The University of Western Ontario
Faculty of Information and Media Studies

MIT 2155B – Social Media + Networked Life
Course Outline, Winter 2022

<u>**Instructor Information**</u>
Name: Prof. Luke Stark (pronouns: he/him/his)
Office: FNB 4035
Student Meetings: By appointment via Zoom (https://calendly.com/lukestark)
Office Phone: 519-661-2111 ext 88511
E-Mail: cstark23@uwo.ca *please note I will work to answer your email within 24 hours, excluding weekends*

<u>**Course Information**</u>
Weekly meetings: **Wednesdays 9:30am-12:30pm ET via Zoom/in FNB 2240 as public health conditions permit**
Online lecture materials will be accessible asynchronously; discussion forums will take place both online via
VoiceThread and in person when possible.

OWL site information: https://owl.uwo.ca/portal/site/39d09eab-6e23-41ab-81f3-7f02e7c4e117
Technology requirements: Students will require regular or at least consistent access to a computer and internet connection capable of handling streaming video. If this is an issue, please contact me as soon as possible.

<u>**Prerequisites or Antirequisites**</u>

Antirequisites: Digital Communication 2310A/B

<u>**Course Description**</u>

It's hard to deny—especially over the past two years—how central social media platforms, digital communications technologies, and online social and political communities are to our everyday lives as citizens and social beings. In this course, you'll be introduced to a variety of scholarly perspectives on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok; digital games and game streaming; Influencer culture; and tracking devices like FitBits and other wearables. We'll explore how different facets of human identity, including race, disability, gender, and sexuality, are shaped by social media; we'll examine the ways in which scholars from different disciplines—computer science, history, sociology, philosophy, media studies, and anthropology—have approached these topics. And perhaps most centrally, we'll consider how the business models of social media and digital networks shape relations of power in the world today.

Course Objectives
In these challenging times, the first objective of the course is to support each other throughout the semester.
Additionally, by the conclusion of the course I hope you'll also feel confident to do the following:
- Think expansively about the constitutive relationships between social media platforms and the people who make and use them.
- Analyze and describe how these relationships have influenced and continue to shape our everyday lives, and those of diverse communities around the world.
- Learn to trace how political, cultural, and social power circulates via digital media in different contexts.
- Become adept in applying your knowledge to the changing digital media landscape.
- Develop a mix of critical research skills, and learn to use these skills synthetically, creatively, and thoughtfully to your own analyses and arguments.
- Apply both your knowledge and research skills to a particular context as part of a broader group collaboration.

Method of Evaluation

In this course, **you have access to 100 possible evaluation points**; collecting 100 points means you will receive 100% in the course. However, **10% of these points are bonuses**, available only for additional work above and beyond the normal course workload. Point values for assignments, reflections, short prompts, and other forms of evaluation are variable and commensurate with the time commitment required /difficulty of the task.

Regardless of point value, **short in-term assessments and activities will be evaluated on a binary scale (credit/no credit)** and **larger activities/group project components will be evaluated on a simple three tier scale (full credit, partial credit, or no credit)**. Your cumulative point total will be available to view in OWL Gradebook throughout the semester.

Points are divided up among various forms of evaluation as follows:

Weekly Module Completion/Exit Ticket: **up to 12 points**

You will receive points for completing all aspects of the module each week: this will be assessed by your completion of the weekly checklist within each module, and of a weekly "exit ticket" feedback form. **It is critical you complete this checklist and exit ticket each week.**

Weekly Module Assessments: **up to 18 points**

You will be asked to complete short assignments throughout the semester tied to each week's content module. Please see the detailed course schedule for the list of assignments and point values. These activities are not meant to be onerous, nor are they intended as busy work. They are designed to help you reflect on how key concepts in the course relate to your own experience of social media, and to apply your knowledge to real-world case studies. As noted, **these activities will be assigned some number of points graded on a simple binary scale (full credit/no credit)** based on whether you have completed them satisfactorily.

Discussion Pod: **up to 20 points**

At the beginning of the semester, you will be assigned to a discussion pod of between 8-10 students. You will meet as a pod both virtually and in-person while physically in class when possible. In-class discussion periods will take place with other members of your pod unless otherwise specified.

