

# MIT 3833F: Arts and Entertainment Journalism

Fall 2019

Instructor: Dan Brown

Room: FNB-1200

Class time: Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

My office: FNB-4118

Office hours: I am generally on campus in the hour before and after class. If that doesn't work for you, PLEASE ARRANGE AN APPOINTMENT so I can be sure not to miss you. Since I work full-time off-campus, you are unlikely to bump into me by chance on campus.

Virtual office hours: I check my UWO e-mail frequently, so contact me by e-mail at: [dbrown84@uwo.ca](mailto:dbrown84@uwo.ca) and I will get back to you as quickly as possible. I can often give you very precise feedback by e-mail fairly swiftly, so don't hesitate to contact me this way.

## Course outline:

The goal of this course is to give students an overview of the types of stories - such as features, columns and reviews - they will write as arts journalists working at a newspaper or website.

Each week, we will look at several sample pieces written by working arts reporters and discuss which journalistic strategies should be emulated or avoided.

## Students who complete this course:

- will understand the mechanics of writing various types of arts stories
- will be able to generate original ideas for arts and entertainment stories
- will recognize the arts angle in any story
- will be adept at making convincing pitches to editors
- will develop strategies for countering the difficult conditions under which entertainment interviews often occur
- will grasp how the arts and entertainment section of a newspaper or website functions
- will have an understanding of the ethical pitfalls of working within the entertainment industry

## Course objectives:

Using real-life examples as a template and our own discussions as a springboard, students will produce a number of their own stories in order to (a) gain as much arts-writing experience as possible and (b) develop a personal theory of arts journalism.

The emphasis will be on learning how arts and entertainment stories are constructed, but to support this goal we will also discuss a number of related topics, including but not limited to (a) generating story ideas, (b) interviewing strategies and (c) ethical problems specific to arts journalism.

### **Course structure/Course materials:**

At the start of the course, class members will be given a package of readings for each class. It's your responsibility to become familiar with these readings so our time together each week is fruitful; being an informed participant in class will be vital to the success of this course, as well as to your enjoyment of the topics covered.

Attendance each week is MANDATORY. If you miss a class, you're responsible to make up the material.

NOTE: Class members are expected to keep themselves informed about the world of arts and entertainment for the duration of the course. You should be familiar with the most important arts stories of the day to get the most out of our time together. For purposes of our discussions, you are expected to be arts EXPERTS.

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>).

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for

similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Students are also forbidden, under any circumstances, from fabricating quotes, sources or details in their stories. If a student is found to have fabricated ANY part of an assignment, that assignment will receive an automatic grade of 0. Such fabrications can be considered an academic offence and will jeopardize your status in the program. Possible punishments include a grade of 0 for the course and removal from the program.

Scalping of quotations from other sources is prohibited. Scalping is taking quotations from interviews conducted by other reporters and passing them off as your own, therefore the quotations you use in your assignments **MUST BE FROM YOUR OWN INTERVIEWS.**

If you are having any difficulties determining what may be considered plagiarism or inappropriate use of source material, please come and discuss the matter with me before including such details in a story.

### **Schedule of classes, topics covered and assignments**

#### **September 11**

Pick up and go over course outline

#### **September 18**

Introduction to arts and entertainment journalism  
Generating story ideas: What is an arts hook?

#### **September 25**

Writing reviews

#### **October 2**

Writing columns

#### **October 9**

Writing advancers

**Review/column assignment due**

#### **October 16**

Writing "found" stories

#### **October 23**

Writing features/trend pieces; spotting trends; finding experts

**October 30**

Getting access to celebrities; interviewing celebrities; doing 20-minute interviews

**November 4 to 8**

Reading break

**November 13**

Writing profiles

**Feature or "found" story due**

**November 20**

Covering awards shows; dealing with impossible deadlines

**Sunday, November 24** \*American Music Awards broadcast: Students will cover the American Music Awards telecast off television, the story to be turned in the next morning (Monday, November 25) by 9 a.m. in my office. The broadcast airs on ABC.

Be prepared to set aside the evening of November 24 to complete this assignment; this will be a "live" assignment done on a real deadline and you will need access to a television

**November 27**

Ethics

**December 4**

How to get a job/Career advice

**Profile or celebrity interview due**

The topics to be discussed may change, depending on what big stories break during the semester. Whenever possible, I will give the class advance warning as circumstances warrant.

