

Winter 2022

Office Hours: Tuesday 10:00 am - 12:00 pm (via Zoom)

* These hours may be subject to change *

Lecture: Weekly, available on OWL course website

MIT 3100g

Dr. James R. Compton

jcompto3@uwo.ca

**UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
Faculty of Information and Media Studies**

Information and the Public Sphere

This course addresses a variety of issues pertaining to a public sphere for free and democratic flows of information. Its starting point is the influential philosophical and sociological work of Jürgen Habermas. Habermas' theory of the public sphere and his critics are used to frame an investigation into how information circuits influence the production, organization, and dissemination of information, whether print, digital, electronic, audio or visual. How do such circuits configure public access, knowledge production, and cultural representations?

The objectives of MIT 3100 are to:

- 1) Introduce students to theories of, and debates about, the concept of the "public sphere."
- 2) To relate these ideas to concrete institutions, practices and controversies, in such fields as: a) public sector media; b) library & information science; c) journalism.

Course Information

Weekly in-class Lectures.

Technology requirements for the course include: a computer with Internet access in order to use OWL website.

The course OWL site will include all course information, including readings.

TA Consulting Hours

TBD

Assignments:

Research Term paper 8-10 double-spaced pages:	35%	Due Mar 21
Term Paper Proposal (250-500 words):	5%	Due Jan 31
Take-home Mid-term:	25%	Feb 14 – Due Feb 15
Take-home Exam:	35%	Mar 28 – Due April 4

Grading:

The **term paper, term paper proposal, mid-term** and **final** will be graded according to the following criteria:

- use of appropriate content (includes research for term paper)
- validity and coherence of criticism and argument
- logical organization
- literacy (grammar, spelling, style)

*** All assignments and tests are to be submitted in the course OWL drop box.**

Required Texts:

Available on Owl course website.

IMPORTANT

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>.

Some Notes and Advice

(1) Given the tight deadlines for submitting grades your assignments must be submitted on time. **Late assignments will not be accepted without penalty without documented medical, legal or similar reason.** Please take careful note of the relevant deadlines. For UWO policy on accommodation for medical illness, see: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medical.pdf>

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling Office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. It will be the Dean's Office that will determine if accommodation is warranted.

Late assignments without documented excuses **will lose 2% of the assignment mark per day late** and will not be accepted more than one week late. Papers to be submitted via OWL.

(2) As a protection against misplacement of term papers, or should problems of authorship and acknowledgement arise, you are strongly advised to **retain your research notes and an extra copy (or computer file) of your assignments** until final grades have been submitted.

(4) **Plagiarism:** Students must write their essays and 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 proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. **Plagiarism includes submitting the same assignment in two separate courses.** Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar). The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking. **Claims of ignorance will not be accepted as an excuse.** The instructor will vigorously pursue *all* cases of plagiarism in accordance with university regulations. Penalties for plagiarism include expulsion from the university.

(5) In addition, even if they may not strictly constitute intellectual dishonesty, **unethical research procedures** (eg. violating the confidentiality of interviews, or stealing or defacing library material) **could adversely affect your mark.** See the instructor if you are at all in doubt.

(6) Your formal **written assignments should each be typed** or word-processed, double-spaced, using acceptable academic style for footnotes and bibliography. Students should follow communication studies social science parenthetical styles and layout. APA and other so-called “Harvard” styles are preferred. Here is a link to an APA style crib sheet: <https://www.ukh.edu.krd/library/files/Citation%20-%20APA%20280816.pdf>

Here is another word of caution: **Wikipedia and similar online Websites do not constitute scholarly sources.** Do **not** rely on them. They may be used for secondary supporting citations. Read a book or journal article. Note: Refereed academic journals available online are fine.

(7) The FIMS expects that the grades awarded in this course will bear some reasonable relation to established university-wide practices with respect to both levels and distribution of grades.

(8) **Email:** I do not respond immediately to email. I will do my best to respond within 24 hours.

