

MIT 2025-001 (Winter 2022)
Research Methods for the Digital Age
January 12-April 8

Instructor Information

Name: Melissa Adler

Office: FNB

Office Hours: Thursdays, 2:00-3:00 (zoom), or by appointment (in person or zoom)

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Course Information

Lectures: 7:00-9:00 pm, Wednesdays

Room: Health Sciences, Room 40

For information on tutorials and TAs, see your Tutorial syllabus and OWL site

Course Description

An introduction to the range of research methods appropriate for understanding scholarship in the fields of communications, information, and media studies, including surveys, interviewing, content analysis and ethnography. Students will study specific methods in the context of the media-related topics that these methods have been used to address.

Course Learning outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Construct research questions to explore specific issues in a particular area of media studies, such as social media, journalism, film, or television. (Ask)
- Identify the best approach for a research project in media studies with human participants.
- Identify and collect appropriate data to address a specific research question. (Collect)
- Apply qualitative methodological framework to analyze data. (Analyze)
- Interpret the results of findings by discussing implications for practice and/or theory in media studies. (Interpret)
- Effectively communicate research findings through digital media (Disseminate)
- Critically evaluate qualitative and quantitative research in media studies. (Evaluate)
- Articulate ethical concerns associated with media studies research
- Explain decision making processes at each step of the research process

Blended Learning and MIT 2025

This course was initially designed to use a blended learning approach to learning, so even if we go back to in-person teaching, there will be an online component. Approximately 30% of the instructional hours in this course will continue to take place online.

Lectures will be one hour. After the lecture, you should engage in one hour of online active learning activities that further refine your knowledge and skills. This online work will also prepare you to receive feedback on the week's work during the one-hour tutorial. You can complete the online activity immediately after lecture in the lecture hall (or in small zoom groups), or on your own time. **They need to be completed before your tutorial.** Tutorials provide an opportunity to ask more questions, discuss and receive feedback on your projects and

assignment, and to create an informed approach to the coursework ahead. Five of the activities will be graded.

Course structure summary:

1. Pre-class preparation (readings, online resources)
2. 1-hour lecture
3. 1-hour online: refine knowledge and skills, activities, prepare for tutorial
4. 1-hour tutorial: discussion and feedback, group work

Required textbook: Leavy, Patricia. *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches*. Guilford Publications, 2017.

Other readings and resources will be available via OWL, Western Libraries, or the internet.

Assignments:

Midterm: Analyze and rewrite a research article for a popular news audience: (20 points)

Industry project (community engaged learning): (25 points) You will work in groups of five to develop a research plan for an industry partner. Your mark will be based on the oral and web-based presentation to the industry partner (15 points) and a written proposal (10 points).

Activities: (20 points) You will apply several methods throughout the semester.

Final exam: (25 points)

Class participation and preparedness: (10 points) Participation and preparation marks will be based on attendance in tutorial and participation in class discussions, as well as evidence that you have engaged with the course materials and are prepared and ready to engage in class discussions and your group work.

Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due at the beginning of tutorial in the week they are due. Assignments will be submitted in OWL, unless otherwise specified. Late assignments will be subject to a mark penalty of 5% per day or part thereof unless appropriate documentation is provided.

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

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software 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. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Support services

Student Support Services (including the services provided by the USC):
<http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre, including Services for Students with Disabilities:
https://studentexperience.uwo.ca/student_development/index.html

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @Western
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Course delivery with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic

Although the intent is for this course to be delivered in-person, the changing COVID-19 landscape may necessitate some or all of the course to be delivered online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will not change. Any assessments affected will be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

When deemed necessary, tests and examinations in this course will be conducted using a remote proctoring service. By taking this course, you are consenting to the use of this software and acknowledge that you will be required to provide personal information (including some biometric data) and the session will be recorded. Completion of this course will require you to have a reliable internet connection and a device that meets the technical requirements for this service. More information about this remote proctoring service, including technical requirements, is available on Western's Remote Proctoring website at: <https://remoteproctoring.uwo.ca>

Policies specific to the online environment:

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

Some of the remote learning sessions for this course will be recorded. Your TA may record synchronous meetings in your tutorial, and I will be recording lectures. 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.

Any reuse of course content without permission may be a violation of copyright. Do not circulate or reproduce recorded lectures or any content produced by the instructor or students. Participants in this course are not permitted to record Zoom sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor.

Important Dates for Winter 2021/22 Semester

Last day to add a half course: January 18

Reading Break: February 19-27

Last day to withdraw from a half course without penalty: March 14

Final day of classes: April 8

Study Day: April 9

Exam Period: April 10-30

Good Friday: April 15

Easter Sunday: April 17

More policies and information

Laptops, Electronic Devices, and Communication: If/when we return to in-person classes, I ask that you do bring laptops or another device that you can use for course projects and activities. Please, reserve these for uses that serve as a benefit to your learning, management, and comprehension of the material.