**Schedule of readings:**

**September 18 (intro)**

Britney's public meltdown not the end of a sad story Siri Agrell

One ring to obsess them all Marlene Arpe

The prequel is the new sequel Dan Brown

What entertainment journalism needs is a 60 Minutes Dan Brown

**September 25 (reviews)**

Fame costs and this is where the audience starts paying Dan Brown

Blood for suckers Roger Ebert  
Million Dollar Baby an absolute knockout Louis B. Hobson  
Clay Aiken makes insipid love song tolerable on debut album Christy Lemire  
Some came for Shania's Hello! Finbarr O'Reilly

### **October 2 (columns)**

Princess Diana's death was not a tragedy Dan Brown  
A salute to mediocrity in list form Andrew Coyne  
The Con in CanCon Andrew Coyne  
Movies just don't matter Neal Gabler  
Campaign against video games is political grandstanding Franklin Harris  
I'm a sharing music lover Donna Laframboise  
Family values on Fox New York Times editorial board

### **October 9 (advancers)**

Tavern history lets you drink in London heritage Brent Boles  
New, broader rules for Genies set the stage for dramatic battle Dan Brown  
Piano man returns to Maritimes Dan Brown  
Saskatoon trio hits Saint John Dan Brown

### **October 16 ("found" stories)**

The 1,000 Jedi march Dan Brown  
Starstruck with superfans at Denver conclave Cesar G. Soriano  
Fan Expo: Day One Dan Brown  
Fan Expo: Day Two Dan Brown  
Fan Expo: Day Three Dan Brown  
Fan Expo: Day Four Dan Brown  
Montell Jordan shows Rock the Park Crowd how he does it Dan Brown

### **October 23 (features/trend stories)**

Patch Adams survives test of the white coats Dan Brown  
Driving out the drive-ins Kristy Brownlee  
Voiceovers of the rich and famous Dan Brown  
TV show benefits from nifty gimmick Lynn Elber  
Getting down and dirty in the hot tub Hank Stuever  
Zombies on the loose William Weir

### **October 30 (celebrity interviews)**

A change in venue if not the world Dan Brown  
Eyes and ears on the prize Dan Brown  
Pillow talk with Bruce Willis Dan Brown  
The return of Plummer's love letter Dan Brown  
Wes Craven directing Meryl Streep? Not so scary Dan Brown  
Meeting Selena Gomez Rule No. 1: Don't mention Justin Bieber Vinay Menon

### **November 13 (profiles)**

Young area stars do veteran fiddler Chuck Joyce proud with victories at Canadian championships Joe Belanger

Batman's creator lived by the code of the Caped Crusader Dan Brown

Delaying a day job Dan Brown

Shutterbug Smith was a placid presence Dale Carruthers

Four Seasons' soon-to-retire concierge is vault of local history Shinan Govani

A Quebec comedian is Happy to Offend in Any Language Dan Bilefsky

How Greta Van Fleet paved their own stairway to heaven Jerilyn Jordan

### **November 20 (award shows/hard news)**

Rings wins big while Arcand takes one for Canada Dan Brown

PLUS read other previous American Music Awards coverage

### **November 27**

Ethics case studies to be read in class

### **December 4**

No readings

There will be additional required reading, depending on the stories that unfold in the world of arts journalism over the semester. Remember, you are expected to be an EXPERT on the events of the arts world for the duration of the course.

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Special Topic: Arts and Entertainment Journalism Instructor: Dan Brown  
Weekly talking points - please come to class prepared with your answers

### September 25: Writing reviews

How do you rate the effectiveness of each lede? How do you rate each conclusion?

What are the components of an effective review?

Which of these reviews is the most effective? Why? Which of these reviews is the least effective? Why?

Was Louis B. Hobson right not to spoil the ending of Million-Dollar Baby? Should he have spoiled it?

Do you owe it to your reader to preserve their surprise before they see a movie?

Was Finbarr O'Reilly fair to Shania Twain? Does it even matter if he was fair?

What do you make of O'Reilly's use of one-name sources?

Would it be possible to review a Lady Gaga concert today and not describe what she wore?

Was Christy Lemire fair to Clay Aiken? This review appeared before he came out of the closet - would you review a Clay Aiken album any differently today, considering he is out?

Which of the reviews made you feel like you were there? How does each reviewer put you there?

