

**Faculty of Information and Media Studies
UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO**

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).

MIT 2157B: Planet Google

Winter 2019

COURSE SYLLABUS

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Grant Campbell, Associate Professor

gcampbel@uwo.ca

519-661-2111 x88483

FIMS-Nursing Building, Room 4083

Office Hours for Winter 2019: Thursdays, 10:30 am.—11:30 am. (Subject to Change)

COURSE INFORMATION

FIMS-Nursing Building, Room 1240

Tuesdays, 9:30 am-11:30 am

Thursdays, 9:30 am-10:30am

REQUISITES

Antirequisite(s): The former MIT 2376F/G.

Prerequisite(s): None

Corequisite(s): None

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Discover how access to and control of behind-the-scenes information is a major force in our lives. This course explores how search engines harvest "big" data from users and use it to map, analyze, and exploit patterns of online behaviour for marketing, government and corporate intelligence, and other purposes.

Consult the course OWL website for weekly readings.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To gain an understanding of large-scale data systems in their practical, theoretical, historical, social and cultural contexts (MIT Objective 1).
2. To gain an understanding of the processes and institutions involved in disseminating information, entertainment, and knowledge through big data technologies and services (MIT Objective 6).
3. To explore the connections between the control of big data technologies and democracy, the public sphere, capital accumulation, labour and occupations, and the environment (MIT Objective 6).

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. **Comprehend** the theoretical principles that underlie key concepts of large-scale data systems, including algorithms, predictive analytics, linked data, and metadata.
2. **Recognize** key continuities and differences between the various paradigms of data that prevail in modern technological discourse, and to place these paradigms in an historical and social context.
3. **Critically engage** with statements in the popular and professional media related to big data, and in so doing distinguish fact from fiction, and truth from hype.
4. **Communicate** both their understanding and their critical engagement to organizations and individuals that would benefit from this knowledge, and be in a position to reward it.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Students are required to read at least ONE of the following two works:

McGrayne, Sharon B. (2012). *The theory that would not die*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Noble, Safiya. (2018). *Algorithms of oppression: How search engines reinforce racism*. New York: NYU Press.

Copies have been ordered for the Western Bookstore. While both books are available in e-version at less cost, students should ensure that their e-book devices enable them to see the illustrations properly.

Other assigned readings will be available on the OWL Site through the Library's Course Readings service.

ASSIGNMENTS

1 Annotated Bibliography Assignment Due: Friday, February 1	25 %
1 Book Review Due: Tuesday, February 26	30 %
1 Course Project Due: End of Term (See Course Policies for clarification)	35 %
Class attendance and participation	10 %
	100 %

COURSE POLICIES

Course Participation:

The term “Course Participation” includes the following components:

- Regularity of attendance (70 % of participation grade)
- Participation in classroom and/or online activities (30 % of participation grade)

Classroom Conduct, including the Use of Electronic Resources:

Due to the nature of the course content, students are encouraged to use their electronic devices during the class to assist them in contributing to class discussions. Please do not use your device in a way that is disruptive to your colleagues or to the instructor.

Taking personal calls is not permitted during the class period; if you anticipate that you will need to receive an important call, please sit near an exit, and leave the room as unobtrusively as possible;

No recording of the class, either audio or video, is permitted without the instructor's permission;

Assignments and Grading:

All assignments will be graded by the instructor, in adherence to the *Guidelines to the MIT Grading Range* at http://www.fims.uwo.ca/acad_programs/undergrad/mit/courses/grading.htm.

Penalties for late assignments will be 5 % per day unless an extension has been negotiated in advance.

Due Date for Final Term Project:

The due dates for the first two assignments have been set at February 1 and February 26.

The final term project is due on a date of the student's choosing between April 2 and April 9.

Each student must consult his or her personal schedule of assignments, decide upon an optimum due date between April 2 and April 9, and formally notify the instructor by e-mail by FEBRUARY 1 at midnight.

Once established, no extensions will be permitted unless for family or medical reasons, with appropriate accompanying documentation.

If the student has not notified the instructor by February 1, the due date will be automatically set at April 2.

Academic Accommodation:

All requests for extensions must be submitted to the instructor at least two weeks before the assignment due date.

In the first class, students will also receive a guide that provides the official FIMS policies on:

- Academic Offenses
- Plagiarism
- Academic Accommodation
- Medical Accommodation
- Compassionate Accommodation
- Religious Accommodation
- The FIMS Grading Policy
- Guidelines to the Grade Ranges in MIT
- Support Services

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.