Acceptable uses include taking notes, looking up sources directly related to the class content, and producing writings and projects. Unacceptable uses of devices include texting, checking email, playing games, chatting, or visiting web sites that are unrelated to the topic at hand. Cell phones should be silenced and put away. We will have a break each class period, so please reserve all unpermitted use for that time.

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 11, 2020. 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.

Photography and video or audio recording are allowed only with permission. See me if you need to record any aspect of the class session.

Please, when you write emails to me or the teaching assistants, provide [MIT 3000] in the subject and maintain a professional tone and delivery. For more on this see: Laura Portwood-Stacer, [How to email your professor \(without being annoying AF\)](#)

Course schedule

Week 1

Lecture topic & readings (Jan. 12) Introduction	Tutorial No tutorial this week
Online activity Library modules Review the syllabus	Assignment due NA

Week 2

Lecture topic & readings (Jan. 19) Looking for information; libraries and archives, Historical research - Colleen Burgess & Tom Peace: <u>19th Century Legacies in 21st Century Historical Research Practice</u> Emily Drabinski: Queering the Catalog: Queer Theory and the Politics of Correction, <i>The Library Quarterly</i> 2013 83(2), 94-111 Listen: <u>Dr. Qwo-Li Driskill on Indigenous & Two-spirit Studies</u>	Tutorial (week of January 17) Introductions
Online activity Industry partners meetings	Assignment due in tutorial NA

Week 3

Lecture topic & readings (Jan. 26) Asking questions -Leavy, Chapters 1 and 3	Tutorial Discuss readings and podcast, Industry partner project requirements.
Online activity Literature search Find 4 articles related to the industry partner problem,	Assignment due in tutorial Be prepared to discuss

Document your search process: Where did you look? Which databases? What keywords/subject headings did you use? Are the articles peer reviewed? Are you beginning to arrive at a research question?	
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Week 4

Lecture topic & readings (Feb. 2) Qualitative research Reading research -Leavy, Chapter 5 -How to Write a Science News Story Based on a Research Article (The Guardian)	Tutorial Discussion, group work
Online activity Industry partner group work	Assignment due in tutorial (activity 1) Citations and documentation of search process (counts toward participation mark)

Week 5

Lecture topic & readings (Feb. 9) Ethics -Leavy, Chapter 2 (Ethics) -Tuck and Yang -Feminist Manifest-no	Tutorial Discussion, group work
Online activity TCPS Core (this will take a total of three hours and will be due at the end of the course in tutorial)	Assignment due in tutorial (activity 2) Research question

Week 6

Lecture topic & readings (Feb. 16) Code/Coding -Stuart Hall -Erika Yi, “ <u>Themes don’t just emerge</u> ,” <i>Medium</i> , July 23, 2018 -Hsieh, Hsiu-Fang, and Sarah E. Shannon. “ <u>Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis</u> .” <i>Qualitative Health Research</i> 15, no. 9 (November 2005): 1277–88. doi: 10.1177/1049732305276687 .	Tutorial Discussion, group work
Online activity Coding	Assignment due in tutorial (NA) Midterm due Friday, February 18, 11:59 pm

*****Reading Week, No Class Feb. 23*****

Week 7

Lecture topic & readings (March 2) Interviews/observation Cormac McGrath, Per J. Palmgren & Matilda Liljedahl (2019) <u>Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews</u> , <i>Medical Teacher</i> , 41:9, 1002-1006 boyd, danah. (2015). “ <u>Making Sense of Teen Life: Strategies for Capturing Ethnographic Data in a Networked Era.</u> ” In Hargittai, E. & Sandvig, C. (Eds.) <i>Digital Research Confidential: The Secrets of Studying Behavior Online</i> . Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.	Tutorial Discussion, group work
Online activity Industry partner group work (Interviews, field work)	

Week 8

Lecture topic & readings (March 9) Quantitative research/Survey research -Leavy, Chapter 4	Tutorial Discussion, group work
Online activity Industry partner group work (quantitative)	Assignment due in tutorial (activity 3) Interview questions

Week 9

Lecture topic & readings (March 16) Research Creation -Leavy, Chapter 7	Tutorial Share, discuss, finalize industry partner proposals
Online activity Industry partners meeting: Pitch the proposal	Assignment due in tutorial NA Finish TCPS Core, get certificate

Week 10

Lecture topic & readings (March 23) Big data, Mixed methods Peer review -Leavy, Chapter 6 -10 Simple Rules for Responsible Big Data Research	Tutorial Discussion
Online activity View and review the projects	Assignment due Industry partner proposal (written component)

Week 11

Lecture topic & readings (March 30) Community research -Leavy, Chapter 8	Tutorial Discussion
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Online activity NA	Assignment due (activity 4) Peer review
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Week 12

Lecture topic & readings (April 6) Review	Tutorial Review
Online activity NA	Assignment due (activity 5) Hand in any remaining activities

Final exam, Date to be determined

NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Winter 2022

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/uwo.com/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.