



Kent Monkman, *The Emergence of a Legend (2)*, 2006

## MIT 4030: The Radical Imaginary

Western University • FIMS  
Wednesdays 3:30-6:20pm  
FNB 1270

Dr. Sharon Sliwinski  
Office: FNB 4030  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 2-3pm  
e: [ssliwins@uwo.ca](mailto:ssliwins@uwo.ca)  
p: 519-661-2111 x88473

### **Course Description**

This course investigates the social and political dimensions of the imaginary realm – the ways that having a mind mediates our experience of the world. We will examine a set of contemporary issues through a psychological frame including: settler colonialism, the legacies of slavery, mental health and illness, and the psychosocial dynamics of the rapid expansion of digital technology and culture.

A number of philosophers and social theorists have explored the role of mass media in the forming and shaping of imagined communities – from nation states to the smallest of subcultures. We will read some of their work as well as the work of key psychological thinkers in order to understand how our inner world affects our sense of reality and attachments to others. As Michael Ende once put it: “If people forget that they have an inner world, then they forget their own values. The inner world must be added to the exterior world, it must be created and discovered. And if we do not, now and then, make a journey through our inner life to discover these values, they will be lost.”

Grasping how these two worlds affect one another—the inner and the outer world of external reality—is a thorny task. But overall, our course aims to build the conceptual grounding for understanding how our current social and political conflicts can be understood as crises of imagination.

## Learning objectives

This course aims to help you: 1) Develop a working definition of the imaginary, both as an aspect of the individual psyche *and* as the shared schema of our social worlds; 2) Develop a sense of the political implications of the imaginary, that is, an understanding of how some of our current social conflicts can be understood as crises of imagination; 3) Develop a capacity to ask clear, compelling, and creative research questions.

## Class rules

There are relatively few: 1) Respect yourself and your colleagues; 2) Read, watch, or listen to the required readings; 3) Thoughtfully prepare and actively participate in every class; 4) Full attendance is expected; please communicate with me if you are unable to attend a class or are having difficulty in the course.

## Schedule

September	11	<b>Intro:</b> Where are we and what are we doing here?
	18	<b>Reverie</b> (Freud + Winnicott, Ch. 7)
	25	<b>Transitional Space</b> (Winnicott, Ch. 1-2)
October	2	<b>Play</b> (Winnicott, Ch. 3-5)
	9	<b>Creativity &amp; Mental Health</b> (Bechdel)
	16	<b>Imagined Communities</b> (Anderson + Appadurai + Castoriadis) <i>*at least two questions due</i>
	23	<b>The Image of the Self</b> (Lacan + Winnicott, Ch. 9 + Frosh)
	30	<b>The Colonial Imaginary</b> (Crosby + Monkman)
November	6	READING WEEK NO CLASS
	13	<b>The Unspeakable Unspoken</b> (Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> )
	20	<b>The Racialized Imaginary</b> (Morrison + <i>The 1619 Project</i> + Adowaa Buolamwini) <i>*final paper proposal due</i>
	27	<b>The Gendered Imaginary</b> (Beard + Butler)
December	4	<b>Outro:</b> Final paper workshop <i>*final paper due</i>

## Required Books (available the Western Bookstore)

1. Bechdel, Alison, *Are You My Mother? A Comic Drama* (Boston: Mariner, 2013)
2. Morrison, Toni, *Beloved* (New York: Vintage, 2004)
3. Winnicott, D. W. *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge, 2005)

## Required Readings (all available on OWL)

1. Adowaa Buolamwini, Joy, "How I'm Fighting Bias in Algorithms" (TED talk) Watch online: <https://www.poetofcode.com>
2. Anderson, Benedict "Imagined Communities" In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 48-59

