

Western University
Faculty of Information and Media Studies

MIT 2154G



**Journalism Practices and Principles
Course Syllabus – Winter 2019**

Instructor: Mark Kearney

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Course Information

Lectures: Mondays 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., **FNB 1200**

The course format will consist of lectures, in class exercises, group work, and assignments that will be completed in and outside class.

Course Description

This course investigates some of the controversies about, and skills of, journalism, studying both mainstream news services and citizen journalism, and providing an introduction to journalistic writing and news production, and the everyday practices of various types of news organizations.

In this course, we will study a variety of genres of journalistic writing, from hard-news stories written on deadline to event coverage and profiles/features. The genres of writing will be examined in several ways — as products of the news media system, as sources of information, and as the first rough draft of history. Students will have opportunities to practise different journalistic genres.

Writing for the mass media incorporates the basic requirements of good writing as well as knowledge of the special requirements of journalism. The course will focus on the skills and

techniques of writing for mainstream media such as daily newspapers, but will also offer insight into citizen journalism and journalism in electronic media.

The course will also examine some of the ethical aspects of journalism and how these affect the daily practices of journalists.

Course Goals /Learning Outcomes

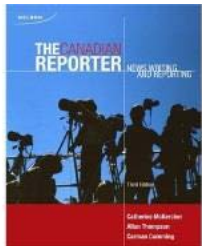
At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

- . Recognize genres of journalistic writing
- . Evaluate the appropriate use of each genre
- . Understand how news is gathered
- . Produce journalistic stories in specific genres
- . Identify ethical concerns relating to journalism and evaluate the appropriate response
- . Critically engage with contemporary issues and debates relating to journalism and the movement of information.

Course Tools and Learning Materials

Web Page: OWL will be the primary tool for communication outside the classroom. Please check the announcements regularly as well as your email. Additional readings and information on assignments may be posted on the site.

Recommended Reading:



This text is **not required** but it has good information that some students in the past have found useful. I will have this on reserve in Weldon library.

The Canadian Reporter, 3rd edition, by Catherine McKercher, Allan Thompson and Carman Cumming (Nelson, 2011).

It's usually available at the UWO bookstore if you want to purchase it and an electronic version of the text is available from <http://www.coursesmart.com> at a reduced cost, if you prefer.

<http://www.coursesmart.com/the-canadian-reporter-news-writing-and-reporting/mckercher-thompson-cumming/dp/9780176407018>

This link should take you to the e-book where it's available to rent for 180 days at a lower price.

- . Read at least one newspaper daily – electronic or paper.
 - . You may be asked to bring a newspaper or link to news website to some classes.
 - . In addition, you should regularly view or listen to broadcast news.
 - . You should acquaint yourself with Canadian Press style which I will discuss in class
- Other required or suggested readings may be posted on the course site.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Expectations: Because this is a second-year class, an emphasis is placed on rigorous engagement with the course materials and active participation in class discussion. **It is expected that students will attend each class**, have completed any required readings, and be prepared to participate thoughtfully and respectfully in discussion on an ongoing basis. **Missing classes means missing an opportunity to participate which will affect your overall grade for participation.**

Assignments will be submitted electronically via the OWL site set up for the course. Yes, grammar and spelling do matter in all written work.

Evaluation:

Assignment	Due Date
Journalistic writing assignments:	
Assignment One (in class) 15%	Assignment One: Jan. 28
Quiz/writing test 5%	Quiz/Writing: Feb. 11
Assignment Two (Event) 25%	Assignment Two: Feb. 26
Group Reporting Project 15%	Group Reporting: March 12
Assignment Three (Profile) 35%	Assignment Three: April 2
(Profile proposal due week of March 11)	
Participation/In-class work 5%	Continuous

Participation/In-Class Work:

Participation/In-Class Work: (5%) This mark will account for students being evaluated on the quantity and quality of their contributions to in-class discussions, to the intellectual life of the class and completing in-class practice writing assignments to determine your grade. Students who are clearly and consistently engaged with the course will be rewarded. **This grade is not for attendance. It is entirely possible to attend every class and still receive a grade of zero if the student does not demonstrate knowledge of any readings, fails to engage in class discussions, doesn't participate in the in-class work and/or disrupts the course.** Students

can also demonstrate they are engaged with the course material by discussions with me during office hours or by e-mailing to me (through the course website) articles, web sites, news stories, and other content related to course topics. If you have a valid reason provided by email or in person to me **prior to class**, the absence will not detract from your grade.

