learning Skills Services:
www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning Indigenous Services:
http://indigenous.uwo.ca/
International and Exchange Student Centre:
www.sdc.uwo.ca/int Career Centre at Western:
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.