(9) **Laptops & Cell phones:** The use of electronic wireless devices in the classroom is severely frowned upon. Web surfing and texting are disruptive and disrespectful of your fellow students who wish to learn. Except under circumstances documented by the office for students with disabilities, **students are not permitted to use laptops in class.** Note taking on your laptop is not permitted in lectures unless there is a documented medical necessity. I have instituted this regrettable policy because quite often, laptops are now being used for considerably more than note taking in class. Computer-based activities other than note taking distract those around you and display, inadvertently or otherwise, a lack of respect for fellow students inappropriate to university settings. Students can use laptops when making class presentations. Students are not permitted to videotape lectures. Students are permitted to make audio recordings of lectures only with the permission of the instructor. Please turn off your phone.

(10) **Note sharing Websites:** I do not authorize you to upload notes from my lectures to note-sharing websites, such as OneClass or Course Hero. Nor do I authorize you to record my weekly lectures. I reserve copyright to all lecture material.

11) Finally, the success of the course will depend, in no small part, on the ability of students to complete the required readings for each week. The theoretical nature of much of the material means it will **be extremely difficult to play catch-up if students skip readings. Consider yourself warned.**

COURSE OVERVIEW

PART I: Theoretical Framework(s)

Wk 1 **Course Intro - The Concept of the Public Sphere & the Critique of Instrumental Reason**
Jan. 10

Readings: None

Wk 2 **The Public Sphere – Defining the Location of Politics**
Jan. 17

Readings: Fraser, Nancy (1990) “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy,” *Social Text*, 25/26, pp. 56-80. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/466240>.

Thompson, John (1993) “The Theory of the Public Sphere,” *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol.

10 (3), pp. 173-189.

Ferree, Myra Marx, William A. Gamson, Jürgen Gerhards, and Dieter Rucht (2002) "Four models of the public sphere in modern democracies," *Theory & Society*, 31 (3), pp. 289-324.

PART II: Historical Development of the Mediated Public Sphere

Wk 3 Space, Time, and the Public Sphere

Jan. 24

Readings: Robins, Kevin and Frank Webster (1999) "The Cybernetic Imagination of Capitalism," in Kevin Robins and Frank Webster, *Times of the Technoculture: from the information society to the virtual life*, London: Routledge, pp. 111-130.

Rosa, Harmut (2005) "The Speed of Global Flows and the Pace of Democratic Politics," *New Political Science*, 27(4), pp. 445-459.

Thompson, John B. (2020) "Mediated Interaction in the Digital Age." *Theory, Culture & Society* 37(1): 3-28.

Wk 4 System World and the Public Sphere

Jan. 31

(Term Paper Proposals Due 9:30 am)

Readings: Ketchum, Cheri (2004) "If a Radical Screams in the Forest, Will She be Heard?: The Hegemony of Instrumental Rationality," *Journalism*, 5(1), pp. 31-49.

Habermas, Jürgen (2006) "Political Communication in Media Society: Does Democracy Still Enjoy an Epistemic Dimension? The Impact of Normative Theory on Empirical Research," *Communication Theory*, 16 (4) pp. 411-426.

Delacourt, Susan (2013) "Intro: Tim Horton's Voters," & "Chap. 1: Let's Get Canada Shopping," in *Shopping for Votes: How politicians choose us and we choose them*, Madeira Park, BC: Douglas & McIntyre. ISBN: 9781926812939

Wk 5 Legitimation Crisis & the Public Sphere

Feb. 7

Readings: Fraser, Nancy (2015) "Legitimation Crisis? On the Political Contradictions of Financialized Capitalism," *Critical Historical Studies*, Fall, 2 (2) pp. 157-189.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/683054>

Bennett, W. Lance and Barbara Pfetsch (2018) "Rethinking Political Communication in a Time of Disrupted Public Spheres," *Journal of Communication*, 68 (2) 243-253

Comor, Edward (2015) "Hegemony," for *The International Encyclopedia of Political Communication*. Gianpietro Mazzoleni et al. eds. Boston: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 463-470.

Wk 6
Feb. 14

Take-home Midterm, Feb 14 – due Feb 15 in Drop Box 9:30 am

Readings: None

READING WEEK – FEBRUARY 19-27

PART III : Mediated Discourse, Culture and the Public Sphere

Wk 7 The Internet as a Public Sphere - Networked Politics

Feb. 28

Readings: Bimber, Bruce and Homero Gil de Zúñiga (2020) “The Unedited Public Sphere,” *New Media & Society*, 22 (4) 700-715.