Discussion Focus: at the beginning of the semester, each student should pick (and list) five social media accounts they follow regularly. These can be on any platform, and of any character (within the guidelines around etiquette and course conduct listed in this syllabus). For each week's discussions, I would like you to relate the themes of that week's module to one or more of the social media accounts you have chosen. As such, you are not allowed to switch accounts during the semester – I want you to follow a particular five accounts through the entire course. For most modules, I will post discussion prompts to help structure your observations.

Online discussions will take place via Voice Thread, where each pod will have its own dedicated space. Please note **I would like you to use the audio recording feature of VoiceThread for discussions**, except in exceptional circumstances. The goal here is to give you a break from typing and let you engage in discussions through a different medium.

Within your discussion pod, you can earn points in the following ways:
- Discussion Leader (4 points): preparing an approximately 300-word reflection on a module's discussion topic, recording it in your pod and sending a transcript to me, and engaging with the ensuing conversation multiple times throughout the week. **Please note you must send me a transcript** to receive credit as a discussion Leader; otherwise, you will receive credit as a Respondent.
- Discussion Respondent (2 point): Engaging with online reflections and prompts in your pod, and with the conversation throughout the week.

If it so happens that there is no Discussion Leader in a pod for a particular week's module, Discussion Respondents should feel free to engage with the prompt provided by me.

You are responsible for making sure you have participated in discussion forums in any combination up to the maximum of 20 points. Please note that you cannot receive more than 20 points for discussion activities.

Social Media Self-Audit: **up to 15 points**
Due Date: Friday, February 18th

This individual activity is intended to help you document and interpret your own social media use patterns, and reflect on them considering the content of the course. The activity includes three components, each worth 5 points each: a focus on hardware, on apps, and on personal data.

A more detailed assignment rubric will be available at the beginning of the semester.

Collaborative Group Project: **up to 25 points**
Research Portfolio Research Brief Draft Due Date: Friday, March 21st
Research Portfolio Final Materials Due Date: Friday, April 8th

Early in the semester, you will be assigned to a project group of between 3-5 students. This group will be a subset of your larger discussion pod group. As a group, you will prepare a multimedia research portfolio focusing on a social media platform or network, *assigned randomly to you by me*. The finished portfolio will include:
- A **2500-word research brief** on the *organizational history, business model, and public impacts/controversies* of the platform (3 points for initial draft/10 points for finished version), including an annotated bibliography of at least 10 articles from academic journals supporting the research brief.
- A**n 8- to 10-minute video** exploring how *three or more themes* from the course modules (such as the circulation of power, disability gender and misogyny, racism and antiblackness, surveillance) are visible or expressed via the platform in question (10 points)
- A **self-assessment from each student** detailing their contribution to the project (2 points)

A more detailed assignment rubric will be available later in the semester.

Bonuses: **up to 10 points**

Throughout the semester, I will provide opportunities for students to gain extra points for work above and beyond the usual content of the course. These bonus opportunities will be available to all students, and will total 10 points over the course of the term. I will announce these opportunities periodically via email and the OWL site.

At the end of the term, point totals will be converted to letter grades according to the following scale, which corresponds to the Western marking scale (https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/general/grades_undergrad.pdf):

A+   90 – 100 points

A   80 – 89 points

B   70 – 79 points

C   60 – 69 points

D   50 – 59 points

F   below 50 points or assigned when course is dropped with academic penalty

What do these grading tiers and the point system mean for you, the student?
You have to work in the class—that's unavoidable. However, I'm interested in giving you some control over your experience of the course. Using this grade scale, you should be able to modulate the amount of work that corresponds with your course goals and bandwidth for this semester.

If you want an A+, then make sure you put together a minimum of 90 points by the end of the term. If all you want or need is a C, then make sure you get at least 60 points; it's entirely up to you. Moreover, you never have to wonder where you stand in the class—you can look at your points, look at the grade scale, and plan accordingly.

