

MIT 3376G – Cyber-Life – Winter 2022

Western University – Media, Information, and Technoculture MIT 3376G – Cyber-Life: Communication in the Digital Age

Course Information

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Martin	Email: jmart9@uwo.ca
Class hours and location:	Online
Office hours and location:	Online, by appointment

Course Description

What kinds of technologies do we use to communicate with other people, and where are they heading in the future? How do digital technologies change the ways we communicate with each other? What kind of benefits do we gain from digital communication? What are the issues that we face using these technologies? This course seeks to look at these questions and serves as an exploration of the importance of electronic communications and learning technologies to society, politics and culture. By examining a variety of related topics – including power, privacy, equity, access, gender, emergent cultures, and identity – and engaging in activities and discussion, we will become familiar with and critically consider the implications of digital communication in contemporary society.

Course Objectives

Students who complete this course will be able to:

1. Explain the evolution of digital media to present day and its main features over time.
2. Evaluate the effects of digital technology on society and culture including power, privacy, equity, access, gender, emergent cultures, and identity.
3. Analyse the uses and implications of specific communication technologies and platforms.
4. Compare the benefits and challenges associated with the current digital communication landscape.

Course Materials

This course does not have a printed textbook. All readings to be used for personal study and review are available online through a direct link provided in the syllabus and in each week's lesson materials. Open access articles should open directly while articles available from Western's libraries will require a proxy login using a Western username and password. All lecture videos and other weekly materials will be available in the OWL course site.

Methods of Evaluation

Critical analysis – 20%

To consider the implications of digital communications and the role they play in our lives, students will complete a critical analysis of a technology, application, or activity using course materials. The analysis should be five to eight double-spaced pages and will be evaluated based on the level of critical analysis, integration of current and previous course material, and writing quality. Further details regarding expectations will be made available through OWL. The critical analysis can be submitted up to Sunday, February 13, at 11:59 pm.

Midterm Exam – 25%

Students will write a take-home midterm exam demonstrating comprehension, synthesis, and application of the course materials. The midterm will be essay-based and will be focused only on course materials covered to the date of the exam. It will be available through OWL on Monday, February 28 at 8 am and will be due on Sunday, March 6 by 11:59 pm.

Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography – 10%

Students will choose a topic related to digital communication for their major paper and start identifying useful, relevant sources to support their work. In a 500 to 750 word abstract, students will describe their topic and research question, detail their argument, indicate potential conclusions, and explain why this topic is important to address. Each proposal will also include an annotated bibliography of at least five sources. Each source should include a paragraph about the usefulness of each text and how it relates to the research. Further details regarding expectations will be made available through OWL. The proposal and annotated bibliography can be submitted up to Sunday, March 13 at 11:59 pm.

Major Paper – 30%

For the final assignment, students will produce a 10 to 12 page double-spaced argumentative research paper or a plan for a digital communication intervention. This assignment is intended to evaluate the ability to construct a focused, critical argument or plan related to a course topic and to argue, research, and support ideas and claims effectively using relevant academic sources. Further details regarding expectations will be made available through OWL along with suggested topics. The major paper can be submitted up to Friday, April 8 by 11:59 pm.

Discussion – 15%

Teaching methods used in this course incorporate activity and class contributions. To help think through and apply class ideas to their interests and experience, students will respond to weekly prompts in the class discussion forum and will be evaluated on the quantity and quality of contributions. To help keep discussions timely, all discussion threads will close two weeks after they open. Participation can also include submission of relevant articles, images, or videos. Further details regarding expectations will be made available through OWL.

Course Schedule

Week 1 – January 10 – course welcome and introduction

Topics: What is this course about?
What will we be looking at and doing across the semester?
How is the course structured?

Due: Discussion

Week 2 – January 17 – digital culture, participation, and user agency

Topics: How do digital communications tools build on existing media and to what ends?
What do digital communications tools let us do and how do they restrict us?
How do different tools and communication practices enable or restrict user agency and participation?
How do users find alternatives or make their own content and meanings?

Due: Discussion

Required readings: Bolter, J.D. (2000). Remediation and the Desire for Immediacy. *Convergence*, 6(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/135485650000600107>

Access link: <https://journals-sagepub-com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/doi/pdf/10.1177/135485650000600107>

Vesnić-Alujević, L., & Murru, M. F. (2016). Digital audiences' disempowerment: Participation or free labour. *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*, 13(1), 422-430.

