

**DETAILED COURSE OUTLINE**  
**MIT 1025 – First-Year Foundations**  
**(NOTE: SUBJECT TO FINAL FACULTY APPROVAL: SOME SMALL DETAILS**  
**MIGHT CHANGE—January 4, 2020)**

**Department:** Faculty of Information and Media Studies

## **Land Acknowledgement**

**Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Attawandaron peoples who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local First Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In this 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).**

**This Land Acknowledgement is important for MIT 1025 for the following reasons:**

- **It reminds us that scholarship does not take place in a vacuum; we are doing our scholarly work within a complex, diverse, and sometimes contentious collection of social contexts and historical narratives;**
- **It reminds us that what seems right from one perspective can seem deeply wrong from another;**
- **It reminds us that the same physical space can hold more than one name and sustain more than one narrative;**
- **It reminds us that learning can be a destabilizing and painful process for all of us.**

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

MIT 1025 (First-Year Foundations for MIT) is a course designed to introduce students to foundational skills they will need throughout their university careers. We will focus on teaching the fundamentals of three key areas: research methods, critical thinking, and writing. The course will provide students with instruction in the basics of finding and evaluating sources, developing arguments, critical thinking, essay development as well as writing and rewriting and revision. It will also cover academic style and formatting, plagiarism and other issues in essay writing. The course will consist of a weekly two-hour lecture and a one-hour tutorial.

## **COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES**

### **Course learning outcomes**

After completing **MIT 1025**, students will be able to:

1. critically read and unpack a text;
2. identify and analyze arguments;
3. find and evaluate scholarly and mainstream sources focusing on media and media-related issues;
4. construct an argument/thesis and support it with appropriate evidence;
5. understand the fundamentals of essay development;
6. learn the basics of academic style, formatting and citation; and
7. have a foundation for further development of critical thinking and writing skills

## **EVALUATION**

<b>Evaluation Components</b>	<b>Percentage of Course Grade</b>	<b>Date Due</b>
<b>Tutorial Participation</b>	10	
<b>Essay Preparation Assignment</b>	10	January 25
<b>Research Plan</b>	20	February 8
<b>Introduction and Essay Outline</b>	10	March 11
<b>Finished Paper</b>	20	March 29
<b>Final Examination</b>	30	TBA

## **Required Textbook**

Kahneman, Daniel. (2011). *Thinking fast and slow*. Toronto: Doubleday Canada.

Other readings and supplementary materials will be supplied on the OWL site for the course.

## **Important Note:**

The deadline to drop the course without academic penalty is March 14, 2021. By that time, you will have received graded work amounting to 30 % of your final grade. 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.

## **CLASS POLICIES:**

### **Tutorial Participation**

Students must provide evidence of engagement with the tutorial material, either through presence at synchronous sessions or through responses to prompts in asynchronous tutorials. Failure to provide evidence of such engagement in at least 5 tutorials will result in failure of the course.

### **Accommodation and Extensions**

Due dates are provided in the syllabus. Assignments submitted late without prior arrangement, with the appropriate documentation, will be penalized at the rate of 10% per day. If you require an extension, refer to the Accommodation Policy in the “Notes” attached to this syllabus, and contact your TA as soon as possible.

### **Grading and Assessment**

All grading will be completed by your Tutorial Leader.

FIMS Grading 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%.”

## **Guidelines to the MIT Grade Range:**

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

**To get a grade of B or higher:**

The student's writing must be acceptably accurate, and free of significant errors in grammar, spelling or punctuation. No paper, however brilliant in conception, will get higher than 68% if the writing fails to communicate that conception effectively.

## COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: January 11-17

### *Weekly Description*

In this class we will first go through the course learning outcomes, the method of course delivery, the nature of the tutorials, and the nature of the course assignments

We will then introduce the primary content of the course: the activities of constructing arguments, researching, writing, revising and citing. We will relate that to the general task of writing essays in university (with an emphasis on media studies), and to the act of thinking and communicating, and how those two relate to the two primary aspects of human cognition: rapid, experiential cognition and slow, reflective cognition.

