

MIT 2200G

MAPPING MEDIA THEORY AND CRITICISM

Winter 2021

Lectures: Asynchronous

Tutorials: Synchronous and Asynchronous

Instructor Information:

Joanna Redden

(jredden2@uwo.ca)

519-661-2111 x88476

Office Hours: Thursdays 1:30-2:30 or by appointment

Course Information:

- Asynchronous lectures will be posted online.

- Participation in Tutorials as outlined by your Teaching Assistant

Course Description

This course is designed to provide MIT students with a background in the theoretical traditions that inform scholarship in media and cultural studies. These traditions include: critical theory, structuralism, semiotics, post-structuralism, Marxism, medium theory, feminism, critical race studies, queer theory, posthumanism and socio-technical analysis. We will engage key theoretical topics, including the meaning of culture, the nature of language and the sign, ideology, subjectivity, gender, sexuality, race, and the implications of digital technology. Throughout, we will attempt to capture the excitement and commitment of scholars and others engaging these various approaches to understanding culture, media, technology and everyday life.

Course Objectives

This course will:

- Familiarize you with many of the major intellectual developments in the humanities and social sciences of the past century
- Give you the tools to understand the intersection of these ideas with scholarship in media and cultural studies
- Sharpen your skills in reading and thinking critically
- Sharpen your skills in communicating your ideas verbally and in writing
- Encourage you to become an active participant in ongoing theoretical debates

Required Texts:

Readings will be posted on the course website.

Requirements

Midterm take-home examination (30%): A take-home examination is **due on Mar.3**. The exam will consist of a combination of short answer and essay questions. The midterm take-home examination will be posted a week before it is due.

Three short writing assignments (20% each) are **due on Jan. 27, Mar. 17 and April 7**.

1) Writing assignment 1: Reverse Outline (**due Jan. 27**)

For this assignment you will be asked to produce a reverse outline for one of our required readings. Knowing how to produce a reverse outline provides you with an essential skill that is useful when reading complex texts and doing research. Producing a reverse outline demonstrates the importance of careful reading and helps you develop skills needed to assess the strength and weaknesses of ideas being presented. Guidelines will be provided in the first week of class and posted in OWL.

2) Writing assignment 2: Question Response (**due Mar. 17, 1,000 words**)

For this assignment you will be asked to write a 1,000 word answer to a question posed by me (Joanna Redden) based on content covered in this course. The question and more details about this assignment will be posted on OWL.

3) Writing assignment 3: Media Analysis (**due April 7, 1500 words**)

Use one of the theoretical concepts covered this term to assess a contemporary media example. For example, draw on Marx's concept of commodity fetishism to discuss a particular ad or campaign. Or use Stuart Hall's essay "Encoding, Decoding," to discuss your response to a television program. Further details about this assignment will be posted on our course OWL site.

Participation and Attendance at Tutorial (10%): This grade is determined by your faithful attendance at tutorial and the level of your engagement and involvement while in the class. Your T.A. will explain his/her expectations around tutorial participation in your first meeting.

Submission of Assignments: All assignments must be submitted electronically on OWL.

Work that has been deferred by the use of a self-reported absence is to be handed in 48 hours following the end of the SRA. Late penalties of 2% per day will begin after this.

Attendance:

You are expected to watch the lectures posted online, to read and watch the required material posted in OWL and to participate in tutorials as outlined by your T.A.

My Role in the course: My role is to make decisions about what we will and will not cover, design the assessments used in the course, supervise the TAs, and deliver the lectures. Please address questions about the design and overall administration of the course directly to me, either over email or in office hours. ***In addition, I am happy to meet with you to discuss course material you are having trouble with.*** Please do not email me about late or missed assignments, grades or extensions; due to the size of this course, these emails must be addressed to your teaching assistant.

The Teaching Assistants' role in the course: In addition to running the tutorials, TAs will handle all marking and issues regarding late or missed assignments. Your TA will also handle concerns about preparing for and writing exams and assignments. In addition, they will help you understand course material and lectures. Finally, they will provide information on using the course website, though the ultimate responsibility for learning to use OWL rests with you. Please address questions about any of these matters directly to your TA. Your TA will explain how best to reach her/him, and when and where s/he will hold office hours during the first tutorial meeting.

Students will receive graded work worth no less than 15% at least 3 days prior to the deadline for withdrawal without academic penalty. Students can find details about this academic policy here: 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.

