

MIT 1020E, 2019-20

INTRODUCTION TO MEDIA, INFORMATION AND TECHNOCULTURE

John Reed, Instructor

Office FNB 4081

Office hours Thursdays 2:00-4:00pm

jreed22@uwo.ca

Lectures

TUES. 4:30 -6:20pm
Location: NCB 101

Outcomes

Students who take this course will:

Understand media in their technological, cultural and economic aspects.

Learn different ways of analyzing media content, production and reception.

Gain critical insight into the technical and cultural role of information and communication technologies.

Explore how people & technologies interweave to produce particular cultures or 'technocultures'.

Objectives

Throughout the year we will:

Assess the importance of media, technology and culture in contemporary society.

Explore theoretical approaches to media, technology and culture, including medium theory, technoculture theory, cultural studies, and political economy of media.

Practice methods of analyzing media arising from these perspectives.

Materials

All required texts are available on the OWL website. Lecture slides are available on OWL. Keep all readings and assignments in a binder for the year!

Description

This course gives a comprehensive introduction to the MIT Program.

In the fall semester, you will explore two methods of grasping media by examining one academic field that focuses on media technologies called medium theory, and another that focuses on media content called cultural studies.

In the winter semester, we use the method of political economy to look at power relationships between politics, media, and economics. We'll conclude the year by exploring how all three methods interact in the age of digital networks.

Requirements

To complete this course, you must understand key terms, write several essays, take two midterm exams, undertake and present group research, and sit a final exam.

Fall Essay 1 (5% 750 words)
Oct. 08 in lecture+OWL.

Fall Midterm Exam (10%)
Oct. 22 in lecture. Multiple choice, closed book.

Fall Essay 2 (10% 1000 words)
Dec. 03 in lecture + OWL.

Winter Midterm (10%)
Feb. 11 in lecture. Multiple choice, closed book.

Group Project (10%)
Feb. 25-28 in tutorials.

Final Essay (15% 1500 words)
March 17 and 31.

Final Exam (30%)
Date TBA. Mixed format and open book.

Tutorial Participation 10%
Ongoing plus attendance.

Organization

We ask the question, 'why study media?' and spend the year slowly exploring three popular academic approaches.

Medium theory sees media as technologies that alter human senses and capacities by their speed, rate of participation, and local or global scope.

Cultural studies approaches media and technology as texts (involving stories, characters, and symbols) that both shape audiences and are interpreted by them.

Political economy examines issues of ownership and control, which in our market economy means understanding media and technologies as commodities.

assignments & guidelines

I consider laptops to be a distraction to others and do not usually allow their use unless you have an accessibility concern. Lecture slides are available on OWL in advance; please print and bring to class. I strongly urge you to write directly on the slide sheets in lecture (tablets are not suitable for this). Doing so compresses notes/images into one resource. I ask for two volunteers to take laptop notes each week, and these notes are available to anyone needing them upon request.

Tutorial Participation Worth 10%

Ongoing

Your Tutorial Assistant (TA) will have their own guidelines regarding this, but they will likely reward attendance, participation in discussion, bringing readings/notes to class, reading the materials in advance, and not disrupting class by using electronic devices.

Tutorials are where the teaching and discussions take place, so use this time! Introduce yourself and grab TAs at office hours, lecture, and by appt. to chat about whatever. That's their job!

Fall Essay #1 Worth 5%

Oct 08 in lecture+OWL (5%)

A 750 word essay (3 page, double-spaced, with 1" margins, 12 point Times New Roman). The details for this assignment will be posted on the OWL course website. It focuses on medium theory.

Fall Midterm Exam (10%)

October 22 in lecture

This multiple-choice, closed-book exam asks you to identify terms from material up to and including the week of October 15.

We'll post an example exam on OWL as the date nears, and we will hold a review and Q&A session as well.

Fall Essay #2 Worth 10%

(Dec 03 in lecture+OWL (10%))

A 1000 word essay (4 page double-spaced, with 1" margins, 12 point Times New Roman). The details for this assignment will be posted on the OWL course website. It focuses on cultural studies.

*Late (unaccommodated) work for all written assignments in this class receives a 10% per day deduction.

**You may request two 48-hour academic accommodations per year for work that is worth less than 30% of your final grade. Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance that is sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements should self-declare using the online Self-Reported Absence portal. Visit [here](#) for more information.