What do these grading tiers and the point system mean for me, the professor?
By simplifying evaluation scales and assigning point tiers, I'm able to focus on the important things, like designing engaging content and interacting with your ideas. It also helps me limit the most subjective dimensions of grading— dimensions that often implicitly reproduce Western gendered, racial, ethnic, class, ability or other biases. I want an A grade to be reasonably attainable by all who want to do the appropriate work; it shouldn't only be something "natural" talents or stereotypically "good" students can get, since "natural" and "good" are often just codes for certain kinds of privilege.

Detailed Weekly Description

Weekly Module Tempo:

All in-module activities, ***other than discussion pod forums*** will be open for __two weeks__, starting the Monday their corresponding module is opened to the class. **Each module will be opened to the class the week I lecture on it**; please try to do all module readings before lecture, and please try to complete module components in order.

Each week's module content will be available as of **Monday at 8am EST; each will close two week later at 9pm.** I will lecture either synchronously on Zoom or in-person from **9:30am-12:30pm every Wednesday**; **I will post lectures from online sessions to MS Stream by Wednesday afternoon at 5pm.** To access a live Zoom lecture, look for the scheduled Zoom links emailed to the class each week; to access recordings, please go to each module's page on OWL.

Please note that you should be able to complete the virtual components of this course entirely asynchronously should you wish. However, after a module closes, **it will not be possible for you to submit the assignment for that module unless under exceptional circumstances**.

Discussion pods for each module will run weekly from **Monday at 8am to the following Monday at 9pm (meaning you have approximately a week per module to participate in the online portion of discussion forums.**

All discussion prompts will be available in advance. **I strongly encourage students who have signed up as Leaders to prepare their responses before the opening of the forums each week (e.g. prepare your response the Friday prior to the forum opening).** I also encourage you to complete warmup activities (which will be brief) prior to each week's lecture if possible.

Week of January 10th
Module 1: Hello, World! **[module open January 10 – January 24]**   **3 points total**

      Warmup Activity: How are you holding up? (**1 point**)

      Lecture **[January 12]**: Introduction/Surveying the Landscape/Course Nuts and Bolts

      Discussion (VoiceThread): Introduce yourself! **[open indefinitely]**
      Introduce yourself with the following information:
- *your preferred name*
- *your preferred pronouns (only if you feel comfortable doing so)*
- *your program and year at Western*

- *the social media platform you spend the most time on, and why*

Assessment: Syllabus scavenger hunt **(1 points)**

Discussion (VoiceThread): **No discussion**

Complete module component checklist & exit ticket **(1 point)**

Week of January 17th
Module 2: Power, Online and Offline **[module open January 17-January 31]**   **3 points total**

Warmup Activity: Define "power" in your own words **(1 point)**

Read: Couldry, Nick. "Power." *Keywords for Media Studies*. Ed. Laurie Ouellette and Jonathan Gray. New York: NYU Press 2017. 145–148.

Watch: Michel Foucault on Power (1981)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ayoub1mfk5k

Read: Bucher, Tanya. 2017 "The algorithmic imaginary: exploring the ordinary affects of Facebook algorithms." *Information, Communication & Society* 20(1): 30–44.

Read: Nooney, Laine. 2021. "How the Personal Computer Broke the Human Body." *Motherboard*, May 12.
https://www.vice.com/en/article/y3dda7/how-the-personal-computer-broke-the-human-body

Lecture **[January 19]**: Some different views on power/ How does power circulate online and off?

Assessment: Writing Reflection on power in your own digital life **(1 points)**
In a one-page essay (~350 words), identify a situation in your own everyday digital life where you see power at work. Use the definitions of power covered this week to analyze how power is circulating in your chosen example, and make sure you cover the following topics: a) what relationships are involved? b) What types of power (symbolic, political, economic) are visible? c) Who benefits and in what way? d) And how do these definitions of power differ from the definition you proposed in the warm-up activity?

Discussion (VoiceThread): *Pick your discussion focus* **[forum open January 17-January 24]**
Each student should pick (and list) five social media accounts they follow regularly (as per instructions for Discussion Pods above). Tell your fellow pod-mates what interests you about these accounts, and how you expect them to potentially relate to the themes of the course.

Complete module component checklist & exit ticket **(1 point)**

Week of January 24th
Module 3: History & Political Economy of Platforms **[module open January 24-February 7]**   **3 points total**

Read: Standage, Tom. 2013. "The Thrill Electric," from *The Victorian Internet* (pp. 57-73). New York: Bloomsbury.