Access link: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Lucia-Vesnic-Alujevic/publication/303438089_Digital_audiences'_disempowerment_Participation_or_free_labour/links/5742fecd08aea45ee84a75e0/Digital-audiences-disempowerment-Participation-or-free-labour.pdf

Optional readings: van Dijck, J. (2009). Users like you? Theorizing agency in user-generated content. *Media Culture Society*, 31(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443708098245>

Access link: <https://journals-sagepub-com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/doi/pdf/10.1177/0163443708098245>

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Week 3 – January 24 – access and the digital divide

Topics: What does the digital divide look like historically and currently?
Who can access digital tools and infrastructure and who can't?
What limits people's access to digital communication?
What challenges do people face when they don't have adequate access?
What kinds of intersectionality exist around access and the digital divide?

Due: Discussion

Required readings: Robinson, L., Schulz, J., Blank, G., Ragnedda, M., Ono, H., Hogan, B., Mesch, G. S., Cotten, S. R., Kretchmer, S. B., Hale, T. M., Drabowicz, T., Yan, P., Wellman, B., Harper, M.-G., Quan-Haase, A., Dunn, H. S., Casilli, A. A., Tubaro, P., Carvath, R., Chen, W., Wiest, J. B., Dodel, M., Stern, M. J., Ball, C., Huang, K.-T., & Khilnani, A. (2020). Digital inequalities 2.0: Legacy inequalities in the information age. *First Monday*, 25(7).
<https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v25i7.10842>
Access link: <https://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/10842/9561>

Robinson, L., Schulz, J., Dunn, H. S., Casilli, A. A., Tubaro, P., Carvath, R., Chen, W., Wiest, J. B., Dodel, M., Stern, M. J., Ball, C., Huang, K.-T., Blank, G., Ragnedda, M., Ono, H., Hogan, B., Mesch, G. S., Cotten, S. R., Kretchmer, S. B., Hale, T. M., Drabowicz, T., Yan, P., Wellman, B., Harper, M.-G., Quan-Haase, A., & Khilnani, A. (2020). Digital inequalities 3.0: Emergent inequalities in the information age. *First Monday*, 25(7).
<https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v25i7.10844>
Access link: <https://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/10844/9562>

Optional readings: Mersereau, M. (2021). The Essential Internet: Results from a study into household internet use at the Toronto Community Housing Corporation. *First Monday*, 26(3).
<https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v26i3.11066>
Access link:
<https://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/11066/10082>

Week 4 – January 31 – surveillance and influence

Topics: What role do algorithms play in digital culture and communication?
How are algorithms structured and who structures them?
What information and data are being collected on users?
What kinds of influence are exerted over users through digital tools?
How are we resisting surveillance and influence?

Due: Discussion

Required readings: Cohen, J. N. (2018). Exploring echo-systems: how algorithms shape immersive media environments. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 10(2), 139-151.
<https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-2018-10-2-8>
Access link: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1198674.pdf>

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Velkova, J., & Kaun, A. (2021). Algorithmic resistance: media practices and the politics of repair. *Information, Communication & Society*, 24(4), 523-540.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2019.1657162>

Access link:

https://tuhat.helsinki.fi/ws/portalfiles/portal/126978733/2019_Velkova_Kaun_IC_S_Algorithmic_resistance_media_practices_and_the_politics_of_repair.pdf

Optional readings: Gilbert, A. S. (2018). Algorithmic culture and the colonization of life-worlds. *Thesis Eleven*, 146(1), 87-96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513618776699>
Access link: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0725513618776699>

Week 5 – February 7 – democracy and democratic participation

Topics: What roles does digital communication play in democracy?
How have digital tools threatened or compromised democracy?
How does digital communication support democracy and democratic practices?
What opportunities do we have to further improve democracy through digital tools?

Due: Critical Analysis – Sunday, February 13, 11:59 pm

Discussion

Required readings: Kuehn, K. & Salter, L. (2020). Assessing Digital Threats to Democracy, and Workable Solutions: A Review of the Recent Literature. *International Journal of Communication*. 14. 2589-2610.