Winter Midterm Exam (10%)

February 11 in lecture

This multiple-choice, closed-book exam asks you to identify terms from the fall as well as winter material up to and including February 04..

We'll post an example exam on OWL as the date nears, and we will hold a review and Q&A session as well.

Winter Group Project Worth 10%

February 25–28 in tutorials

You will work with several other students in tutorial to choose a topic, collaboratively research, and present your findings in a medium of your choosing. You'll have about 5 minutes, so be concise and to the point! One mark for the entire group. You'll use Teams to communicate, share resources and document your collaboration.

A Winter Final Essay Worth 15% (2 parts)

(1) Mar 17 lecture+OWL (5%)

(2) Mar 31 lecture+OWL (10%)

This end-of-year five-page (1250 word) critical essay asks you to look at your own digital media usage through a variety of surveillance, tracking and privacy exercises to examine how that information is commodified but masked by the medium itself in many ways. It contains two portions: the results of your surveillance exercises (due March 17) and the final 5-page critical essay reflecting on those findings (due March 31).

Open-Book Final Exam Worth 30%

TBA during the April final exam period.

This is a three hour, open-book, mixed-format exam that requires you to bring your readings and notes (saved in a binder, right?).

The exam consists of short answer questions (on the winter semester's work) and an essay assignment (focused on topics covered from mid-winter semester on). The date for the exam has not been set at this time; once it has been set by central administration we will inform the class. Be aware that the exam period takes place after classes end. Having travel plans that conflict with the exam date is not a legitimate excuse for requesting alternative arrangements, and cannot be accommodated.

We'll post an example exam on OWL as the date nears, and we will hold a review and Q&A session as well.

Tutorials

Tuesdays

7:00-7:50pm	FNB-2240	SEC 003	Chantale Pard	cpard@uwo.ca
7:00-7:50pm	UC-1105	SEC 004	Farzan Mirzazadeh	fmirzaza@uwo.ca

The Course Instructor. As the course instructor I design, teach and administer the course. I make decisions about what material we will or will not cover. I set the response topics, assignments, exams and deliver the lectures. The TAs work with me to make sure you are being heard, and your thoughts are being considered. I meet with the TAs regularly to compare notes about how the course is proceeding. Together we are a teaching team. TAs run their own autonomous groups in the way they see fit, but we insist on grading and pedagogical consistency between groups. If you have an issue that cannot be resolved by your TA, then by all means, contact your instructor for the semester. We are happy to talk with you about any aspect of class or school.

Tutorial Leaders. TAs play an important role in this course. They lead tutorials, clarify and extend the course material, the lectures, the review sessions, hold office hours (announced in the tutorial) and collect and evaluate all assignments. Nobody else will mark your work. They handle concerns about writing, preparing for exams, and composing and improving your work. Get to know them; they are here to help.

You play an important role at Western and your contribution here is vital. First year involves a radical overturning of your lifestyle, social bonds, living conditions, and academic approach. Since most of these changes are non-academic, they can pile up and overwhelm the academic. Turn to each other, your TAs, Sophs, and the course instructors to make sense of it all. Do not go through these adjustments alone, for you must quickly learn how to take ownership of these responsibilities.

Changing tutorial sections. *You cannot change your fall tutorial without approval from a FIMS Academic Advisor.* Do not ask your course instructor or TA for permission to change, as they do not have authorization to do so. *You cannot switch tutorials in the winter term,* as the registrar's office considers this to be yearlong commitment. **Keep this in mind as you add/drop other courses in the winter semester.**

Wednesdays

9:30-10:20am	FNB 1270	SEC 006	Danica Facca	dfacca2@uwo.ca
9:30-10:20am	SH-3305	SEC 008	Anton Savitch	asavitch@uwo.ca
11:30a-12:20pm	HSB-35	SEC 009	Amanda Jenkins	ajenki3@uwo.ca
1:30-2:20pm	SH-2355	SEC 010	Effie Sapuridis	esapurid@uwo.ca
12:30-1:20pm	UCC-54A	SEC 011	Saveena Atwal	satwal26@uwo.ca

