

Western University Faculty of Information and Media Studies

**MIT 3216G THE CULTURE OF CONSUMPTION**

Winter 2020

Tuesdays: 9:30 – 12:30 FNB-1200

Dr. Paul A. Aitken

Office Hours: *by appointment* on Tuesdays 12:30 – 13:30 FNB 4050

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines the historical development and social significance of the contemporary culture of consumption. After exploring its history and dynamics, among other subjects, it looks at advertising and marketing, Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) applications, globalization, and strategies of resistance.

**COURSE GOALS**

- To appreciate and understand the complexity of institutions and actors that make up consumer life in late-capitalism;
- To develop the ability to discuss the history and development of the “consumer society.”;
- To appreciate the role that critical theory approaches can play in fostering a critical and potentially transformative engagement with consumption and production;
- To refine your ability to research and communicate ideas through formal and informal discussions and written assignments.

**PREREQUISITES / ANTIREQUISITES**

Please ensure that you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in this course. If not, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

**COURSE MATERIALS**

Information about course materials will be provided by the instructor.

**CLASS POLICIES**

*Late Assignments and missed tests or exams.*

If you do not submit an assignment on or before its due date or if you miss a test or exam ***you will receive a grade of zero***. Exceptions will only be granted if accompanied by an official accommodation. Do not ask for special accommodations unless you can support these with documentation.

### *Back Up Your Work.*

You are responsible for ensuring that all of your coursework is backed up. Services such as Dropbox or Google Drive are just a few “cloud storage” options. You can copy your data to a USB stick, burn a CD or DVD, email it to yourself, or even print it! “Computer issues” will not be accepted as a valid reason for missing any course assignments.

### *Office Hours*

Office hours are not “drop in,” they are by appointment. Before coming to my office hours students are required to *email me by the **Friday** before* my office hour to note their intention to attend and with the specific reasons for their visit. This way, I have time to prepare and can give your questions and concerns the attention they deserve before meeting with you.

### *Devices*

**Do not use laptops** in this class (unless you have official accommodations from SDC). They are distracting both for you and those around you. Take notes in the traditional way and transcribe them later. This will help you retain information. You will also be able to give the course material your full attention and participate in class discussions. Keep your mobile phones off.

### *Audio Recording/Online Streaming/Video Calling/Photography*

Audio recording, online streaming, video calling, photography, and other such means of “capture” are **absolutely prohibited** in this class without express written accommodations.

### *Electronic Communication*

1. Communicate with me *only* through your @uwo.ca email account. Do not use the OWL messaging system or your personal email.
2. Do not expect immediate responses to your emails.
3. Include a descriptive subject. Not “Course Question,” “Help,” etc. Include the course number and section.
4. Use a salutation: “Hello Professor,” “Hello Paul,” etc. are appropriate; “Hey,” “Wassup?,” and similar are not.
5. Use proper grammar, spelling, sentence and paragraph structure and punctuation. Use capital letters where conventionally appropriate (i.e. at the beginning of sentences), use spaces where conventional (i.e. after punctuation), do not use “text speak” (abbreviations, acronyms, etc.)
6. Be polite: say please and thank-you.
7. Sign off your email with your first and last name and student number.
8. Do not email with enquiries about a due date on that (potential) due date.
9. Do not email with questions about an assignment within the week that the assignment is due.
10. Do not email with enquiries of a technical nature. “This won't open on my laptop,” “I can't download...” are not problems that I can solve

## METHODS OF EVALUATION

Paper Proposal / Annotated Bibliography (February 4)	20%
Test (March 17)	40%
Research Paper (March 31)	40%

### *Paper Proposal / Bibliography (20%)*

*Paper Proposal:* Students will choose a topic related to the study of consumption and consumer society. In the form of a 300-word proposal, describe your research paper, indicate your thesis/argument, include major theoretical/empirical components (including any specific authors, theories, etc.), potential conclusions, and relevance/importance to the study of issues related to consumerism, consumer society, consumer behaviour, and the social, political, and economic structures that support and/or challenge these ideas.

*Bibliography:* As part of the paper research process students will survey published books and articles about their topic. The bibliography is a list of useful scholarly resources that will be consulted while writing the term paper. You will provide three (3) relevant sources. You may not include class readings. These sources will be scholarly in nature and will not include corporate documents, objects of analysis, etc. The annotated bibliography will not include material from the course readings. Each properly cited source will be accompanied by a *brief* (no more than 300 words) paragraph that indicates the source's usefulness to your paper and your plans for how it will fit in your research. The bibliography provides the beginnings of a literature review, which will be a required section of the final paper.

A "scholarly source" has been published for scholarly consumption in a publication that is not usually supported by commercial advertising. Newspaper and magazine articles, blog posts, books written by prominent business people and celebrities, and so forth are not acceptable. Neither are publications that appear to be a part of a wider promotional strategy (i.e. biographies, autobiographies, etc.). *If you doubt whether or not a source is a scholarly one, please forward me the details and I will help you determine this.*

### *Research Paper (40%)*

The research paper will develop a thesis/argument/enquiry that you will come up with on your own and will be based on the work you have done preparing the proposal and annotated bibliography. You will be expected to draw on concepts and ideas discussed in class and in the readings and expand these ideas into different areas of research.

Your paper will be 2000-2250 words (approx. 8-9 pages, not including the works cited) in a 12-point font, double-spaced, and free of errors in spelling and grammar. Papers that greatly exceed the assigned length will be penalized, and papers that fall short of the length will be considered incomplete and thus receive a *grade of zero*.

All sources and ideas referenced in the paper must appear in the works cited, this includes any A/V material that is referenced. If you are not familiar with MLA style, it is your responsibility to learn about it. Papers that fail to cite sources, do not include in-text references or bibliography, or are found to be plagiarized will receive a *grade of zero*.

You must include the word count at the bottom of the last page of writing (before the works cited).

Assignments must be submitted in hard copy. Do not include a title page. Do not include a fancy plastic folder (I'll keep it!).

*Test (40%)*

The test will be cumulative from the first day and include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions drawn from material found in the course readings, lectures, and videos viewed in class. It will take place in class.

# 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/uwocom/mentalhealth/>

## SUPPORT SERVICES – LINKS

Office of the Registrar:

[www.registrar.uwo.ca](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca)

Student Development Centre:

[www.sdc.uwo.ca](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca)

Psychological Services:

[www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych)

Services for Students with Disabilities:

[www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd)

Accessibility

Information:

[www.accessibility.uwo.ca](http://www.accessibility.uwo.ca)

[/ Writing Support](#)

Centre:

[www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing)

Learning Skills Services:

[www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning)

Indigenous Services:

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

International and Exchange Student

Centre:

[www.sdc.uwo.ca/int](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/int) Career

Centre at Western:

[www.success.uwo.ca/careers/](http://www.success.uwo.ca/careers/)

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

### Guidelines to the MIT Grade Range

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

#### 90-100 (Outstanding, A+)

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

#### 80-89 (Excellent, A)

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

#### 75-79 (Very Good, B+)

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

#### 70-74 (Good, B)

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

#### 60-69 (Competent, C)

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

#### 50-59 (Marginal, D)

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

#### Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)

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

## Appendix B: Guidelines of Academic Appeals for FIMS Students

### Grounds for Appeal:

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

### Stages in the Appeals Process:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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