

**MIT 3000B-001 (Winter 2020)**  
***Designing and Critiquing Research Methods***  
**Mondays 9:30-12:30**  
**January 6-March 30, 2020**  
**Health Sciences Building Room 35**

**Instructor: Melissa Adler**

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**Office hours:** Mondays, 2:00-3:00, or by appointment

**Teaching Assistants:**

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TA Consulting Hours tbd

**Course Description**

An introduction to the range of research methods appropriate for understanding scholarship in the fields of communications, information, and media studies, including surveys, interviewing, content analysis and ethnography. Students will study specific methods in the context of the media-related topics that these methods have been used to address.

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We will explore methods for doing research in media studies, as well as approaches to finding, reading, and critically evaluating research, and putting research to use in the field. The course will introduce qualitative and quantitative methods for systematically collecting and analyzing data, including surveys, content analysis, interviews, and ethnography, and techniques for communicating research, including data visualization and publishing. We will talk about the ways that the field has been formed and understood through research by examining a range of topics in areas of journalism, social media, big data, and television and film. The class will draw attention to the significance of framing and design, as well as the ethical considerations associated with doing research. As much as possible, this class will be run like a weekly working session, with hands-on activities to get a feel for different approaches to inquiry. You will also conduct original research in groups.

**Outcomes**

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- Demonstrate uses, techniques, and limitations of several quantitative and qualitative research methods.
- Explain ontological and epistemological underpinnings of research methods.
- Discuss ways that research has informed professional and disciplinary aspects of media studies.
- Articulate ethical concerns associated with research methods.
- Critically evaluate research articles.
- Make decisions regarding appropriate approaches to research questions.
- Effectively communicate research findings through digital media—Research creation.

### **Important Dates for Winter 2020 Semester**

**Last day to add a half course:** January 14, 2020

**Family Day:** Monday, February 17, 2020

**Reading Break:** February 15 - February 23, 2020

**Date to have returned at least 15% of graded work:** March 4, 2020

**Last day to withdraw from a half course without penalty:** March 7, 2020

**Final day of classes:** April 3

**Study Days:** April 4-5

**Exam Period:** April 6 -26

**Good Friday:** April 10

**Easter Sunday:** April 12

### **Course requirements:**

Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due at the beginning of class in the week they are due. Most assignments will be submitted in OWL, unless otherwise specified. Please make sure that all written assignments are clearly labeled with the course name and number, assignment title, instructor's name, and your name. Detailed descriptions of the assignments follow the course schedule on this syllabus.

Late assignments will be subject to a mark penalty of 5% per day or part thereof unless appropriate documentation is provided. Assignments that are 7 or more days late will not be accepted.

There will be a final exam. The date will be announced in class.

Attendance at and timely arrival to all classes is required. Students needing to negotiate legitimate absences need to inform the instructor in advance in order to arrange for make-up work. In case of emergency absences, students must contact the instructor as soon as possible

afterwards. Students can expect absence or lateness without permission or explanation to be reflected in their participation grade. Participation marks will reflect attendance and participation in class activities. There is a semester-long group project, and much of the class time will be reserved for individual activities and group project worktime. Your group members will depend on your attendance.

**Required textbook:** Leavy, Patricia. *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches*. Guilford Publications, 2017.

All readings listed in the schedule below are required and will be available through the internet or Western Libraries via OWL. These provide technical or background information and applications of the methods we will discuss in this course. Please read these before class meets each week.

You may also want to visit the Library's research guides:

Media studies: <https://guides.lib.uwo.ca/mediastudies>

Foundations: <https://guides.lib.uwo.ca/MIT1025>

Citing & writing: <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/essayhelp>

### **Assignments:**

#### **Qualitative content analysis (4 parts + peer reviews)**

1. Research question and brief annotated bibliography. (10 points, group)
2. Collect data (10 points, group)  
2.5 Revise question
3. Code data (10 points, group)
4. Disseminate (15 points, group)
5. Review the final presentations (5 points, individual)

#### **Analyze and rewrite a research article for a popular news audience (10 points, individual)**

**Read, review, discuss** (10 points, individual) Each of you will be assigned to lead a small-group discussion of a week's (week 3, 5, or 8) readings. You will hand in a 400-500-word summary and two questions for discussion.

#### **Final exam (20 points)**

**Class participation & preparedness** (10 points) Some of the in-class activities will be handed in for a participation mark. These will help me determine how well you are engaging with the course material.

## **More policies and information**

### **Laptops, Electronic Devices, and Communication**

I ask that you do bring laptops or another device that you can use for course projects and activities. Please, reserve these for uses that serve as a benefit to your learning, management, and comprehension of the material.