Tutorials, continued

Thursdays

9:30-10:20am	AHB-1B08	SEC 012	Percy Sherwood	asherwoo@uwo.ca
9:30-10:20am	UC-1225	SEC 013	Stanley Park	jpark648@uwo.ca
11:30a-12:20p	UC-1105	SEC 014	Leah Brown	mbrow244@uwo.ca
3:30-4:20pm	UCC-61	SEC 015	Syeda Afsana Tazreen	stazreen@uwo.ca
3:30-4:20pm	SH-3315	SEC 016	Charlotte Nau	cnau@uwo.ca
3:30-4:20pm	FNB-1270	SEC 017	Naj Naeemzadah	nnaeemza@uwo.ca
4:30-5:20pm	UC-1105	SEC 018	Karuna Dsouza	kdsouz9@uwo.ca

The Course Instructor. As the course instructor I design, teach and administer the course. I make decisions about what material we will or will not cover. I set the response topics, assignments, exams and deliver the lectures. The TAs work with me to make sure you are being heard, and your thoughts are being considered. I meet with the TAs regularly to compare notes about how the course is proceeding. Together we are a teaching team. TAs run their own autonomous groups in the way they see fit, but we insist on grading and pedagogical consistency between groups. If you have an issue that cannot be resolved by your TA, then by all means, contact your instructor for the semester. We are happy to talk with you about any aspect of class or school.

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FALL SCHEDULE

01

Sept 10 Introduction/Overview: Reviewing the Course

—>Screen in lecture: *Black Mirror* (TV episode)

02

Sept 17 How Do Technologies Shape Us and Vice Versa?

*Tutorials
begin

Mark Federman, 'What is the Meaning of the Medium is the Message?'

Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message* (1967, excerpts)

03

Sept 24 How Do Media in Specific Ages Uniquely Shape Us?

Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message* (1967, excerpts)

04

Oct. 01 Become the Medium in Order to Use it: Absorption and Mutation

Alan Kay, 'User Interface: A Personal View' (1989)

Mark Weiser, 'The Coming Age of Calm Technology' (1996)

05

Oct. 08 Human-Machine Environments: Cybernetics and Cyborgs

*Medium Theory
essay due in
lecture (5%) and
via OWL

Hari Kunzru, 'You Are Cyborg' (1997)

Norbert Wiener, 'Men, Machines and the World About' (1954)

06

Oct. 15 Networked Surveillance Environments: From Social Media to Smart Homes

Quinn Norton, 'The Hypocrisy of the Internet Journalist' (2015)

Kashmir Hill and Surya Mattu 'The House that Spied on Me' (2018)

07

Oct. 22 Midterm Exam in Lecture

*Midterm exam
in lecture (10%)

Closed-book; multiple choice

08

Oct. 29 Making Meaning Using Signs, Fixed by Codes, Within Languages

Roland Barthes, 'The Photographic Message' (1977, excerpts)

Stuart Hall, 'The Work of Representation' (2012)

09

Nov 05 Reading Week: Enjoy the Break!

10

Nov 12 History as a Text: Master Narratives of 'Progress'

David Nye, 'Technology, Nature, and American Origin Stories' (2003)

11

Nov 19 Producers, Consumers and the Negotiation of Meaning
Stuart Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding' (1973, excerpts)

12

Nov 26 Master Narratives II: Coding Meaning Through Sublime and Binary Thought

John Hartley, 'Binary Opposition' in *Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies*

Ian Buchanan, 'Hysterical Sublime' in *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*

13

Dec. 03 Screening in Class: *tba*

*Cultural Studies essay due in lecture (10%)

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Enjoy the break. We'll see you in January.

WINTER SCHEDULE

01

Jan 07 Welcome Back: Using *Black Mirror* to Review and Move Forward

*Tutorials
begin NEXT
week

02

Jan 14 The Industrial Economy: Standardization and Mass Production

*Tutorials
begin

'Ford Motor Company Successful Because of Concentration', New York Times (1913)

Janet Staiger, 'The Hollywood Mode of Production to 1930'

03

Jan 21 Efficiency: Rationalization and its 'Iron Cage'

*Group project
guidelines

George Ritzer, 'The McDonalidization of Society'

Luke Dormehl 'Taylorism Is Back: How A.I. Is Forging The Hyper-Efficient Workplace'

04

Jan 28 Informatization: Transitioning from the Industrial Economy to the Information and Service Economy

Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, 'Postmodernism, or the Informatization of Production'