Read: Gillespie, Tarleton. 2015. "Platforms Intervene." *Social Media + Society* 1.1, 1–2.

Read: Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong and Jorge Cotte. "Reimagining Networks: An interview with Wendy Hui Kyong Chun." *The New Inquiry*, 12 May 2020. https://thenewinquiry.com/reimagining-networks/

Read: Stark, Luke, and Kate Crawford. 2014. "The Conservatism of Emoji." *The New Inquiry,* August 20.
https://thenewinquiry.com/the-conservatism-of-emoji/

Lecture **[January 26]**: A brief history of "social media"/how platforms intervene

Activity: Emoji Design Challenge **(2 points)**

Discussion (VoiceThread): What's your attention worth? **[forum open January 24-January 31]**
Do the accounts you've chosen as a focus have a business model? If so, what is it? And how do you think social media platforms could change their business models to better balance preserving your attention and serving the public good?

Complete module component checklist & exit ticket **(1 point)**

Week of January 31st
Module 4: Surveillance, Propaganda & Misinformation **[module open January 31-February 14]**   **3 points total**

Read: "The Pandemic Is No Excuse to Surveil Students" by Zeynep Tufekci, *The Atlantic* (4 September 2020)
https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2020/09/pandemic-no-excuse-colleges-surveil-students/616015/

Read: Jack, Caroline. 2017. *Lexicon of Lies: Terms for Problematic Information*. New York: Data & Society Research Institute. https://datasociety.net/pubs/oh/DataAndSociety_LexiconofLies.pdf

Read: Sauter, Molly. 2017, May 15. "The Apophenic Machine." *Real Life*. https://reallifemag.com/the-apophenic-machine/

Read: "All of YouTube, Not Just the Algorithm, is a Far-Right Propaganda Machine" by Becca Lewis, *FWWD* (8 January 2020)
https://ffwd.medium.com/all-of-youtube-not-just-the-algorithm-is-a-far-right-propaganda-machine-29b07b12430

Lecture [**February 2**]: A short history of surveillance/Propaganda goes digital

Discussion: *Black Mirror* Writer's Room Brainstorming **[forum open January 31-February 7]**
Pitch your idea for your assignment to your fellow pod-mates and provide feedback on the ideas of others. What makes a new technology creepy, compelling, or both? And is creepiness always a sign a new technology is a potential problem?

Activity: *Black Mirror* Writer's Room Exercise **(2 points)**
The Netflix show Black Mirror imagines dystopian future technologies *just* fictional enough to creep us out and make us think critically about the role of these technologies in our lives. The University of Colorado-Boulder's Prof. Casey Fiesler has developed an assignment to help students use science fiction to explore different possible futures: the "Black Mirror Writer's Room" (you can learn more at https://howwegettonext.com/the-black-mirror-writers-room-teaching-technology-ethics-through-speculation-f1a9e2deccf4). Create your own ~350-word synopsis of a possible Black Mirror episode about a possible surveillance technology AND a brief postscript describing how we can avoid your scenario actually coming to pass.

Complete module component checklist & exit ticket **(1 point)**

Week of February 7th
Module 5: Platform Racism & Anti-Blackness **[module open February 7-February 21]**   **2 points total**
Warmup Activity: Short response **(1 point)**

Read: "Preface" and "Introduction" (pp. ix-48) in Benjamin, Ruha, *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2019.
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Read: McIlwain, Charlton. 2020, August 29. "Racism Cannot Be Reduced to Mere Computation." *Slate*.

https://slate.com/technology/2020/08/algorithms-artificial-intelligence-racism-reparations-history.html

Read: Merrill, Jeremy B. 2020, August 25. Does Facebook Still Sell Discriminatory Ads? *The Markup*. https://themarkup.org/ask-the-markup/2020/08/25/does-facebook-still-sell-discriminatory-ads

Read: "We Need to Talk About Digital Blackface in Reaction GIFs" by Lauren Michele Jackson, *Teen Vogue* (2 August 2017) https://www.teenvogue.com/story/digital-blackface-reaction-gifs

Lecture **[February 9]**: Race and/as technology/Race and representation on social media/Finding and using academic sources

Discussion (VoiceThread): Racism Online and Off **[forum open February 7-February 14]**
In North America, we live in a society shaped by racism and white supremacy, online and off. How, if at all, did the accounts you follow respond to the #BlackLivesMatter protests of 2020? How did those responses differ? Were there accounts you felt responded badly?

