

**The University of Western Ontario  
Faculty of Information and Media Studies  
MIT 4999 - Media and the Public Interest Practicum  
Course Outline, Winter 2021**

**Instructor Information**

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**Course Information**

**Meetings:** Class meetings take place on select Fridays (listed below), from 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm. They will be conducted via Zoom and will be synchronous. **\*ALL classes are MANDATORY\***

**OWL site information:** Official Course Site MIT 4999G 001 FW20

**Technology requirements:** Access to Zoom

**Meeting dates – select Fridays, 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm:**

- Friday, January 15
- Friday, January 29
- Friday, February 26
- Friday, April 9

**Assignment due dates:**

- Mid-term reports due Monday, March 8<sup>th</sup> (by midnight) via your OWL dropbox.
- Final papers due (tentatively) Monday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> (by midnight) via your OWL dropbox.

**Prerequisites**

*Prerequisites for MIT 4999:* Restricted to students in the fourth year of a module in Media and the Public Interest. Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

**Course Syllabus**

*1. Course Description*

This course combines engagement in the field of public interest media with a non-profit or community-based organization; participation in a special seminar; a short mid-term report, and a theoretically informed final paper

based on the practicum experience. Students must successfully complete a minimum of forty hours in their placement.

## 2. *Class Zoom Meetings*

Students will meet as a group via Zoom on select, \*mandatory\* Fridays throughout the term from 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm. We will engage in reflexive discussions about your placements, about community engaged learning writ large, and about the relationship between the academy and local communities.

Meeting dates:

- Friday, January 15
- Friday, January 29
- Friday, February 26
- Friday, April 9

## **Methods of Evaluation**

The course is evaluated on a Pass/Fail basis, with the possibility – in exceptional cases – for a Pass with Distinction.

To receive a Pass in the course, students must complete all of the following:

- 1) Attend all scheduled classes (any absences must be approved and documented via official faculty procedures);
- 2) Successfully complete \*at least\* 40 hours in their placements;
- 3) Submit a mid-term progress report and final paper. Submissions must include appropriate content and must be properly written and formatted (described in detail below). Prior to completing the mid-term report, students should ‘meet’ with their host placement supervisor to discuss progress to date;
- 4) Receive, \*at minimum\*, a satisfactory evaluation from their host placement.

To receive a Pass with Distinction in the course, students must complete all of the following:

- 1) Produce exceptional written work in their mid-term progress report and in their final paper;
- 2) Actively participate in all class discussions;
- 3) Receive an exceptional evaluation from their host placement.

\*Students should be aware that this course has received a decanal exemption from the Senate policy requiring students to have received graded work worth at least 15% of the final grade on or before March 12, 2021.

## **Assignments**

There are two written assignments for this course.

- 1) A 750-word mid-term progress report (in a word doc format) is due by **midnight, Monday, March 8<sup>th</sup> via your OWL dropbox.**
  - The report must include a detailed description of your activities to date, any issues/concerns/successes, and plans for the remainder of the placement.
  - Please use 12-point font, Times New Roman, double-spaced. It **MUST** be in **Word format** (NOT pdf). Please include your last name in the saved document title. As noted above, prior to completing the mid-term report, students should ‘meet’ with their host placement supervisor to discuss progress to date.

2) A 3000-word final paper (in a word doc format) is (tentatively) due via OWL by **midnight, April 23<sup>rd</sup> via your OWL dropbox.**

- The paper must include a detailed description of your practicum, including all activities, and a critical, reflective analysis of your successes and obstacles. You must examine the practicum in a theoretical context, drawing on previous and current MIT and MPI courses. You must include a *\*minimum\** of six (6) academic sources from your courses.
- Please use 12-point font, Times New Roman, double-spaced. It **MUST** be in **Word format** (NOT pdf). Please include your last name in the saved document title.

*Paper Format:* Students will be penalized for improper grammar, spelling, and formatting. You must include a word count at the end of the essay. Please use consistent MLA, APA, or Chicago citation style (your choice of style). Students who submit papers with excessive errors in style, format, or spelling/grammar will be required to re-submit the paper.

### **Medical Accommodation**

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, assignments or participatory components worth 10% or more of their final grade for the course must apply to the FIMS Undergraduate Student Services and provide documentation in the form of a Student Medical Certificate. For work worth less than 10% of the final grade, the instructor will consider requests for academic accommodation on medical grounds made in a timely manner in writing or by appointment in office hours. Such requests need not be accompanied by documentation. The instructor may, however, decide to require documentation be submitted to the FIMS Undergraduate Student Services office.

Late Papers and Missed Assignments: At the discretion of the instructor, a request for an extension may be granted for a legitimate reason. However, requests for extensions must be made at least **ONE WEEK** before the due date of the paper to be considered (no extensions will be considered within six days of the assignment due date). Late assignments without documentation of illness or emergency will receive a penalty of 5% a day for up to four days; on the fifth day, the paper will receive an automatic **FAIL**.

**\*PLEASE NOTE:** due to the time constraints for the submission of final grades, no extensions will be granted for the final research paper. Students who are unable to submit the final paper by the due date will need to provide appropriate documentation through FIMS Undergrad Student Services in order to receive an INC in the course.

### **Plagiarism**

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by using proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Western Academic Calendar). Western University uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.

## **Statement on the Use of Zoom Recording**

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.

## **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 the 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).*

# 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.