Access link: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Leon-Salter/publication/341200011_Assessing_Digital_Threats_to_Democracy_and_Workable_Solutions_A_Review_of_the_Recent_Literature/links/5eb36b9e45851523bd497fd7/Assessing-Digital-Threats-to-Democracy-and-Workable-Solutions-A-Review-of-the-Recent-Literature.pdf

Fuchs, C. (2021). The Digital Commons and the Digital Public Sphere: How to Advance Digital Democracy Today. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 16(1), 9–26. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16997/wpcc.91>

Access link:

<https://westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/download/2f041cec884866f8dfaadb27e51b08a85ec36fccbd3c8fa2ba9b79234432c951/1637089/wpcc-917-fuchs.pdf>

Optional readings: Engelmann, S., Grossklags, J. ., & Herzog, L. (2020). Should users participate in governing social media? Philosophical and technical considerations of democratic social media. *First Monday*, 25(12). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v25i12.10525>

Access link:

<https://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/10525/10011>

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Week 6 – February 14 – activism and resistance

Topics: How are we using digital communication as a tool for activism and resistance?
What kinds of activism are possible using digital tools?
What are we using digital communication to push back against?
What kinds of approaches to digital resistance and activism are effective?

Due: Discussion

Required readings: Neumayer, C. & Svensson, J. (2014). Activism and radical politics in the digital age: Towards a typology. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1354856514553395>

Access link: <https://journals-sagepub-com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/doi/pdf/10.1177/1354856514553395>

Mundt, M., Ross, K., & Burnett, C. M. (2018). Scaling social movements through social media: The case of Black Lives Matter. *Social Media+ Society*, 4(4).

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118807911>

Access link: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2056305118807911>

Optional readings: Singh, R. (2020). Resistance in a minor key: Care, survival and convening on the margins. *First Monday*, 25(5). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v25i5.10631>

Access link: <https://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/10631/9418>

Week 7 – February 21 – reading week

No class

Week 8 – February 28 – take-home midterm

Due: Take-home midterm – Monday, February 28 to Sunday, March 6, 11:59 pm

Week 9 – March 7 – identity and community

Topics: What opportunities and constraints exist around online identity and self-presentation?
How do characteristics like ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and disability contribute to online identity and self-presentation?
How does online community support and limit identity and self-presentation?

Due: Proposal – Sunday, March 13, 11:59 pm

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Discussion

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- Required readings:** Duffy, B. E., & Chan, N. K. (2019). "You never really know who's looking": Imagined surveillance across social media platforms. *New Media & Society*, 21(1), 119-138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818791318>
Access link: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1461444818791318>
- Miller, R. A. (2017). "My voice is definitely strongest in online communities": Students using social media for queer and disability identity-making. *Journal of College Student Development*, 58(4), 509-525. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2017.0040>
Access link: <https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/article/663305/pdf>
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- Optional readings:** Suler, J.R. (2002). Identity Management in Cyberspace. *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, 4(4), 455. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1020392231924>
Access link: http://journals1.scholarsportal.info.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca:2048/show_pdf.xqy?uri=/15211401/v04i0004/455_imic.xml&school=western
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Week 10 – March 14 – labour and the reputation economy

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- Topics:** How has labour changed in response to digital communication, culture, and tools?
What different kinds of labour have been impacted or created by digital communication?
Who has benefitted and who hasn't in light of these changes?
How do identity and reputation become implicated in digital labour?
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- Due:** Discussion
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- Required readings:** Zukerfeld, M. (2021). Platforms and exploitation in informational capitalism. In *Work and Labour Relations in Global Platform Capitalism*. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781802205138>
Access link: <https://www.elgaronline.com/view/edcoll/9781802205121/9781802205121.00010.xml>
- Duffy, B. E., & Wissinger, E. (2017). Mythologies of creative work in the social media age: Fun, free, and "just being me". *International Journal of Communication*, 11, 20.
Access link: <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/viewFile/7322/2185>
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- Optional readings:** de Rosnay, M.D. and Musian, F. (2016). "Towards a (De)centralisation-Based Typology of Peer Production." *Triple-C*, 14(1).
Access link: <http://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/article/view/728/801>
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Week 11 – March 21 – education and learning

Topics: What, how, and where are we learning in the digital age?
What is essential for us to learn given the ubiquity of digital tools?
What skills do we need to be able to learn effectively through digital approaches?
What aspects of digital learning are working and what could be improved?

Due: Discussion

Required readings: Cesco, S., Zara, V., De Toni, A. F., Lugli, P., Betta, G., Evans, A. C., & Orzes, G. (2021). Higher education in the first year of COVID-19: Thoughts and perspectives for the future. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 10(3), 285-294.