Complete module component checklist & exit ticket **(1 point)**

Week of February 14th
Module 6: Digital Colonialism **[module open February 14-March 7]**   **2 points total**

   Warmup Activity: Short response **(1 point)**

   Read: Birhane, Abeba. 2019, July 18. "The Algorithmic Colonization of Africa." *Real Life*. https://reallifemag.com/the-algorithmic-colonization-of-africa/

   Watch: Kimberly TallBear on Decolonizing Science and Technology
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlK1QoM_qAo

   Read: Nakamura, L. (2014). Indigenous Circuits: Navajo Women and the Racialization of Early Electronic Manufacture. *American Quarterly*, *66*(4), 919–941. http://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2014.0070

   Lecture **[February 16]**: Situating colonialism/digital colonialism

   Activity: ***Social Media Self-Audit due Friday, February 18**

   Discussion (*VoiceThread*): *An anti-colonial Internet?* **[forum open February 14-March 7]**
   Do the accounts you've chosen ever engage with colonialism in any form, including settler colonialism? If so, what do they say? Is it possible to decolonize the Internet? And if not, how can it be made more anti-colonial?

   Complete module component checklist & exit ticket **(1 point)**

Week of February 21st
Spring Reading Week

Week of February 28th
Module 7: Gender & Misogyny Online **[module open February 28-March 14]**   **2 points total**

   Warmup Activity: Reflection on course thus far **(1 point)**

   Read: Gill, Rosalind. 2020. "Gender." In *Keywords for Media Studies*, 77–81. New York: NYU Press.

   Read: Sharma, Sarah. 2018, June 19. "Going to Work in Mommy's Basement." *Boston Review*.
   http://bostonreview.net/gender-sexuality/sarah-sharma-going-work-mommys-basement

Read: Brewer, Kirstie. 2017, August 10. How the tech industry wrote women out of history. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/careers/2017/aug/10/how-the-tech-industry-wrote-women-out-of-history

Watch: *#Tropes vs Women in Video Games,* Damsels in Distress Part 1 by Anita Sarkeesian https://feministfrequency.com/video/damsel-in-distress-part-1/

Lecture **[March 2]**: The history of gender and technology/misogyny online

Discussion (VoiceThread): Media representation and misogyny **[forum open February 28-March 7]**
Representations of women across media have come a long way, but not far enough. Describe a nuanced female character in any medium you admire and say why. How could these representations be further improved to combat misogyny? And do any of the accounts you've chosen address misogyny as a problem?

Complete module component checklist & exit ticket **(1 point)**

Week of March 7th
Module 8: Sexuality, Homophobia, and Transphobia **[module open March 7-March 21]**   **2 points total**

   Warmup Activity: Short reflection **(1 point)**

   Read: Hicks, Marie. 2019. "Hacking the Cis-Tem." *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing* 41 (1). IEEE: 20–33.

   Watch: Queer Tropes vs Video Games, *Feminist Frequency*. https://feministfrequency.com/series/queer-tropes/

   Read: Romano, Aja. 2019, December 19. "J.K. Rowling's latest tweet seems like transphobic BS. Her fans are heartbroken." *Vox.* https://www.vox.com/culture/2019/12/19/21029852/jk-rowling-terf-transphobia-history-timeline

   Lecture **[March 9]**: Queer cultures online

   Discussion (VoiceThread): Sex panic? **[forum open March 7-March 14]**

   Complete module component checklist & exit ticket **(1 point)**

Week of March 14th
Module 9: Disability, Ableism & Social Media **[module open March 14 – March 28]**   **2 points total**

   Read: Couser, G Thomas. "Illness." *Keywords for Disability Studies*. Ed. Rachel Adams, Benjamin Reiss, and David Serlin. New York: NYU Press, 2015. 105–107.