Acceptable uses include taking notes, looking up sources directly related to the class content, and producing writings and projects. Unacceptable uses of devices include texting, checking email, playing games, chatting, or visiting web sites that are unrelated to the topic at hand. Cell phones should be silenced and put away. We will have a break each class period, so please reserve all unpermitted use for that time.

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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 4, 2020. Students can find details about this academic policy here:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/exam/evaluation\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/evaluation_undergrad.pdf). Please note, students are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of the grades they have received in their courses.

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I encourage you to print out the articles assigned for you to review and any others. There is a lot of evidence that suggests people tend to comprehend material better when they read from print than from a screen. Again, there are some variations, and we all have our different approaches. Whatever format you choose, do use this course to experiment with reading techniques—annotate and mark up the readings, and take notes that you can work from in class discussions and assignments.

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Photography and video or audio recording are allowed only with permission. See me if you need to record any aspect of the class session.

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Please, when you write emails to me or the teaching assistants, provide [MIT 3000] in the subject and maintain a professional tone and delivery. For more on this see: [Laura Portwood-Stacer](#), “How to email your professor (without being annoying AF)”

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## Acknowledgement of traditional territories

*We acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee), Lūnaapéewak and Attawandaron peoples, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous peoples (e.g. First Nations, Métis and Inuit) whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors of our society.*

## Weekly Schedule

### Week 1

#### Lecture topic & readings/prep (January 6):

##### Introductions

(Read chapter 1 in Leavy, optional)

#### Activity:

Thinking about research in/using/about the media

### Week 2

#### Lecture topic & readings/prep (January 13):

##### Asking questions / Framing problems; Science reporting

Read Chapter 3 in Leavy

Read [The Seven Deadly Sins of Journalism](#), *Eurozine*

Read [How to write a science news story based on a research paper](#), *The Guardian*

#### Activity:

Begin literature search: find 2-3 citations to a topic you are interested in. These will help to begin brainstorming for your research project. Your citations and responses will count toward preparation mark.

Reflect on your search and write responses to the following questions:

Where did you look?

What keywords did you use?

What topic(s) are you interested in, and why? Why did you choose articles?

Are these articles peer reviewed?

#### Discussion:

Brainstorm topics of interest for small group content analysis

### Week 3

#### Lecture topic & readings/prep (January 20):

##### Libraries and archives; Looking for information

Michelle Caswell, [“The Archive’ Is Not an Archives: On Acknowledging the Intellectual Contributions of Archival Studies,”](#) *Reconstruction*, 16, no. 1

Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever," Read pages 9-19.

View video (Archivist of the Diocese of London)

**Activity:**

Begin gathering and selecting content (data) for the research project. **Document your process.** What are you looking for? How are you looking for it? Is your search changing as you discover relevant content? Are you finding too much, too little? Do you need to reconsider the topic?

**Group work:** Nail down your question, talk about the content you all selected. Share with the class and get feedback.

#### Week 4

**Lecture topic & readings/prep (January 27):**

**Qualitative research, intro to content analysis**

Read Leavy, Chapter 5

**Activity:**

View the music videos on climate change activism.

Pay careful attention to the details. Look for all kinds of things: Location, images, camera angles, words, body movements, etc.

Take notes as you watch.

What is happening visually? What is happening lyrically? Is there a message? How is it conveying that message? What is this video *doing*? What questions does this video bring to mind? Do they make you think of other songs or videos? Can you draw comparisons?

View both of these:

[https://youtu.be/pvuN\\_WvF1to](https://youtu.be/pvuN_WvF1to) (Lil Dicky, "Earth")

<https://youtu.be/tB7uVxacXuI> (Paul McCartney, et al. "Love Song to the Earth")

**Discussion:** Talk about the coding exercise in small and large groups

**Assignment due:** **Content analysis part one** (Research question & brief annotated bibliography)

#### Week 5

**Lecture topic & readings/prep (February 3):**

**Refusal and commitments; colonialism and anti-colonial methods**

Read Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang, [Unbecoming Claims: Pedagogies of Refusal in Qualitative Research](#), Eve Tuck & Wayne Yang

Haraway, Donna. "Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective." *Feminist studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575-599.

Read the Feminist Manifest-No: Cifor, M., Garcia, P., Cowan, T.L., Rault, J., Sutherland, T., Chan, A., Rode, J., Hoffmann, A.L., Salehi, N., Nakamura, L. (2019).

<https://www.manifestno.com/>

Optional: Read Leavy, Chapter 2

**Activity:**

We'll listen to a podcast about the Government of Canada's Indigenous services and discuss.

Write a letter to a tech company or a government agency based on this week's materials.