### *Main Topics*

- Essay Writing
- Communication
- Thinking
- Self-Reflection

### *Readings and Other Materials*

There are no assigned readings this week prior to listening to the lectures. There will, however, be 4 things to read in between the lectures:

- A short video on Western Libraries
- A short video from the Writing Centre;
- A guide to the University's counselling services
- A short video on thinking fast and slow

No Tutorial for the First Week

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Week 2: January 18-24:

### *Weekly Description*

This week, we will start with two very simple writing techniques: changing between the active and the passive voice, and clarifying the antecedents of pronouns. We will use these two techniques as examples to illustrate how the smallest, most prosaic aspects of writing reflect the cognition of the writer through the phenomena of cognitive coherence, cognitive ease, and cognitive dissonance. Finally, we will see how an author, by avoiding cognitive ease in writing, creates a sense of cognitive ease in the reader.

### *Main Topics*

- Pronouns and antecedents

- The active and the passive voice
- Cognitive ease
- Cognitive dissonance

***Readings and Other Materials for the Lecture:***

- Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow* chapters 1-5
- Western Writing Support Center: “Active and Passive Voice”
  - [http://writing.uwo.ca/img/pdfs/handouts\\_updated/Active%20and%20Passive%20Voice.pdf](http://writing.uwo.ca/img/pdfs/handouts_updated/Active%20and%20Passive%20Voice.pdf)
- Diane Hughes, “The Case of the Ambiguous Antecedent”
  - <https://www.dianewordsmith.com/the-write-stuff-blog/the-case-of-the-ambiguous-antecedent#:~:text=Let's%20look%20at%20an%20example,pronoun%20relate%20to%20each%20other.>
- Video: “Mistakes were Made”
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjLOayFi5-w>
- Video: Ted Gideonse, “Cognitive Dissonance and Michael”
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dr00TrsG\\_eo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dr00TrsG_eo)
- Doreen Arcus, “The Passive Voice Has No Place in Conversations About Rape.” 2019.
  - <https://www.wbur.org/cognoscenti/2019/01/28/the-language-of-sexual-violence-doreen-arcus>

Week 3:

January 25-31:

***Weekly Description***

This week, we will address the phenomenon of confirmation bias: how our minds construct a sense of what is “normal,” which leads us to accept certain concepts with undue ease, and to be content only with information that lies within our immediate reach, and which confirms what we already think. This leads to the practice of finding information that will widen, and sometimes challenge, our perspective. We will work through techniques of searching that bypass Google’s ranking system, such as periodical databases that are searched with the aid of Boolean operators and controlled vocabularies.

***Main Topics***

- Normality and Confirmation Bias
- WYSIATI: “What You See Is All There Is”
- Finding Information Sources
- Boolean Operators

***Readings and Other Materials***

- Kahneman, Chapters 6, 7
- Searching with Boolean Operators
  - [https://www.lib.uwo.ca/tutorials/searching\\_with\\_boolean\\_operators/index.html](https://www.lib.uwo.ca/tutorials/searching_with_boolean_operators/index.html)
- Boolean Search Operators
  - <https://sites.google.com/a/onalaskaschools.com/tech/boolean-search-tools>

- Julia Galef, “Why You Think You’re Right, Even If You’re Wrong.” *TED Talks*
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4RLfVxTGH4>
- Western Libraries: the CRAAP Test
  - <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/tutorials/evaluatingresources/index.html>
- Jackson, P. (2011, February 4). Are libraries finished? Five arguments for and against. *BBC News*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-12340505>

Assignment Due: Essay Preparation Assignment, January 25

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Week 4: February 1-7:

***Weekly Description***

This week addresses the task of defining a research topic. We start with the distinction between a topic sentence and a thesis statement, and relate these to the concepts of prototypes and substitutions, and the cognitive practice of replacing an insoluble question with a soluble one. In so doing, we explore how the researcher adapts this “rapid” cognitive practice into a plan for creating a manageable essay topic. We explore some of the heuristics to which we’re all vulnerable: prototyping, intensity matching, and over-computation.