   Warmup activity: Disability in your life **(1 point)**

   Read: Blake, Melissa. 2020, August 26. "A Message To TikTok Parents Who Use My Face To Make Their Kids Cry", *refinery29* (26 August 2020) https://www.refinery29.com/en-ca/2020/08/9989497/new-teacher-challenge

   Read: "University Instructional Design" Center for Teaching and Learning, Western University. https://teaching.uwo.ca/curriculum/coursedesign/uid.html

   Read: Wong, Alice. 2019. "The Rise and Fall of the Plastic Straw: Sucking in Crip Defiance" *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience 5*(1), 1-12.

   Lecture **[March 16]**: Disability Studies meets media Studies/Reimagining Universal Design

Discussion (VoiceThread): Social media and disability **[forum open March 14-March 21]**
In what ways are disability and impairment visible in the accounts you've chosen? What narratives about disability, if any, occur frequently? How are these social media channels accesible? How are they not?

Complete module component checklist & exit ticket **(1 point)**

*Research Portfolio Research Brief Draft Due Friday, 18th

Week of March 21st
Module 10: Games, Gamification, & Virtual Reality **[module open March 21-April 4]**   **2 points total**

Warmup activity: **(1 point)**

Read: Gershon, Ilana. 2015. "What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Animation." *Social Media + Society* 1 (1): 1–2. doi:10.1177/2056305115578143.

Read: Zuckerman, Ethan. 2021. "The Metaverse Was Always Terrible." *The Atlantic*, October 29. https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2021/10/facebook-metaverse-was-always-terrible/620546/

Read: Bogost, Ian. 2011. Persuasive Games: Exploitationware. *Gamasutra,* May 3. https://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/6366/persuasive_games_exploitationware.php

Lecture **[March 23]**: Games invade life/life invades games/animation invades both

Discussion (VoiceThread): *Gamic life* **[forum open March 21-March 28]**
Games have been a major way for people to connect during the pandemic. Are any of your chosen accounts devoted to gaming? If so, which? How does video game content appear in your everyday social media life?

Complete module component checklist & exit ticket **(1 point)**

Week of March 28th
Module 11: We're All Influencers Now **[module open March 28-April 11]**   **4 points total**

Read: Cotter, Kelley. 2018. "Playing the Visibility Game: How Digital Influencers and Algorithms Negotiate Influence on Instagram." *New Media & Society* 21.4: 895–913.

Read: Hill, Kashmir. 2020, July 31. "I Tried to Live Without the Tech Giants. It Was Impossible." *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/31/technology/blocking-the-tech-giants.html

Read: Bishop, Katie. 2020, May 2. "The pandemic and the influencer: will the lifestyle survive coronavirus?" *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/media/2020/may/02/influencers-coronavirus-future-income-marketing-lifestyle

Lecture **[March 30]**: Famous for fifteen seconds/Intersectionality and influence

Activity: TikTok PSA **(3 points)**

Discussion (VoiceThread): Influencers and Us **[forum open March 28-April 4]**
Are you an influencer? Are the accounts you've chosen? What are your/their strategies for gaining and maintaining influence? Is there money involved? How do you/they fit into the business models of platforms? How do you/they seek to subvert those business models?

Complete module component checklist & exit ticket **(1 point)**

Week of April 4th
Module 9: Gig Work **[module open April 4-April 8]**   **2 points total**

Warmup activity: Final course feedback **(1 point)**

Read: Ticona, Julia. 2017, June 14. "The Future of Work: The Digital Hustle." *Pacific Standard*. https://psmag.com/economics/the-future-of-work-the-digital-hustle

Read: Irani, Lilly. 2015, January 15. "Justice for 'data janitors.'" *Public Books.* https://www.publicbooks.org/justice-for-data-janitors/

Read: Gray, Mary L. 2019, May 1. "The hidden global workforce that is still fighting for an eight-hour workday." *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/05/01/hidden-global-workforce-that-is-still-fighting-an-eight-hour-workday/

Read: Sinders, Caroline and Cade Diehm. 2020. ""Technically" Responsible: The essential, precarious workforce that powers A.I." *Feminist Data Set Project*. http://trk.network/essay

Lecture **[April 6]**: Social media, network life, and gig work

Discussion (VoiceThread): **No discussion**

Complete module component checklist & exit ticket **(1 point)**

*Research Portfolio Final Materials Due by Friday April 8.