<https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v10n3p285>

Access link:

https://bia.unibz.it/view/delivery/39UBZ_INST/12256544360001241/13256514430001241

Greenhow, C. & Lewin, C. (2016). Social media and education: reconceptualizing the boundaries of formal and informal learning. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 41(1).

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2015.1064954>

Access link: [https://www.tandfonline-](https://www.tandfonline-com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/doi/pdf/10.1080/17439884.2015.1064954?needAccess=true)

[com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/doi/pdf/10.1080/17439884.2015.1064954?needAccess=true](https://www.tandfonline-com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/doi/pdf/10.1080/17439884.2015.1064954?needAccess=true)

Optional readings: Warschauer, M. (2007). The paradoxical future of digital learning. *Learning Inquiry*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11519-007-0001-5>.

Access link: [https://link-springer-](https://link-springer-com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs11519-007-0001-5.pdf)

[com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs11519-007-0001-5.pdf](https://link-springer-com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs11519-007-0001-5.pdf)

Week 12 – March 28 – environmental and human costs

Topics: How does digital communication affect the material world?
What are the human and environmental costs of digital communication?
How are the costs and consequences of digital communication being resisted?
What do digital tools and how they're produced tell us about what we value?

Due: Discussion

Required readings: Ensmenger, N. (2018). The environmental history of computing. *Technology and culture*, 59(4), S7-S33. <https://doi.org/10.1353/tech.2018.0148>.

Access link: [https://www.ctcs505.com/wp-](https://www.ctcs505.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Ensmenger-2018-The-Environmental-History-of-Computing.pdf)

[content/uploads/2016/01/Ensmenger-2018-The-Environmental-History-of-Computing.pdf](https://www.ctcs505.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Ensmenger-2018-The-Environmental-History-of-Computing.pdf)

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Fuchs, C. (2014). Theorising and analysing digital labour: From global value chains to modes of production. *The Political Economy of Communication*, 1(2).

Access link:

<https://www.polecom.org/index.php/polecom/article/download/19/175>

Optional readings: Pun, N., Tse, T., & Ng, K. (2019). Challenging digital capitalism: SACOM's campaigns against Apple and Foxconn as monopoly capital. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(9), 1253-1268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1414290>.

Access link: [https://disaster-sts-](https://disaster-sts-network.org/sites/default/files/artifacts/media/pdf/pun_et_al_2019_challenging_digital_capitalism.pdf)

[network.org/sites/default/files/artifacts/media/pdf/pun_et_al_2019_challenging_digital_capitalism.pdf](https://disaster-sts-network.org/sites/default/files/artifacts/media/pdf/pun_et_al_2019_challenging_digital_capitalism.pdf)

Week 13 – April 4 – independent work time (classes end April 8)

Due: Final paper – Friday, April 8, 11:59 pm

Late Assignment Policy

Assignments must be submitted on time. Due dates and times are noted in the course outline. A late penalty of 5 per cent per day will be applied to all late assignments. All assignments must be submitted online through OWL's assignment submission tool and will be subject to analysis through Turnitin software. Students are responsible for ensuring that their assignments are successfully submitted. This includes ensuring that the correct assignment and version of the assignment are the ones that are submitted.

Out of fairness to all students, academic accommodation will only be provided to students with concerns set out in Western's policy on accommodation. Students who miss work because of an illness or compassionate grounds can access relief in one of two ways, though a Self Reported Absence (if the criteria are met) or through the Academic Counselling office in their faculty of registration, by providing appropriate documentation (Student Medical Certificate or other valid documentation). Students in FIMS can access FIMS Undergraduate Student Services (UGSS) by emailing fims@uwo.ca.

Academic Integrity

Maintaining academic integrity is an important element of academic study and research. Academic integrity helps to ensure that proper credit is given to the work of others and that everyone's work demonstrates their own ideas and skills. There are numerous ways that academic integrity can be compromised, including cheating and plagiarism. Students can be sanctioned for intentional or accidental plagiarism and the penalties can range from a reduced grade on an assignment through to removal from the university. If you have questions about academic integrity, Western has a number of resources that you may find helpful:

- Western Libraries – [plagiarism guide](#)
- Office of the Ombudsperson – [Cheating, Plagiarism and Unauthorized Collaboration](#) brochure
- Office of the Ombudsperson – [Cheating, Plagiarism and Other Scholastic Offences](#) guide

Land Acknowledgement

Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak, and Attawandaron peoples who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local First Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region, there are eleven First Nation communities and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America).

NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Fall 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.