Journalistic Assignments:

There are *two news writing assignments*: one will be completed in-class and the second will be mostly completed on your own time as you will be asked to cover an event.

The *third writing assignment* will be in the form of a profile on a subject/person of your choosing. **However, you will not be allowed to profile and/or interview any family members for this or any other assignment.** A short three or four line proposal will be due for approval and input from the instructor. **The proposal will not be marked, as such, but must be submitted and approved or you will receive a five-mark deduction on the grade of the profile.**

The *Group Reporting Project* will involve teams of students working on an assigned topic for a story or a suggestion proposed by the group. Each student will be assigned to a group of four or five. The topics will likely be tied to news stories or trends of the day and will involve using classroom hours to interview people, take photos and to write up a story or stories based on what the team has gathered. This is a group mark and the process will take place over Weeks 7 to 9.

Detailed information on assignments will be distributed in class and/or via OWL.

Please note that 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 March , 2019. Students can find details about this academic policy here:
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. Students are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of the grades they have received in their courses.

Deadlines

Deadlines are sacred in journalism and assignments should be submitted electronically before the specified time via OWL. I will indicate that for each assignment. If necessary, you may in certain circumstances also be able to hand them in to me at the beginning of the class in which they are due. Unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor at least 48 hours in advance of the due date, late assignments will be subject to a **deduction of five per cent per day.**

Submissions will not be accepted after the assignments have been returned to the class.

Contacting the instructor

E-mail: **Students must regularly check the course website on OWL and possibly their UWO accounts for important announcements such as additional information regarding class preparation, assignments, or class cancellations or changes.**

Please allow a 24-hour turnaround for an email response – and please do not expect quick responses over the weekend.

Any email correspondence should have MIT 2154 in the subject headline. **Use the OWL website and your UWO email account ONLY. No messages from hotmail or Gmail accounts please.**

E-mails to the instructor, however, are best reserved for short questions that require a brief response. E-mail is often not a useful pedagogical tool for explaining course concepts or providing detailed advice on assignments. These issues are best handled with a face-to-face discussion, so please see me during my office hours or at some other time that is convenient for both of us.

I cannot give out or discuss grades via e-mail.

Please respect your fellow students:



Cellphones should be turned off during class.

Checking your phone and/or texting can be disrupting to others around you.

Laptops should be used **ONLY** for taking notes, writing stories, or other purposes related to the class – not checking email or browsing the Web (unless requested by the instructor for specific journalistic reasons).

I reserve the right to disallow them should they interfere with the class.

With all that said, I am here to help you achieve your potential in this class. Mass media and journalism are a vital part of our everyday life; knowledge of the role of journalism and how it is produced helps us to evaluate the information we receive and use it to our best advantage.

Please also read the *Notes from the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Information and Media Studies* that I have placed on the OWL site for this class.

Welcome to the course and let's work together to make it productive and enjoyable.

Land Acknowledgement

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

Schedule of Topics, Readings and Assignments

	Topic	Suggested Readings in The Canadian Reporter
Week One		
Jan. 7	Mass Media/What is News	Chapters 1, 2
Week Two		
Jan. 14	Writing for a Mass Audience Writing Leads	Chapter 9
Week Three		
Jan. 21	Gathering Information Story Ideas	Chapters 3, 4
Week Four		
Jan. 28	Covering Events/CP Style Assignment 1 in class	Appendix A – Language Chapter 12
Week Five		
Feb. 4	Interviewing More news writing practice	Chapter 7
Week Six		
Feb. 11	Features/Profiles Writing for the Web and Social Media Quiz/writing test today	Chapters 6, 11

Feb.18 -Feb 22

Reading Week - no classes

Week Seven

Feb. 25

Features/Profiles Continued
Introduction to Group Reporting
**Assignment Two due via OWL on
Feb. 26**

Chapter 8, Chapter 10
(Profile section)

Week Eight

March 4

Basic Editing/ Headlines
Working on group reporting in class

Week Nine

March 11

Group reporting assignment due this week
Other kinds of journalism – opinion, columns,
longer features, beat reporting
Profile Proposal due this week

Week Ten

March 18

Specialized reporting, freelancing,

Chapter 19, Chapter 13

Week Eleven

March 25

Ethics and Legalities
Other journalistic skills
Workshopping/working on your profile

Week Twelve

April 1

Future of Journalism
Workshop Profile
Assignment Three (Profile) due April 2

Week Thirteen

April 8

Wrap up
Profiles returned

NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Winter 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:

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

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 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.