Etiquette & Course Conduct

In this course, I'd like you to strive to embody Western's equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) principles. Western's institutional commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) supports the University's mandate as a research-intensive institution of higher learning, an employer of choice and a community leader. The University is enriched by the diversity of our campus community and strengthened by our shared commitment to equity and inclusion. Black Lives Matter, as do the lives and experiences of Indigenous peoples, other visible minorities, and all underrepresented and equity-seeking groups*. Your conduct in this course should be guided by the principles below:

Equity – We value equity of access and opportunity for members of underrepresented and equity-seeking groups*. We take action to identify and address barriers to the full participation of members of these groups at the University.

Diversity – We value and respect the diversity of our campus community. We recognize the important contributions that diverse perspectives and lived experiences bring to Western's learning, teaching, working and research environments.

Inclusion – We value inclusion and active engagement with and across diverse communities in all aspects of university life. We foster a welcoming campus community where everyone feels respected, valued and included.

*Members of underrepresented or equity-seeking groups includes, but may not be limited to, women, Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Inuit and Métis), persons with disabilities, members of racialized groups and members of LGBTQ2+ communities. In recognition that all individuals have multiple aspects of identity, an intersectional lens will also be used when assessing barriers and/or developing policies/programs at the University.

Your goal is full attendance, attention, participation, listening and reading all of required texts. That said, while I expect the very best you can give, this semester is unlike many others, and goals are always aspirational. Do your best, but don't beat yourself up when (as we all do) it feels to you as if you come up short.

Disagreements are expected, but while arguments are not contests, they often have high stakes (sometimes invisible to you, but highly compelling to others – see the EDI principles above). Personal attacks, bullying, or intimidation are not acceptable under any circumstance. Please keep nitpicking to a minimum; all questions, whether basic or advance, are valuable. Remember, you are free to change your mind at any time -- as are others.

Do not engage in "seek and destroy" criticism of others' ideas, or of ideas in the readings. Critique is a powerful tool and can do damage. If you have something critical to say about a reading, please be ready to explain how the piece could be improved; if you disagree with the premise of a piece, read to understand what motivates the argument -- without knowing your adversary, how can you defeat it?

The testimony of personal experience is a necessary and often valuable part of our intellectual grounding and trajectory. However, like critique, testimony is also a powerful tool that can cut both ways. Please be thoughtful about mobilizing personal experience in class. Ask yourself if the testimony is relevant, and safe for you to share; ask yourself too if you are prepared to seriously consider others' interpretations of your experience if they differ from your own? Anecdotes are a different kind of evidence that systematically collected scholarly data, and useful (or harmful) in different ways.

For more information on Western's policies around academic integrity, including plagiarism, please visit https://teaching.uwo.ca/teaching/assessing/academic-integrity.html

Course Materials & Grading Policy
All course materials will be available via OWL, including short video lectures, accessible PDFs, links to external online content, discussion fora, and text-based assignment prompts.

There are no late penalties for this course, other than the polices regarding course modules and points already described.

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, 2022. 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.

The final date to drop this course without academic penalty is **March 14, 2022**.

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.~~

Statement on the Use of Zoom Recording

Class Zoom sessions for this course will be recorded for accessibility and remote learning purposes. 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 sessions themselves, except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor.

Land Acknowledgment
We acknowledge that Western University's buildings are located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Attawandaron peoples, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present, and future, and acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced removal from this territory. This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous peoples (e.g. First Nations, Métis and Inuit) whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors of our society, and we honor and respect the Indigenous communities still living on and connected to this land by striving for restorative justice for First Nations peoples, and for all.

Course Credits
This syllabus is grounded in part on materials developed by Drs. Gabriella Coleman of McGill University, Casey Fiesler of the University of Colorado-Boulder, Anna Lauren Hoffmann of the University of Washington, Jonathan Sterne of McGill University, and M. Sauter of the University of Maryland.

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.