Important notes regarding Online Teaching:

Some of the remote learning sessions for this course will be recorded. The data captured during these recordings may include your image, voice recordings, chat logs and personal identifiers (name displayed on the screen). The recordings will be used for educational purposes related to this course, including evaluations. The recordings may be disclosed to other individuals under special circumstances.

Please contact the instructor if you have any concerns related to session recordings. Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor.

Some components of this course will involve online interactions. To ensure the best experience for both you and your classmates, please honour the following rules of etiquette:

- please “arrive” to class on time
- please use your computer and/or laptop if possible (as opposed to a cell phone or tablet)
- ensure that you are in a private location to protect the confidentiality of discussions in the event that a class discussion deals with sensitive or personal material

- to minimize background noise, kindly mute your microphone for the entire class until you are invited to speak, unless directed otherwise
- please be prepared to turn your video camera off at the instructor's request if the internet connection becomes unstable
- unless invited by your instructor, do not share your screen in the meeting

The course instructor will act as moderator for the class and will deal with any questions from participants.

To participate please consider the following:

- if you wish to speak, use the "raise hand" function and wait for the instructor to acknowledge you before beginning your comment or question
- remember to unmute your microphone and turn on your video camera before speaking
- self-identify when speaking
- remember to mute your mic and turn off your video camera after speaking (unless directed otherwise)

General considerations of "netiquette":

- Keep in mind the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students in the course.
- Be courteous toward the instructor, your colleagues, and authors whose work you are discussing.
- Be respectful of the diversity of viewpoints that you will encounter in the class and in your readings.
- The exchange of diverse ideas and opinions is part of the scholarly environment. "Flaming" is never appropriate.
- Be professional and scholarly in all online postings. Cite the ideas of others appropriately. Note that disruptive behaviour of any type during online classes, including inappropriate use of the chat function, is unacceptable. Students found guilty of Zoom-bombing a class or of other serious online offenses may be subject to disciplinary measures under the Code of Student Conduct.

Schedule at a Glance

* Note that the specific details of each class may change depending on timing and circumstances

Date	Topic
Week 1 (Jan. 13)	Introduction
Week 2 (Jan. 20)	Marx and Media Studies: Key Ideas
Week 3 (Jan. 27)	Mass Culture Debates and the Frankfurt School
Week 4 (Feb. 3)	Semiotics
Week 5 (Feb. 10)	Cultural Studies – The Birmingham School
Week 6 (Feb. 5-19)	Reading Week
Week 7 (Feb. 24)	Power, Governmentality and Media Studies
Week 8 (Mar. 3)	Gender / Sexuality
Week 9 (Mar. 10)	The Public Sphere, Media and Democracy
Week 10 (Mar. 17)	Decoloniality, Intersectionality and Anti-Racism
Week 11 (Mar. 24)	Media Technology and Media Ecology
Week 12 (Mar. 31)	Critical Data Studies
Week 13 (Apr. 7)	Course Conclusion

Weekly readings

Week 1 (Jan. 13)	Introduction
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In this introductory class we will consider: How can theory help us in assessing the relationships between media, technology, society, politics, and culture? What is the relevance of critical theory today? We will also discuss the course outline and course expectations.

No required readings.

Note: No tutorials this week.

Week 2 (Jan. 20)	Marx and Media Studies: Key Ideas
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This class identifies some of Marx’s insights into the characteristics of capitalist society. We will discuss Marx’s contributions to critical theory. We will look at Marx’s ideas on class, ideology, alienation, commodity fetishism and consider the relevance of these concepts to media studies.

Required Readings:

Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich (1970, 1998) “The Ruling Class and Ruling Ideas,” *The German Ideology*. Electric Book Company, 1970, 92-94.

Marx, Karl (1904) *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 11-12.

Engels, Frederick (1895, 1999) “Letter to Joseph Bloch,” *Historical Materialism (Marx, Engels, Lenin)*, marxists.org, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1890/letters/90_09_21.htm.

Marx, Karl (1844) *Estranged Labour*, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm>.

Week 3 (Jan. 27)	Mass Culture Debates and the Frankfurt School
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In this class we will look at some of the founding thinkers of the Frankfurt School. We will place these thinkers within their social and political context and consider how this context influenced their ideas. We will identify some of the central ideas to emerge from the Frankfurt School and discuss how these ideas continue to influence media studies today.