Jeff Jarvis, 'Google Eats,' in *What Would Google Do?*

05

Feb 04 Emotional Labour in News, PR and Social Media

Jennifer Pan, 'The Pink Ghetto of Social Media'

Alana Hope Levinson, 'Pink Collar'

06

Feb 11 In-Class Multiple-Choice Midterm

*Finalize group projects in tutorials (due after the break)

--->Before Feb 25: Watch the film *The Great Hack* (posted to OWL)

07

Feb 18 Winter Reading Week

--->Before Feb 25: Watch the film *The Great Hack* (posted to OWL)

08

Feb 25 The Cybernetic Surveillance Economy

*Group projects in tutorials

Shoshanna Zuboff, 'On Surveillance Capitalism's Threat to Democracy'

09

Mar 03 AI and Ideology: When Algorithms Reproduce or Worsen Social Inequality

Cathy O'Neil, 'How Algorithms Rule Our Working Lives'

Safiya Noble, 'Google Has a Striking History of Bias Against Black Girls'

10

Mar 10 Transhumanism: Evolving Beyond 'Sub-Optimal' Nature?

Clay Dillow, 'This is What 2045 Will Look Like'

Max More, 'A Letter to Mother Nature'

11

Mar 17 Thinking About the Future

*Surveillance Exercises due in tutorial/OWL

*Lecture is online only

Theodore Kaczynski, 'Industrial Society and Its Future'
Kara Swisher, 'No More Phones and Other Tech Predictions for the Next Decade'

12

Mar 24 Movie Week!

View in Class: *Ex Machina* (2015) dir. Alex Garland

13

Marc 31 Final Lecture: Discuss the Film, Exam, and Wrap-Up the Year!

*Last week of tutorials

*Surveillance Essay Pt1 + Exercises due in lecture

??

tba Final Exam

We'll hold a review beforehand.

The exam will be open-book, with multiple choice short answer questions in Part One, and a short essay in Part Two. It will prioritize material from weeks 8-14 (including *Ex Machina*), as well as selected key concepts discussed throughout the year.

NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Winter 2020

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 Accessible Education (formerly 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, unless noted on the syllabus. 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

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Academic Calendar](#).

Grading at FIMS

- Normally, first year courses required for entry into an MIT or MPI module (MIT 1020E and MIT 1025F/G) are expected to have a course average between 68-72%.
- Normally, second year required courses (MIT 2000, 2100, 2200, 2500) are expected to have a course average between 70 and 75%.
- Normally, third year required courses (MIT 3000, 3100) are expected to have a course average between 72 and 77%.

Elective courses and 4th year seminars have no recommended course averages.

Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>

SUPPORT SERVICES – LINKS

Office of the Registrar:

www.registrar.uwo.ca

Student Development Centre:

www.sdc.uwo.ca

Psychological Services:

www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych

Services for Students with Disabilities:

www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd

Accessibility

Information:

www.accessibility.uwo.ca

[/ Writing Support](#)

Centre:

www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing

Learning Skills Services:

www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning

Indigenous Services:

<http://indigenous.uwo.ca/>

International and Exchange Student

Centre:

www.sdc.uwo.ca/int Career

Centre at Western:

www.success.uwo.ca/careers/

Appendix A: Suggested Grade Ranges in MIT, MPI and MTP

Guidelines to the MIT Grade Range

These guidelines are benchmarks, and are not to be followed as rigid regulations. They will be adjusted as appropriate to take into account the level of the course and any specific instructions given by a professor. As well, competency in English language usage (including spelling and grammar) may be taken into account in the assignment of grades by individual instructors. Note that the 70-79 grade range is broken into two divisions, as this is the grade range into which a large number of students fall.

90-100 (Outstanding, A+)

The report shows sparkling originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic. Sophisticated synthesis and analysis of the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the topic are demonstrated. Mastery of complex material and ideas is immediately evident. The topic is treated with sensitivity and subtlety of thought. The quality of the writing and background research is exemplary.

80-89 (Excellent, A)

The report shows originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic; it gets to the heart of the matter with comments and/or questions. It is clearly focused and logically organized. The quality of writing makes the report immediately understandable. Mastery of complex material and ideas is demonstrated. The report is of appropriate length, while preserving the priorities and emphasis of the material, so that the result is meaningful, not simplistic.