### October 2: Writing columns

How do you rate the effectiveness of each lede? How do you rate each conclusion? Sum up each argument in one sentence.

Which column is the most convincing? Why? Which column is the least convincing? Why?

What do you make of the tone in the Princess Diana piece?

Do any of the columnists seem to speak with more authority on their chosen topic? Why?

What persuasive strategies does each columnist use to try to bring readers around to

their way of thinking?

What would have made each column more convincing? What's the difference between a column and an editorial?

### **October 9: Writing advancers**

How do you rate each lede? How do you rate each conclusion? Why are advancers called advancers?

What are the components of an effective advancer?

Why should a newspaper even bother to publish advancers?

Is there a difference between an advancer and a paid advertisement? If so, what is the difference?

Which is the most effective? Why? Which is the least effective? Why? How can you get an interview subject off or their talking points?

### **October 16: Writing "found" stories**

How do you rate the effectiveness of each lede? How do you rate each conclusion?

What is the story that each reporter found? Sum it up in one sentence.

Which story has better quotes?

When you are writing an article about a topic like Star Wars, who is your audience - Star Wars fans, or the average reader who may not be a fan?

Which piece paints a more vivid picture? How does the writer do that? Which writer put you at the event? How do they put you there?

Compare the conclusions of each piece - which one is stronger? What do you think of the strategy of ending on a quote?

Should I have mentioned the Columbine school shooting in my piece, as the USA Today writer did?

For the Fan Expo blog posts: What are these reports? Are they columns, reviews, advancers, features, something else? How do you categorize them?

Is a blog post a separate category of story, different from the others we have covered in class? If so, what are components of an effective blog post?



Is the Montell Jordan piece a found story or a review?

### **October 23: Writing features/trend pieces**

How do you rate the effectiveness of each lede? How do you rate each conclusion?

Describe the trend in each story in one sentence.

Who are the experts in each story?

How would you describe the tone of each story?

In the hot-tub story, does the tone get in the way?

How successful is each writer in showing that the trend is actually a trend?

What do you make of the transitions in the Robin Williams piece?

### **October 30: Writing celebrity interviews**

How do you rate the effectiveness of each lede? How do you rate each conclusion?

What is the story in each of these pieces, in one sentence?

Is the Alicia Silverstone story fair? Does it matter if it's fair? In each of the stories, is there a larger issue at stake?

Is the Bruce Willis story more than a catchy lede? How many times is Willis quoted? Is the Christopher Plummer story more than just an advancer?

### **November 13: Writing profiles**

How do you rate the effectiveness of each lede? How do you rate each conclusion?

How does each writer bring their profile subject to life? Do they, in fact, bring them to life on the page?

If writing a profile is like being a portrait painter, how vivid is each portrait? In what ways is a profile more than just the details of a resume?

After reading each profile, do you know what the person being profiled looks like? Is there a larger issue at stake in each profile?

How do you get someone to open up about a dead relative or friend?

In the Lilloo Alim piece, how does Shinan Govani paint a vivid picture of her? How does he turn her story into the story of Toronto?

What do you make of Govani's use of supposition (no doubt, she was likely, who knows?)?

In the Sugar Sammy piece, how does Dan Bilefsky turn Sammy's story into Quebec's story? How does he outline Sammy's theory of comedy?

Is Greta Van Fleet piece too "insiderly?" What do you make of its tone?

## **November 20: Awards Shows**

How do you rate the effectiveness of each lede? How do you rate each conclusion?

What are the components of an effective awards-show story?

How do you recreate the experience of watching the show as it unfolds;?

How do you write a piece with lots of "colour" without making it an opinion piece?

How do you deal with an impossible deadline?

### **Suggested resources:**

On the web: Arts Journal, found at [artsjournal.com](http://artsjournal.com)

Slate magazine, found at [slate.com](http://slate.com) - especially the Arts & Life section

The BBC's website, [BBC.co.uk](http://BBC.co.uk), especially the Entertainment section of the News page

[CTVNews.ca](http://CTVNews.ca), especially the Entertainment section

[CBC.ca/arts/](http://CBC.ca/arts/)

[Eonline.com](http://Eonline.com)

The Hollywood Reporter, found at [hollywoodreporter.com](http://hollywoodreporter.com)

The Internet Movie Database [imdb.com](http://imdb.com) - good starting point for research on movies