Required Reading:

Adorno, Theodor and Horkheimer, Max (2001) “The Culture Industry Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” *The Cultural Studies Reader*, Simon During (ed.), New York: Routledge, 31-41.

Week 4 (Feb. 3)	Semiotics
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A great deal of work in media studies is devoted to the analysis of media texts and understanding the political, social, and cultural significance of media messages. In this class we will discuss some of the key terms and ideas associated with semiology, and consider the influence of founding thinkers. Through examples, we will examine how semiology can aid in analysis and discuss some of the limitations of this approach.

Required Reading:

Barthes, Roland (2009) "Myth Today," In *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, John Storey (ed.) London: Pearson Education, 261-269.

Barthes, R. (1973) "Toys," and "The Face of Garbo," in *Mythologies*, London: Granada, 53-57.

Hall, Stuart (2013) "The Work of Representation," in *Representation*, Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans and Sean Nixon (eds.), Sage: New York, 1-25.

Week 5 (Feb. 10)	Cultural Studies – The Birmingham School
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This class provides an overview of the history and development of Cultural Studies and the forms of analyses associated with the discipline.

Required Readings:

Hall, Stuart (2007) "Encoding, Decoding," In *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-1979*, Florence, KY: Routledge, 117-127.

Gramsci, Antonio (1971) *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, New York: International Publishers. (specific sections posted to OWL).

McRobbie, Angela (2013) ANGELA McROBBIE INTERVIEWS HERSELF, *Cultural Studies*, 27:5, 828-832, DOI: 10.1080/09502386.2013.773677

Week 6 (Feb. 5-19)	Reading Week
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Week 7 (Feb. 24)	Power, Governmentality and Media Studies
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Critical theory focuses largely on questions of power. In this class we look at the development of concepts of power. We consider Foucault's contributions to our understanding of power and how his ideas have been, and continue to be, used by media studies scholars.

Required Reading:

Foucault, Michel (1995) "The Body of the Condemned," *Discipline and Punish*, New York: Random House, 3-31.

Week 8 (Mar. 3)	Gender / Sexuality
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Required reading:

Laura Mulvey, from “Visual pleasure and the narrative cinema” in *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*

Judith Butler, from *Gender Trouble* in *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*

Sarah Ahmed (2018) “Feminist Hurt/Feminism Hurts,” in *The Power of Vulnerability: Mobilising Affect in Feminist, Queer and Anti-Racist Media Cultures*, 59-67.

<https://www.manchesteropenhive.com/view/9781526133113/9781526133113.00009.xml>

Sasha Costanza-Chock, “Design Justice, A.I. and Escape from the Matrix of Domination”

<https://jods.mitpress.mit.edu/pub/costanza-chock>

Week 9 (Mar. 10)	The Public Sphere, Media and Democracy
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Required Reading

Habermas, Jurgen “The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article,” in *Media and Culture Studies: Introducing the Key Works*, Douglas M. Kellner and Meenakshi Gigi Durham (eds.), Wiley-Blackwell, 73-78.

Garnham N (1992) *The Media and the Public Sphere*. In Calhoun C (ed.) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 359-376.

Week 10 (Mar. 17)	Decoloniality, Intersectionality and Anti-Racism
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Required Reading

Aouragh, M., & Chakravartty, P. (2016). Infrastructures of empire: Towards a critical geopolitics of media and information studies. *Media, Culture, and Society*.

Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality, More than Two Decades Later (2020) Columbia Law School, <https://www.law.columbia.edu/news/archive/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality-more-two-decades-later>

Week 11 (Mar. 24)	Media Technology and Media Ecology
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In this class we discuss the relationships between media, knowledge, and subjectivity.

Required Reading:

Harold Innis, "A Plea for Time" <http://gutenberg.ca/ebooks/innis-plea/innis-plea-00-h.html>

Wendy Chun (2017) "Introduction: Habitual New Media, or Updating to Remain (Close to) the same," *Updating to Remain the Same*, 1-24.

Week 12 (Mar. 31)	Critical Data Studies
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Required Reading:

Craig Dalton and Jim Thatcher (2014) What Does a Critical Data Studies Look Like, And Why Do We Care? *Digital Geographies*, <https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/what-does-a-critical-data-studies-look-like-and-why-do-we-care>

Benjamin, Ruha (2019) "Introduction: The New Jim Code," *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*, Cambridge UK: Polity.

Week 13 (Apr. 7)	Course Conclusion
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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.