**Discussion:** Refusal and commitments; colonialism and anti-colonial methods

## Week 6

**Lecture topic & readings/prep (February 10):**

**Research creation, data visualization**

Read Leavy Chapter 7

Read [Why we're rethinking the images we use for our climate journalism](#), *The Guardian*

Read T. L. Cowan, [The Internet of Bawdies: Transmedial drag and the onlining of trans-feminist and queer performance archives, a workshop essay](#)

*First Monday*, Volume 23, Number 7 (2018)

**Activity:**

We'll view examples of Research Creation.

Begin to think about the medium that you're studying and possibilities for showing your findings or making a creative intervention.

**Assignment due:**

**Content analysis part 2**

**(Revised question and data)**

## READING WEEK: FEBRUARY 17-21

## Week 7

**Lecture topic & readings/prep (February 24):**

**Code and coding, Data analytics**

Taylor, C and Gibbs, G.R. 2010. How and what to code, *Online QDA Web Site*, [http://onlineqda.hud.ac.uk/Intro\\_QDA/how\\_what\\_to\\_code.php](http://onlineqda.hud.ac.uk/Intro_QDA/how_what_to_code.php)

Climate change: Where we are in seven charts and what you can do to help, BBC news  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-46384067>

Revealed: The 20 Firms Behind a Third of all Carbon Emissions, *The Guardian* (Oct. 9, 2019)

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/09/revealed-20-firms-third-carbon-emissions>

Recommended—This is pretty technical. I'll use it to teach from, and some of you may want to refer to it, but it's not a required reading: Lassen, Niels Buus, Lisbeth la Cour and Ravi Vatrapu. "Predictive Analytics with Social Media Data." In *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media Research Methods*, 328-341. 55 City Road, London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2016. <http://sk.sagepub.com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/reference/the-sage-handbook-of-social-media-research-methods/i2647.xml>

**Activity:**

Open time to begin coding with group. (This can be facilitated by collaborative software.)

**Assignment due:**

**Popular news article**

## Week 8

**Lecture topic & readings/prep (March 2):**

**Big data, AI**

How to stop data centres from gobbling up the world's electricity, *Nature* (Sept, 12, 2018) <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-06610-y>

Zook, Matthew, Solon Barocas, Kate Crawford, Emily Keller, Seeta Peña Gangadharan, Alyssa Goodman, Rachelle Hollander et al. "Ten simple rules for responsible big data research." (2017): <https://journals.plos.org/ploscompbiol/article?id=10.1371/journal.pcbi.1005399>

Cheney-Lippold, John. "A new algorithmic identity: Soft biopolitics and the modulation of control." *Theory, Culture & Society* 28, no. 6 (2011): 164-181.

**Activity:** Download a data set using Netlytic (data should have something to do with climate change) **OR** Visualize the data stored on your phone and consider its carbon consumption (be creative and descriptive!) Submit in class or in the dropbox for participation marks.

## Week 9

**Lecture topic & readings/prep (March 9):**

**Interviews, observation**

Listen to the [The Social Justice Repair Kit and the Co-Designing Inclusive Cities Project](#) (pay attention to the interviewing techniques)

Cormac McGrath, Per J. Palmgren & Matilda Liljedahl (2019) [Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews](#), *Medical Teacher*, 41:9, 1002-1006 (this is written by a medical professional, but the tips are relevant for any research interview)



Guests: So What? podcast crew

**Activity:**

Turn your content analysis project into a project that involves human participants. Design a study that would include interview questions or observation.

Try your study out with your classmates; Discuss some of the potential ethical issues or methodological challenges.

**Assignment due:**

**Content analysis part 3 due (codes/ thematic analysis)**

**Week 10**

**Lecture topic & readings/prep (March 16):**

**Mixed methods**

Read Chapter 6

**Activity:**

Workshop time for creating dissemination plan for research project

**Week 11**

**Lecture topic & readings/prep (March 23):**

**Community research**

Read Chapter 8

**Assignment due:**

**Content analysis part 4 due**

You will be assigned to view a set of final presentations and vote on the best one by **Friday**.

**Week 12**

**Lecture topic & readings/prep (March 30):**

**Final presentation showcase**

**Review for the final exam**

**Full assignment descriptions**

**News article based on research**

The purpose of this assignment is to immerse yourself in a research article, distill some key points from that article, read it with a critical lens, and communicate the findings via a popular news source, e.g., *The Guardian*, *Globe & Mail*, *Scientific American*, *New York Times*, etc.