3. Appadurai, Arjun "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," In *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 27-47
4. Beard, Mary, "The Public Voice of Women" *London Review of Books*, Vol. 36 No. 6 (20 March 2014): 11-14, or listen online: <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v36/n06/mary-beard/the-public-voice-of-women>)
5. Butler, Judith, "Introduction" In *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1-16
6. Castoriadis, Cornelius, "Radical Imagination and the Social Instituting Imaginary" In *The Castoriadis Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997), 319-337.
7. Crosby, Marcia "Construction of the Imaginary Indian" in Stan Douglas (ed) *The Vancouver Anthology: the Institutional Politics of Art*, Vancouver: Talon Books, pp. 267-294.
8. Freud, Sigmund, "Creative Writers and Day-dreaming" (1908) In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 9, ed. and trans. James Strachey, (London: Hogarth Press, 1955)
9. Frosh, Paul, "The Gestural Image: The Selfie, Photography Theory, and Kinesthetic Sociability," *International Journal of Communication*, Vol. 9 (2015), 1607–1628
10. Monkman, Kent, "Casualties of Modernity," Watch online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VW3amUsP-50>
11. Lacan, Jacques, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" In *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 2006)
12. Morrison, Toni, selections from *The Source of Self-Regard* (New York: Knopf, 2019)
13. *The 1619 Project*, online: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/19/magazine/history-slavery-smithsonian.html>

## Assignments

### **1. Questions: approx. 250 words each (4 x 10%) \*at least two questions must be handed in by Oct. 16**

A good question possesses, inspires, perplexes, and thrills the mind and heart. On four separate weeks, prepare a question based on the assigned reading for that week. Provide context for your question, signaling how your thinking about the question evolved. Your questions should be straightforward, jargon-free, and open-ended. Anchor your question in the text. This might mean parsing a particular passage in a Talmudic fashion, i.e. actively wrestling with the text, seeking the meaning and truth of the words. This approach to reading aims at critique, which privileges the ability to question freely and without inhibition. Or you might wish to find links between our authors. There is no need, however, to rely on outside materials for this assignment.

### **2. Keyword: 500-750 words (25%)**

This is a modified version of the standard seminar presentation. At least once during the semester, you are required to present your thoughts about one of the assigned reading. The presentation must focus on a **keyword or key passage** from one of the week's

assigned readings. The idea of this task is to work closely with the text, unfolding and reflecting upon the significance of the keyword (or key passage) that you have chosen. You might wish to choose a term that you believe to be the crux of the author's argument. Or you might choose to focus on something more obscure in order to speculate on the significance of the outlying idea. Depending on your choice, you may wish to use the term as a way to try to paraphrase or summarize the author's argument. Or you may wish to deconstruct the logic at work in the passage. You may wish to link your discussion of the keyword to other readings from our course, but there is no requirement to rely on outside materials for this assignment. End your discussion with two-three questions for discussion with your colleagues. Bring enough copies of your work for each student in the class.

**3. Proposal: 250-500 words (10%) Due November 20<sup>th</sup>**

Choosing a topic takes time. Good essays almost always begin with good questions. Spend time thinking about the kinds of questions that animate your reading and writing. Use a question as the basis for your proposal and as the basis for the final essay.

The proposal should include your research question and its context, the thinkers with whom you will be in dialogue, a description of the texts that you will engage with in your investigation of your question, and the lens you plan to use in your analysis. On the last week of class, we will workshop the proposals, so bring one copy for each person in the class.

**4. Final Essay: approx. 2500 words (25%) Due December 4<sup>th</sup>**

The ubiquitous term paper: this should be an original and exciting piece of writing that makes direct use of class materials. You should deeply engage with one or more of the authors from the syllabus. While it is not required, you may also use our course materials as inspiration for original research.

I am keen to read essays that are: conceptually fresh and show some adventure in the craft of writing. A sense of the intellectual stakes of your argument and/or the larger context of your topic is important. A musical quality in the prose is most welcome.

We will use the last week of class to share your ideas with your colleagues. Bring a revised copy of your proposal as the basis for a brief presentation of your work.

# 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)

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.