75-79 (Very Good, B+)

The report shows above average analysis, critical thinking and independent thought. Claims are supported by ample evidence and the components of the topic are well-researched and presented. The topic is addressed in reasonable depth and/or breadth and covers material appropriate to the course. The analysis is organized around focal points and the argument is easily followed. The report demonstrates an above average ability to write in an intelligible style and to condense material meaningfully and with a concern for priorities of that material.

70-74 (Good, B)

The report shows an attempt at analysis and critical thinking. Claims are supported by reasonable evidence. The topic is addressed in some depth and/or breadth, with references to the appropriate literature and course material. The analysis is organized around focal points. The report is generally well written and well argued.

60-69 (Competent, C)

The report demonstrates adequate comprehension of the topic. The report is on topic and is a reasonable summary of material covered in the course, but goes no further. Facts are stated accurately; the quality of writing is sufficiently intelligible with enough elaboration and enough connections made between ideas to permit a reader to understand the point of the report.

50-59 (Marginal, D)

The report shows less than adequate comprehension of the topic and of the material covered by the course. The report is a less than adequate summary of sources and/or is considerably off-topic. Facts are stated inaccurately or ambiguously; the writing style is difficult to follow; there is insufficient elaboration to permit reader's comprehension of relations among ideas; little judgment is shown in selecting detail for inclusion in the report.

Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)

The report demonstrates a failure to comprehend the topic. The material is disorganized and unintelligible. The report clearly does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment.

Appendix B: Guidelines of Academic Appeals for FIMS Students

Grounds for Appeal:

The Faculty of Information and Media Studies does not view the appeals process as an opportunity for students to solicit a second opinion on a grade assigned to a particular piece of work. Appeals must pertain to the final grade in a course, and will only be entertained if sufficient grounds for appeal can be met, including: medical or compassionate circumstances, a defect in the evaluation process, bias, inaccuracy or unfairness.

Stages in the Appeals Process:

The first stage of the process is a discussion of the disputed grade with the appropriate Teaching Assistant (if applicable), and subsequently, the course Instructor. For grades assigned to individual assignments, essays, lab reports, projects and tests completed throughout the term, the student first must appeal to the Teaching Assistant or Instructor of the course, within three weeks of the date on which the Instructor or Teaching Assistant returned the assignments to the class. The Appeals Committee will not hear any further appeals about the final grade in any course unless this first step has been taken.

If completion of the first stage has not resolved the matter, the student may appeal the final grade in the course to the FIMS Appeals Committee. Appeals of final grades must be **within the time frame indicated in the Undergraduate Calendar.** It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the appeal is submitted within the deadline. The student shall submit a formal letter to the FIMS Appeals Committee outlining the grounds for the appeal, the remedy sought and relevant materials including the information about when and with whom (Teaching Assistant and/or Instructor) the student met, as described in Stage 1. If the appeal involves a request for work to be regraded, the original marked work and a clean copy (if possible) must be included. If the appeal is commenced once the deadline has passed, it will not be considered either by the Appeals Committee or by the Associate Dean.

The FIMS Appeals Committee has the discretion to determine whether the grounds for appeal have been met.

If the Committee deems that the reasons for the appeal are not legitimate, the Associate Dean will be informed. The appeal will be terminated and the student will be informed.

If the Committee decides that the grounds for appeal have been met, the following steps will be taken:

1. the course Instructor will be shown the appeal letter and offered an opportunity to make a written response;
2. if work is to be regraded, a reader will be appointed who is competent in the area in question and was not involved in the assignment of the original mark. The reader will consider the work in question and will arrive at an independent evaluation. If there is a large discrepancy between the original mark and the regraded mark, a second reader may be appointed by the Committee. **If the appointed reader(s) arrive at a grade within five marks of the original, the original grade will stand.**

The FIMS Appeals Committee will review the evidence and will make a recommendation on the case to the Associate Dean Undergraduate.

The Associate Dean Undergraduate will consider the recommendation from the Appeals Committee, and will make a decision. The student and the instructor will be notified promptly and in writing by the Associate Dean of the decision and of the change in grade, if any. Within the Faculty of Information and Media Studies, the Associate Dean's decision on the matter is final.

Further appeals are possible under certain circumstances to the Senate Review Board Academic (for Undergraduate students) or to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (for Graduate students) but the student should carefully consult the guidelines regarding such Appeals.