

The University of Western Ontario  
**Faculty of Information and Media Studies**

**MIT 3213G – Media and Audiences: The Situation(ism) is Critical – Winter 2021**

**Instructor Information**

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**Course Information**

Lectures: Asynchronous; OWL

Technology Requirements: Internet, Digital Device

**Prerequisites**

Restricted to FIMS students; course counts toward Writing Certificate.

**Course Syllabus**

In recent years, audiences have made the shift to becoming producers of media content, largely due to the participatory nature of Web 2.0. Yet, the question remains as to whether we as producers and consumers of content are not simply participating in the commodification of ourselves and the media we produce and consume. What we may come to believe as the emancipation of public opinions in a democratized digital context may in fact further entrench us in what Guy Debord calls the society of the spectacle. It is to this end that we will be assessing the historical shaping of audiences from the 20<sup>th</sup> into the 21<sup>st</sup> century from a Post-Marxist and Situationist context. This is not to say that we must be complicit with these theoretical approaches, and it is hoped that we can both critically assess the trends of audience formation/manipulation as well as question whether or not situationism is still relevant to us today, and if we are unwitting participants in what can be called “spectacles of persuasion.” Each class will include a close reading and discussion of the assigned portion of the Debord text. Students are strongly urged to come prepared and to discuss the content of the readings. The content is rich, dense, difficult, but ultimately rewarding.

**AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT THE ONLINE VERSION:**

As these are extraordinary times, the Western community has had to adopt some extraordinary measures to ensure safety. It is certainly not ideal for all faculty and students to conduct our courses virtually. Nothing can quite replace the in-class environment. The need for social distancing makes scheduling in-person courses an enormous logistical challenge, and so a good portion of our courses will be virtual this year.

One of the benefits may be in consuming content when it is convenient for you as opposed to a scheduled meeting time. The one disadvantage of online learning is how to overcome that feeling of isolation, and to be disciplined in keeping up with course content.

I will be providing as much lecture content as possible to allow those of you who anticipate a crunch in workload to get ahead. You can screen content at your leisure.

We will be making a few changes to how assessment works in an online format, and expectations will be clearly communicated in our introductory lecture. That being said, deadlines are still deadlines!

### Itinerary and Reading Schedule

Week	Topic	Reading / Due Dates
1	Introduction (Hegel, Marx)	Aph 1 - 17
2	Public Opinion Redux (Bernays, Lippmann)	Aph 18 - 34
3	Postwar Opinion (Merton, Lazarsfeld, et al)	Aph 35 - 53
4	Paranoiacs, Pessimists, and Prophets (Adorno, Heidegger, Wertham)	
5	Audiences of Resistance (de Certeau, Debord)	Aph 54 - 72
6	Fanatics, Manias and Cult Audiences (Crowds: Mackay, Le Bon, Canetti)	Aph 125 - 146
7	Screens and Screening (Mulvey, Baudrillard et al)	
8	The New Childhood	Aph 147 - 164
9	Gender, Class and Ethnic Representation	Aph 165 - 179
10	Interactivity and the Prosumer	Aph 180 -211
11	Audience 2.0	Aph 212 - 221
12	Concluding Questions	

[Note: the Debord text will be referenced by numbered aphorism. Students are required to read the assigned aphorisms before we meet for class]

### Course Materials

Given the ambitious scope of this course, it would prove unwieldy to assign readings for the roughly 30 or so theorists under discussion. Students will be expected, however, to read the entirety of Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* and be prepared to discuss and apply their understanding of Debord's work to the context of our subject matter. Fortunately, Debord's text is

available as free and public domain. A copy of the course text is available here: [http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/pub\\_contents/4](http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/pub_contents/4) (if the link is inactive, perform a quick Google search: it is hosted in full on other sites; translation/version may vary).

**Recommended Readings:** Although this is not *required* reading, it is strongly recommended that students draw from this resource as it may prove useful for the first assignment and in understanding Debord in our contemporary context:

Briziarelli, Marco and Emiliana Armano (eds) (2018) *The Spectacle 2.0*. University of Westminster Press. <https://www.uwestminsterpress.co.uk/site/books/10.16997/book11/>

### **Evaluation**

25% - Small Essay (500-1000 words) Due: **January 22**

25% - Precis/Proposal of Final Paper (500 words excluding bibliography) Due: **Feb 19**

40% - Final Research Paper (1500-2500 words) Due: **April 2**

10% - Participation Self Evaluation. Due: **April 2**

**\*All assignments are due digitally on OWL Sakai in PDF format before 11:55 PM on the due date — Late submissions without accommodation are graded as zero.**

**\*Note:** Assignment details and digital syllabus will be made available electronically

Students will receive graded work worth no less than 15% at least 3 days prior to the deadline for withdrawal without academic penalty. This year, the date by which students are to have received at least 15% of their grade in a first semester course is **March 12, 2021**. 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.

All assignments **MUST** be submitted as a PDF, not in DOC format.

### **Course Policies**

#### **Communication/Consultation**

I make every effort to be as flexible as possible in accommodating student requests for consultation. My office hours are posted at the top of this syllabus. During peak times (generally prior to when an assignment comes due), it may be more difficult to contact me during my office hours. You may wish to “beat the rush”, which means beginning your assignments earlier and coming to me with issues as they arise.

If your issue requires a bit more face to face communication, we can arrange to meet over Zoom or some other platform. However, *email is preferable* since it allows both instructor and student to reflect and compose their thoughts.

My policy concerning email is that I endeavour to respond within 24 hours, and at reasonable times. That means you should not expect a reply to your email delivered at 2 am or on weekends until the usual working week and daylight hours. That means 9 to 5, Monday to Friday. If you do not receive a response within 24 hours, please resend. NB: If I need to get in contact with you about an urgent matter, please do make a habit of keeping sufficient space on your account so the email does not bounce.

*\* Emails should not contain questions easily answered by either the syllabus or assignment documents.*

*\* I will read working thesis statements or discuss research questions, but please do not ask me to read entire drafts of assignments out of fairness for my time, and those students who cannot benefit from such feedback. Taking some risk and initiative is a part of life.*

*\* It is the student's responsibility to read all OWL announcements made in a timely fashion, and to check in on OWL occasionally to view any feedback on graded assignments.*

### **Late Assignment Policy**

Late assignments will receive a zero. If extenuating circumstances prevent the timely submission of an assignment or paper, documentation is required (see Academic Accommodation below). All assignments must be submitted by the due date. IMPORTANT: Please do not send or show me medical notes - I value your privacy and do not have the specific authorization to vet medical notes.

**Student-Reported Absences (SRAs):** All conditions of the SRA apply (See [https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic\\_considerations/self\\_reported\\_absences\\_faqs.html](https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/self_reported_absences_faqs.html)). It will be reasonably expected that the assignment for which the SRA covers will be submitted no later than 48 hours after that deadline has passed.

### **Electronic Submission**

All assignments are to be submitted via our Learning Management System (OWL). No paper copies. Unless otherwise specified, please submit as a PDF.

### **Work Submission and Feedback**

Apart from extenuating circumstances, I generally have a one or two week turnaround policy, which means I will have your work graded with feedback ready online. Pending my workload, you may receive feedback much sooner. If you submit sooner, you may also receive feedback sooner, which may be a great way of decreasing academic stress toward the end of the semester.

# 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/uwo.com/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.