***Main Topics***

- Prototypes and Substitutions
- Research Questions
- Heuristics

***Readings and Other Materials***

- Kahneman, chapters 8 and 9
  - Western Libraries, “Essays: General Structure”
    - [http://writing.uwo.ca/undergrads/handouts\\_new/Essays%20General%20Structure1.pdf](http://writing.uwo.ca/undergrads/handouts_new/Essays%20General%20Structure1.pdf)
  - Emily Abrams, “Essay Structure,” Harvard College Writing Center, 2000
    - <https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/essay-structure>
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Week 5: February 8-14:

Class Topic: Citations

***Weekly Description***

This week, we examine how the complex and arduous process of bibliographic citation, far from being a pointless exercise, is a way of opening ourselves and our work to scrutiny beyond ourselves. We’ll look at various citation styles and examine how the different requirements reflect the needs and perspectives of particular communities. We will also look at the role of citation in research, ranging from simple methods of “pearl growing” to sophisticated computer citation analysis.



### ***Main Topics:***

- Citation Formats
- Standards
- Citation Analysis

### ***Readings and Other Materials:***

- Yale Poorvu Centre for Teaching and Learning, *Why Are There Different Citation Styles?*
  - <https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/writing/using-sources/principles-citing-sources/why-are-there-different-citation-styles>
- American Psychological Association, *About APA Style*
  - <https://apastyle.apa.org/about-apa-style>
- Texas A&M University Libraries, *Guide to Citation Analysis*
  - <https://apastyle.apa.org/about-apa-style>
- Western Libraries, *Citation Guides*
  - <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/essayhelp/index.html>

Assignment Due:      Research Plan, February 8

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READING WEEK: February 15-21

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Week 6:                      February 22-28

### ***Weekly Description***

This week, we will address one of the most valuable assets an academic writer can acquire: doubt. We will explore doubt as a state of vigilance that protects us from excessive faith in our own abilities, arising from an over-reliance on the information immediately available. We will then move to one of the core techniques in academic inquiry for addressing this healthy doubt: empirical study. We will explore the tradition of systematic accumulation of qualitative and quantitative data, and the cultivation of a skeptical approach to data analysis.

### ***Main Topics***

- Availability and Doubt
- Empirical Study

### ***Readings and Other Materials***

- Kahneman, chapters 10-13
  - Western Libraries: “How to Read a Scholarly Article”
    - <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/tutorials/howtoreadascholarlyarticle/index.html>
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Week 7:                      March 1-7

### ***Weekly Description***

This week we will address numeracy: the ability to comprehend basic arithmetical concepts and to apply them in making sense of the world in general, and of research in particular. We examine some of the common mistakes that we often make when estimating likelihood and probability in numerical terms, and how that can sometimes lead us to misinterpret data.

### ***Main Topics***

- Stereotyping and Conjunction
- Media History

### ***Readings and Other Materials***

- Kahneman, Chapters 14, 15
  - Joel Best, “COVID-19 and Numeracy: How About Them Numbers?”
    - <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/numeracy/vol13/iss2/art4/>
  - Haldane, Andy “We All Have a Maths Brain: It’s Just some Need a Reboot”
    - <https://www.standard.co.uk/comment/comment/we-all-have-a-maths-brain-it-s-just-some-need-a-reboot-a3839491.html>
  - TED Talk: Stories vs Statistics (John Allen Paulos)
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVMYTplQ158>
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Week 8: March 8-14

Class Readings: Kahneman, chapters 14, 15  
Class Topics: Stereotyping and Conjunction  
Media History

### ***Weekly Description***

This week, we explore another dimension of writing in media, information and technoculture: historical treatments of these subjects. We’ll look at two pervasive heuristics in cognition: causal stereotyping and regression towards the mean. Historical analysis is often useful for broadening the narrow perspectives of time that lead us to attach unjustified causal meanings to events, and to attach unjustified significance to variations in data over time. We’ll explore how well-researched historical analysis can lead to useful insights about the present.