Curran, James (2012) “Reinterpreting the Internet,” in *Misunderstanding the Internet*, James Curran, Natalie Fenton and Des Freedman eds., New York: Routledge, pp. 3-33. ISBN: 9780415579582

Hindman, Matthew (2018) “The Nature of the Internet,” in *The Internet Trap: How Digital Economy Builds Monopolies and Undermines Democracy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chap. 8 pp. 162-180. ISBN: 978-0-691-15926-3

Wk 8 Spinning the Public Sphere – Public Opinion and Public Relations

Mar. 7

Readings: Bennett, W. Lance and Steven Livingston (2018) “The disinformation order: Disruptive communication and the decline of democratic institutions.” *European Journal of Communication*, 33, (2): 122 -139.

Sussman, Gerald (2011) "The Propaganda Society," in Gerald Sussman ed. *The Propaganda Society: Promotional culture & politics in global context*, New York: Peter Lang, pp. 1-21. ISBN 978-1-4331-0996-6

Caplan, Robyn and danah boyd (2018) “Who’s Playing Who? Media Manipulation in an Era of Trump,” in Pablo J. Boczkowski and Zizi Papacharissi (Eds.) *Trump and the Media*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. pp. 49-57.

Wk 9 Popular Culture and the Public Sphere I – Critiquing & Championing the Popular

Mar. 14

Readings: Lunt, Peter & Paul Stenner (2005) "The Jerry Springer Show as an emotional public sphere" *Media, Culture & Society*, 27(1) 59-81.

Alexander, Jeffrey and Ronald Jacobs (1998) “Mass Communication, Ritual and Civil Society,” in Tamar Liebes and James Curran, eds. *Media, Ritual and Identity*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 23–41.

Flew, Terry and Petros Iosifidis (2020) Populism, Globalisation and Social Media,” *The*

International Communications Gazette, 81 (1), pp. 7-25.

Wk 10 Popular Culture and the Public Sphere II – Mediated Political Scandals

Mar. 21

*** Term Paper DUE Mar. 21 @ 9:30 am ***

Readings: Thompson, John B. (2000) *Political Scandal: power and visibility in the media age*, Cambridge: Polity Press, Chap. 4, pp. 90-118. ISBN: 0745625509

Entman, Robert M. (2012) *Scandal and Silence: Media responses to presidential misconduct*, Cambridge, UK: Polity, pp. 18-47. ISBN: 9780745647630

Wk 11 REVIEW & Take-Home Final

Mar. 28

*** Final DUE April 4 9:30 am ***

**Notes from the Dean's Office of the
Faculty of Information and Media Studies**

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/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and 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 proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

The Academic Handbook defines plagiarism as “The act or an instance of copying or stealing another’s words or ideas and attributing them as one’s own.” Excerpted from Black’s Law Dictionary, West Group, 1999, 7th ed., p. 1170. (see [Academic Handbook, Rights and Responsibilities, Scholastic Discipline - Undergrad](#)) Plagiarism can apply to any type of academic assignment, including essays, labs, journals, computer projects, media projects etc.

Academic Accommodation

If you are in the MIT program but registered in another faculty or at an affiliated university college, you should consult with the Academic Counselling Office in your home faculty for instructions.

Medical Accommodation

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Illness may be acute (short term), or it may be chronic (long

term), or chronic with acute episodes. The University further recognizes that medical situations are deeply personal and respects the need for privacy and confidentiality in these matters. However, in order to ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet his/her academic responsibilities.

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the appropriate Dean's Office (the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration/home Faculty) together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. These documents will be retained in the student's file, and will be held in confidence in accordance with the University's [Official Student Record Information Privacy Policy](#). Once the petition and supporting documents have been received and assessed, appropriate academic accommodation shall be determined by the Dean's Office in consultation with the student's instructor(s). Academic accommodation may include extension of deadlines, waiver of attendance requirements for classes/labs/tutorials, arranging Special Exams or Incompletes, re-weighting course requirements, or granting late withdrawals without academic penalty. Academic accommodation shall be granted only where the documentation indicates that the onset, duration and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete his/her academic responsibilities. (Note – it will not be sufficient to provide documentation indicating simply that the student “was seen for a medical reason” or “was ill.”)

Whenever possible, students who require academic accommodation should provide notification and documentation in advance of due dates, examinations, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and their Academic Counselling office in a timely manner.