Rolling Stone, found at [rollingstone.com](http://rollingstone.com)

In print: The London Free Press YOU section

USAToday

The Wall Street Journal, especially the Friday edition's Weekend Journal National

National Post's Arts & Life section

The Toronto Star's entertainment pages

The Globe and Mail, especially the daily Review section

Shows such as TMZ, eTalk daily and Access Hollywood are primarily sources of celebrity gossip, but they may spark story ideas

### **Grading:**

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

**Participation in class:** worth 10 per cent of final grade (although attendance is mandatory, this is NOT an attendance mark; see remarks on participation criteria)

**Review or column assignment:** worth 20 per cent of final grade; due October 9

**Feature/trend piece or "found" story:** worth 20 per cent of final grade; due November 13

**American Music Awards assignment:** worth 25 per cent of final grade; Due November 25 outside class, the morning after the People's Choice broadcast on E!

Be prepared to set aside the evening of November 24 to complete this assignment; this will be a "live" assignment done on a real deadline and you will need access to a television

**Profile or celebrity interview:** worth 25 per cent of final grade; due December 4

NOTE: Every story written for this course must have an identifiable arts hook or peg. You must get your topic and list of interview subjects approved before you begin. This can be done in class, in my office by appointment, or by e-mail.

**\*I WILL NOT ACCEPT ASSIGNMENTS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN PITCHED AND APPROVED BEFORE YOU START WRITING\***

**Late policy:** Assignments are due at the beginning of class in class. A paper that is one day late will receive a 10 per cent penalty. This increases to 20 per cent on the second day and 30 per cent on the third. Papers more than three days late will not be accepted and will receive a mark of 0.

Please submit a hard copy \*Assignments will not be accepted by e-mail\* This policy is for your protection. If handing in a hard copy of each story to me in class is going to

be an obstacle or a hardship for you, I urge you to re-think your decision to take this course.

An additional note: MIT Grading Policy - see Notes from the Dean's Office at the end of the syllabus

From the Academic Handbook (§.1664)

As a guideline for departments (or faculties where applicable), assigned work will be distributed in such a way that approximately half way through the course the student will receive an estimate of his standing in the course.

This requirement will be satisfied with a remark on the marked copy of your second assignment. If you want an estimate of your standing before then, please contact me and we can discuss an alternative arrangement.

Students will receive graded work worth no less than 15% at least 1 week 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 the course is October 29, 2016. Students can find details about this academic policy here:  
[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/exam/evaluation\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/evaluation_undergrad.pdf)

Please note, students who receive academic accommodation for the assignments on which these grades are based may not receive feedback in time to meet this deadline. Instructors and TAs are responsible for making available graded work to the student prior to the deadline; students are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of the grades they have received in their courses.

### **Participation criteria**

#### **Grade range**

100-90: You always participate in depth, offering insightful comments on the assigned readings

80-90: You speak in every class, make significant contributions in most, and clearly know the readings

70-80: You usually participate in depth and know the readings, but are silent some of the time

60-70: You make at least one relevant brief comment each class 50-60: You make a relevant brief comment in most classes

40-50: You make a few brief comments and are silent most of the time

Below 40: You never participate OR I don't have any idea who you are OR you read the newspaper, text message, play video games or check Instagram during class. As such, you will be considered MENTALLY ABSENT.

Attendance in class is MANDATORY each Wednesday

For the first class missed, 5% will be deducted from the student's participation grade

For the second class missed, 10% will be deducted from the student's participation grade

And so on, at a rate of an additional 5% per class missed

THE PARTICIPATION PORTION OF YOUR FINAL GRADE IS NOT AN ATTENDANCE MARK.

Please don't confuse the two. Participation is not important as an end in itself; it's important to the extent that being present is a prerequisite to participating in class discussions.

If you are uncomfortable speaking in class and sharing your thoughts, you should re-think your decision to take this course. By not participating, you cheat not only yourself of a chance to learn, but you also deny your classmates the opportunity to learn from you.

The use of cellphones in class is prohibited. Please turn cellphones off before class begins. The use of laptops is likewise prohibited, except when necessary for our discussions, I will let you know when this is permitted

# 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](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: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#)

## 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, 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](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 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)

g Indigenous Services:

[http://indigenous.uwo.c](http://indigenous.uwo.ca/)

a/

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.