Use this article to base your popular journalism assignment on:

Dusyk, Nichole, Jonn Axsen, and Kia Dullemond. "Who cares about climate change? The mass media and socio-political acceptance of Canada's oil sands and Northern Gateway Pipeline." *Energy Research & Social Science* 37 (2018): 12-21. <http://tinyurl.com/uk5h3te>

Your piece should incorporate all of the following elements, and communicate them in a way that will be accessible and relevant to a wide audience. Think of this as a modified version of the CRAAP test—one that presents a critical and informative account of existing research in a readable form.

- The research question(s) or hypothesis of the study
- A description of the authors' background, authority/credibility
- The purpose of the research—why does this research matter, and what is it trying to accomplish?
- The most significant findings or conclusions of the article.
- A brief discussion of the methodology (data collection and analysis)
- An evaluation of the validity of the research
- One limitation of the article (try not to make this a description of the study you wish to see)
- Please limit your use of direct quotes as much as possible. If you do quote directly, cite the page number.

### Qualitative content analysis research project

Over the course of the semester you will work on a research project in groups of 4-5 people. You will conduct a qualitative content analysis, beginning with a broad question: *How is/are \_\_\_\_\_ represented in X?*

Possible sources of data include (but aren't limited to):

Advertisements, Twitter (hashtags, especially), Instagram (comments, images, etc.), Comics, News articles, Websites, Song lyrics, Music videos, Legislative documents, Policy documents, Metadata, TV show clips, Course outlines, Reports...

Whatever you choose, make sure that the data is open to the public. Do not use private social media accounts, for example.

The assignment is broken into separately graded chunks. Due dates are in the schedule above.

- Research question and brief annotated bibliography. (10 points, group)

**a) Research question:**

Is it worth asking?

Is it feasible?

Does it define the focus of the project?

Is it clear and unambiguous?

**b) Provide a paragraph that describes your purpose, method, and intended audience.** Who would be interested in this topic, and why? Where and how are you looking for sources of data? Do you believe that your topic is appropriately focused?

**c) Find five scholarly articles** related to your topic. Provide **full citations in Chicago Notes and Bibliography citation format**. For each article provide **3-5 sentences explaining how they support your project**.

- Collect data (10 points, group)  
**Gather a set of data that you will analyze for the project.**  
**a)** Compile it in a form that will be legible to your group members and your TA. This will vary based on the type of data you collect. It would be appropriate to provide links if you are analyzing online material, but if your data is not easily accessible, you should include excerpts from some of the sources.  
**b)** Provide clear **citations** for each source of data  
**c)** Provide a paragraph or two **explaining your process**. How did you find your data, and where? Did you encounter any challenges? Do you think that your sample is representative? What are the limitations of your data?

**2.5 Revise question:** Either revise your research question based on shifts due to the data collected, or keep your question as it was originally articulated.

- Code and analyze data (10 points, group)  
**a)** Provide **one page of coded data** (open coding—these should be descriptive codes that stay close to the text). If you have visual material or video, provide a page of notes and memos, again staying close to the text)  
**b)** Pull out three to four themes, and provide a description of how you arrived at these themes and how you define those themes.  
**c)** **Provide two to three paragraphs on your process**. How did you divide the labour? Did you come to any disagreements about method or themes? How did you arrive at consensus? What conclusions have you arrived at? How confident are you about your conclusions? What are the strengths of your study? What would you do differently if you could do this all over again?
- Research creation (15 points, group—the final project is worth 10 points, the reflective essay is worth 5)  
 We recognize that you all come to this class with different creative talents and that we are asking you to be experimental in your approach. You will be rewarded for taking risks, as long as they are educated risks that are feasible and within your group's skill set. You will not be punished for failure, unless the failure is due to a lack of effort.

**You'll be graded on the following criteria:**

- Does the project reflect a **critical engagement with the course material**?
- Is the **medium** appropriate for the research project? Have you exploited the medium and its attendant technologies effectively?
- Is the project **original and creative**?
- Does it **deliver a message** or offer insights based on the findings of the research? Is there an identifiable **argument** or **thesis** at the heart of the project?
- Is that message **legible** for the intended audience? Is there enough context? Can this project stand alone?
- Does the project "make clear its web of influence and associations," and **cite sources** as appropriate?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Shannon C. Mattern, Evaluating Multimodal Work, Revisited, *Journal of Digital Humanities*, 1, no. 4 (2012)  
<http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/1-4/evaluating-multimodal-work-revisited-by-shannon-mattern/>

g) You will also include a **two-page (double-spaced)** essay that **includes and expands upon the reflection in part 3 (analysis)**. Add to that your reflections on your choice of medium, your intended audience, what you are trying to convey, and why this research matters. Was your project successful, or did it fall short of your goals? How so?

- Peer evaluations (5 points, individual)

## 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](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 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](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/uwoom/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/learnin](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/learnin)  
[g](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/learnin)  
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.