Documentation from Family Physicians and Walk-In Clinics

A UWO Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is required where a student is seeking academic accommodation. This documentation should be obtained at the time of the initial consultation with the physician or walk-in clinic. An SMC can be downloaded under the Medical Documentation heading of the following website: <https://student.uwo.ca/>. Hard copies are available from Academic Counselling in the Faculties.

Documentation from Student Health Services

Students obtaining documentation from Student Health Services should sign a “release of information.” This form authorizes Student Health Services to provide information to the student's home Faculty. Release of information forms are available from, and can be arranged through, the student's home Faculty Academic Counselling service.

Documentation from Hospital Urgent Care Centres or Emergency Departments

Students should request that an SMC be filled out. Students may bring this form with them, or request alternative Emergency Department documentation. Documentation should be secured at the time of the initial visit to the Emergency Department. Where it is not possible for a student to have an SMC completed by the attending physician, the student must request documentation sufficient to demonstrate that his/her ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities was seriously affected.

Accommodation by Instructor for work worth less than 10% of the overall grade in a course

Instructors are encouraged, in the first instance, to arrange participation requirements and multiple small assignments in such a way as to allow students some flexibility.

A student seeking academic accommodation for any work worth less than 10% must contact the instructor or follow the appropriate Department or course specific instructions provided on the course outline.

In arranging accommodation, instructors will use good judgment and ensure fair treatment for all students. Instructors must indicate on the course outline how they will be dealing with work worth less than 10% of the total course grade. In particular, instructors must indicate whether medical documentation will be required for absences, late assignments or essays, missed tests, laboratory experiments or tutorials, etc. Where medical documentation is required, such documentation must be submitted by the student directly to the appropriate Faculty Dean's office, and it will be the Dean's office that will make the determination whether accommodation is warranted. Given the University's Official Student Record Information Privacy Policy, instructors may not collect medical documentation.

In all cases where accommodation is being sought for work totalling 10% or more of the final grade in a course, students will be directed to the appropriate Faculty Dean's office.

Students who have been denied accommodation by an instructor may appeal this decision to the appropriate Faculty Dean's office but will be required to present appropriate documentation.

Compassionate Accommodation

Academic accommodation (extensions, makeup tests and exams, additional assignments etc.) may be given to students on compassionate grounds. The situations for which compassionate accommodation can be given must be serious, including significant events such as death in the immediate family, trauma (fire, robbery, harassment, muggings, car accidents, etc.) or emergency situations. Documentation is required.

If a member of your immediate family is seriously ill, obtain a medical certificate from the family member's physician and submit the documentation to your Academic Counsellor.

If you have been involved in a severe accident, fire or some other exceptional crises, obtain a copy of the police report or be prepared to provide the necessary documentation upon request.

Bereavement

Generally, for deaths within a student's immediate family (parents, guardians, caregivers, siblings, spouses), bereavement leave is granted, upon provision of documentation.

For deaths within a student's extended family, academic accommodation is given for one to three days, upon provision of documentation.

Students seeking additional bereavement leave for religious or other reasons should contact their Academic Counsellors, and provide valid documentation.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays (see the [Multi-Faith Calendar of Religious Accommodation](#)), 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. Further specific information is given in the Western Academic Calendar.

Absences

If you have missed a lecture or lab due for a legitimate reason, check the course outline for the instructor's attendance policy and if necessary, notify him/her of your absence. If you have missed several weeks of lectures or have fallen behind in your coursework, discuss your situation with your instructor. If you would like to discuss your workload, please make an appointment to speak with an Academic Counsellor in FIMS.

Support Services

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.

Other support services on campus:

Office of the Registrar: www.registrar.uwo.ca

Student Development Centre: www.sdc.uwo.ca

Psychological Services: www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych

Services for Students with Disabilities: www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd

Accessibility Information: www.accessibility.uwo.ca/

Writing Support Centre: www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing

Learning Skills Services: www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning

Indigenous Services: indigenous.uwo.ca/

International and Exchange Student Centre: www.sdc.uwo.ca/int

Career Centre at Western: www.success.uwo.ca/careers/

FIMS Grading Policy

Elective courses and 4th year seminars have no recommended course averages.

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.