### ***Main Topics***

- Causal stereotyping
- Regression towards the mean
- Historical approaches to the study of media, information, culture and technology

### ***Readings and Other Materials***

- Kahneman, chapters 16, 17
- Wagner, V. (2008, May 3). Margaret MacMillan: Things not to learn from history. *The Star*. Retrieved from

[https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/books/2008/05/03/margaret\\_macmillan\\_things\\_not\\_to\\_learn\\_from\\_history.html](https://www.thestar.com/entertainment/books/2008/05/03/margaret_macmillan_things_not_to_learn_from_history.html)

- Campigotto, J. (2019, August 12). Is Bianca Andreescu on track to be Canada's best tennis player ever? *CBC Sports*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/sports/tennis/the-buzzer-bianca-andreescu-rogers-cup-1.5244336>

Assignment Due: Introduction and Outline, March 11

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Week 9: March 15-21

### ***Weekly Description***

This week, we examine one of the most effective methods of banishing the halo effect of cognitive ease: media theory. We will look at how media theory scholars reverse our ingrained tendency to replace difficult questions with simple ones, and force us to replace simple questions with more difficult ones. We will look at examples of how effective media theory can change our assumptions and cast opinions we considered obvious into question.

### ***Main Topics***

- Narrative fallacy
- Halo effect
- Media theory

### ***Readings and Other Materials***

- Kahneman, ch. 18, 19
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Week 10: March 22-28

### ***Weekly Description***

This week, we'll look at a phenomenon we call "cognitive authority": how do we come to trust the knowledge and credibility of others? Using Kahneman's discussion of the limits of "expertise," particularly in the context of prediction, together with Patrick Wilson's concept of cognitive authority, we will discuss how scholarly writing requires that we cultivate respect for knowledgeable and accomplished people while retaining a skepticism towards their more confident predictions and analyses. We will practice this respectful skepticism by looking at effective literature reviews: how do we summarize what others have written in a way that does justice to their contributions without becoming trapped in their limitations?

### ***Main Topics***

- Prediction
- Cognitive authority
- Literature reviews

### ***Readings and Other Materials***

- Kahneman, ch. 21-23

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Week 11:

March 29-April 4

***Weekly Description***

Continuing from the previous week's discussion of experts, we will explore the ways in which expert calculations and predictions are undermined by our cognitive inability to deal with the unexpected. However, far from accepting Kahneman's belief in calculation over intuition blindly, we will balance it against another phenomenon: the current trend of using predictive algorithms as a means of replacing human cognition altogether in important areas of human life.

***Main Topics***

- Illusions of Continuity and The Unexpected

***Readings and Other Materials***

- Kahneman, ch. 24
- Gohd, C. (2018, January 19). Algorithms are no better at predicting repeat offenders than inexperienced humans. *Futurism*. Retrieved from <https://futurism.com/algorithms-no-better-predicting-repeat-offenders-inexperienced-humans>

FINAL PAPER DUE:

March 29

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Week 12:

April 5-11

***Weekly Description***

We'll close the course with a topic that touches all of us: What happens when education, study, reading and writing cause us to see the world differently? And what happens when that change of world view causes friction with our former family ties, our former friends, our former selves? Starting with Tara Westover's account of her own family life, we will ponder the role of loyalty, gratitude and obligation in our intellectual lives. Are there lines we will not cross? People we will protect? Ties we refuse to break?

***Readings and Other Materials***

- MacSweeney, E. (2018, February 16). Read an excerpt from Tara Westover's hotly anticipated memoir, *Educated*. *Vogue*. Retrieved from <https://www.vogue.com/article/tara-westover-educated-excerpt?verso=true>

No Tutorials this week.

# NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Winter 2021

## 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, including take-home exams, 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 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 two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, 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 or equivalent documentation, 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)

**In the event of a Covid-19 resurgence, it is possible that different procedures may need to be put in place on short notice.**

## 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)

### Mental Health

#### Support:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>

### Accessible Education:

[http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible\\_education/index.html](http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html)

### Accessibility

#### Information:

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

### Writing Support

#### Centre:

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

### Learning Skills

#### Services:

<https://www.uwo.ca/sdc/learning/>

### Academic Learning and Support for Online Learning:

<https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital/types/academic-and-learning-support.html>

### Indigenous Services:

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

### Western International:

<https://international.uwo.ca/>

### Career Centre:

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

## 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.