

MIT 2150G

Media, Representation, Identity

Winter 2021
Wednesday, 3:30-5:30pm

Instructor: Dr. Tiara Sukhan
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Office Hours: Fridays 10am-12pm or by appointment (virtually); 1-3pm in person (pending the end of lockdown restrictions)

Course Description & Objectives

This course explores the role of media and visual culture in shaping our environment, worldviews, and senses of self and identity, including issues related to gender, sexuality, class, race and ethnicity, and ability and disability.

In this course, you will learn to:

- Understand identity as intersectional and rooted in structures of power.
- Identify positive and negative examples of representation in news and entertainment media and understand how these depictions influence the ways that we see each other and ourselves.
- Critique media representations by identifying stereotypes and systems of signification and analysing the ideological work they do to reinforce or disrupt social norms.
- Apply relevant theoretical concepts to analyses of representation in a range of media texts including news broadcasts, TV shows, movies, advertisements, video games, music videos, websites, and social media platforms.
- Create your own media representations, which illustrate a comprehensive understanding of key course concepts.

Required Course Materials (books available in the UWO bookstore or you can purchase them online)

1. **Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (2007)**
2. **Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (2015)**
3. **bell hooks, *all about love: NEW VISIONS* (2001)**
4. **Eden Robinson, *Son of a Trickster* (2017)**
5. Assorted book excerpts, journal articles and web links are provided on **Owl** as required weekly readings under “Course Content”. You will also be required to screen three films – *The Truman Show* (Netflix), *The Mask You Live In* (Kanopy), *Hillbilly Elegy* (Netflix) – and one television series – *Social Distance* (Netflix).

Requisites

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate requisites for this course or to obtain special permission from your Dean to enrol in it. If you fail to do so, you will be removed from the course and your fees will not be adjusted accordingly.

General Policies

- **Check your UWO email regularly** – aside from Owl, this will be the primary way that I will communicate with you as a class. Announcements made from Owl will be sent to you as emails. It is your responsibility to ensure that you don't miss important communications from me. Please avoid emailing me from outside of your UWO account as messages from webmail accounts may end up in my spam folder. Please ensure that your emails contain our course number in the subject line. I try to respond to emails within 24 hours between Monday morning and Friday afternoon. I generally will not reply to emails that I receive on Friday evening, or on the weekend, until Monday morning.
- **Deadlines** – A number of assignments in this course have flexible deadlines and you are responsible for ensuring that you know when things are due and where/how to submit them. I encourage you to investigate appropriate channels of accommodation (medical, compassionate, self-reported) when needed, and I reserve the right to apply a late penalty of 3% per day where warranted.
- **Communication** – I am available for consultation every week during my regular office hours on Friday mornings (see details at the top of the syllabus). If you have class during this time, you may make an appointment for a time of mutual convenience. Please reserve emails (see policy below) for brief queries. Substantial discussions about grades or assignments are better live (via zoom, phone call or face to face).
- **Attendance & Participation** – Students are expected to prepare required readings and screenings and participate in class activities and discussion in our weekly synchronous Zoom sessions, throughout the semester. **It is imperative that you attend class for the 5 weeks of small group seminars (see class schedule below).** As there are only 5-6 students in each group, missing any one of these discussion sessions lets your groupmates down. **If you feel that you will not be able to meet these attendance requirements, then this course may not be for you.**
- **Discussion Forums** – I have created a number of Forums in Owl: 1) General discussion – you may post contributions here which will count towards your participation grade (forum use is not mandatory); 2) Questions about course material or assignments; 3) Technical Issues – a place where you can note any problems you are having with the Learning Management System (Owl).
- **Self-Reported Absences and other approved deadline relief** – sometimes things happen which make it impossible to meet deadlines. If you are granted medical or compassionate accommodation (see the appended notes from the Dean's Office) you are expected to

contact me ASAP to negotiate a new deadline for the work you have missed. If you use the Self-Report Absence (SRA) function, *please understand that this extends the deadline by no more than 48 hours*, and I expect your work to be turned in within this window or it will still be considered late.

- **Accessible Education (formerly SSD) Accommodations** – all accommodations need to be activated through Accessible Education – if you aren't registered with them, then I have no way of confirming your eligibility. This needs to be done at the start of every semester and updated every time you make changes to your timetable. Extra time/rest breaks will be managed by me, and if you have registered your accommodations, then you will see versions of assessments on Owl that have been adjusted to reflect your needs. If you have flexible deadlines as one of your accommodations, it is expected that you will contact me *before* an assignment is due to discuss possible deadline relief. Should you fail to contact me in advance or fail to meet new negotiated deadlines, late penalties may still apply.

Required Course Work and Evaluation

1. **Seminar: Questions (10%) + Response Paper (20%)** *ongoing from Weeks 4-9*
2. **Reading Journal: (20%)** *Ongoing throughout the term (one entry must be a 2-3 minute video submission)*
3. **Contribution to Community Learning: (10%)** *This will be a self-assessed reflection on your engagement with your colleagues and participation in small group discussion throughout the semester*
4. **Keyword: (20%)** *representation + rationale due March 23rd*
5. **Final Exam: (20%) Take home format** – *submission date scheduled in Final Exam period in April (TBA)*

See detailed assignment briefs on Owl

Lecture Schedule

Week/Date	Module	Topic	Readings/Screenings/Assignments
1 Jan.13	ONE	Introductions	
2 Jan.20		Enlightenment	WATCH: <i>The Truman Show</i> (Netflix) READ: 1) Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , Book VII; 2) Toni Morrison's Nobel Lecture www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1993/morrison-lecture.html
3 Jan.27		Dialogue	READ: 1) James Baldwin, "Letter to my nephew"; 2) Ta-Nehisi Coates, <i>Between the World and Me</i> Part I
4 Feb.3	TWO	Race	*SEMINAR 1 READ: Ta-Nehisi Coates, <i>Between the World and Me</i> Part II
5 Feb.10		Class	*SEMINAR 2 WATCH: <i>Hillbilly Elegy</i> (Netflix) READ: Chris Hedges & Joe Sacco, <i>Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt</i> , Ch.3
Reading Week – no classes			
6 Feb.24	TWO	Nation	*SEMINAR 3 READ: Eden Robinson, <i>Son of a Trickster</i>
7 Mar.3	THREE	Gender	*SEMINAR 4 WATCH: <i>The Mask You Live In</i> (Kanopy) https://uwo.kanopy.com/video/mask-you-live READ: Alison Bechdel, <i>Fun Home</i> , Ch.1-4
8 Mar.10		Health, Wellbeing & Dis/ability	*SEMINAR 5 READ: Alison Bechdel, <i>Fun Home</i> , Ch.5-7
9 Mar.17	Catch-up Week (This is not university wide – it's just for our course. Use it to get caught up on reading journals, work on the keyword project due next week, or to start studying for the exam)		
10 Mar.24	THREE	Queer	KEYWORD project due (March 23rd) READ: Eve Sedgwick, "Introduction: Axiomatic"
11 Mar.31	FOUR	Desire	READ: Catherine Belsey, "Writing About Desire" & "Reading Love Stories"
12 Apr.7		Love	WATCH: <i>Social Distance</i> (Netflix) READ: bell hooks, <i>all about love</i>

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

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments, 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

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 4th year seminars have no recommended course averages.

Support Services

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

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

SUPPORT SERVICES - LINKS

Office of the Registrar:

www.registrar.uwo.ca

Mental Health

Support:

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

Accessible Education:

http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

Accessibility

Information:

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.