



Eve Arnold/Magnum. Civil Strike, training activists not to react to provocation, Virginia. 1960.

MIT 3772G: Media & Human Rights

Western University
FIMS • Winter 2022

SEB-1056

Thurs. 9:30-12:20

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Course Description

Our course examines human rights from the vantage of media studies. We will explore the history and theory of some of the core concepts as well as a brief history of claims made in the name of human rights. The first part of our course asks: Who is the subject of human rights? How did these ideas and concepts come to be invented? In the latter half of the course, we will examine several case studies, including: the suffrage movement, civil rights, refugees and migrants, and Indigenous rights.

Throughout the course, we will be attentive to the various media that support and enable these claims. The concept of human rights is at once a political demand and an international legal discourse, but it is also an idea that must be nurtured and sustained in the social imaginary. Our common world must be constantly reimagined by human actors—a task that calls upon artists, journalists, filmmakers, and other storytellers. There are no human rights without someone demanding them and these demands require a narrative, an image, or a performance.

Learning Outcomes: Upon the completion of this course, students will:

1. Gain an understanding of the history of human rights
2. Understand the role that various media play in human rights claims
3. Develop a working familiarity with the forms of humanitarian reporting

Class Rules

1. Respect yourself and your colleagues.
2. Participation—particularly in your small working groups—is essential.
3. Communicate with me about any absences or if you are facing issues that are impeding your capacity to complete the course.

Course Calendar

January	13	Introductions
	20	Inventing Human Rights: Hunt, <i>Inventing Human Rights</i> (excerpt) Seminar 1
	27	The Perplexities of Human Rights: Arendt, “The Perplexities of the Rights of Man” + Keenan, “Mobilizing Shame” Seminar 2
February	3	The Aesthetics of Human Rights: Sliwinski, <i>Human Rights in Camera</i> (excerpt) + Stonebridge, <i>Writing and Righting</i> (excerpt) Seminar 3
	10	Civil Disobedience: Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience” (1849) + Pankhurst, “Freedom or Death” (1913) [Optional: Watch <i>Suffragettes</i> (2015) dir. Sarah Gavron] Seminar 4
	17	Civil Rights: MLK, “Give Us the Ballot” + Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet” + Baldwin, “On Being White...and other lies” + “Letter to My Nephew” [Optional: Watch: <i>Selma</i>] Seminar 5
	24	READING WEEK – NO CLASS
March	3	Black Lives Today: Lewis, “Vision & Justice” + The Movement for Black Lives platform + Richardson “Bearing Witness while Black” Workshop 1
	10	Sovereign Violence: Human Rights Watch, “Those Who Take Us Away” (excerpt) <i>*attend Abigail Echo-Hawk’s visit March 9th - more details TBA</i> Workshop 2
	17	Refugees, Migrants, Displaced Peoples: Oliver, <i>Carceral Humanitarianism</i> + WATCH (at home): Forensic Architecture “Shipwreck at the Threshold of Europe” Workshop 3
	24	Indigenous Sovereignty: <i>Who’s Land is it Anyway?</i> (excerpt) Workshop 4

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| | 31 | Video Activism: Ristovska, "Seeing Human Rights" + Mroué, "The Pixelated Revolution" (https://vimeo.com/119433287)
Workshop 5 |
| April | 5 | Chorus: Thomas Keenan, "Human Rights" + WATCH (in class): Greyson, <i>International Dawn Chorus Day</i> |
| | 7 | Wrap-up * <i>participation grades due</i> |

COVID Information

1. If you miss class due to COVID-related issues, you should be prepared to contact colleagues in your small groups to obtain lecture notes. (I do not post lectures on OWL.)
2. If you miss a deadline due to COVID-related issues, please contact me as soon as you are able to negotiate a new deadline.
3. In the event of course delivery changes necessitated by the changing COVID-19 situation, students should expect that grading scheme in the course will not change.
4. Students will be expected to wear triple layer non-medical masks at all times in the classroom as per university policy and public health directives. Students who are unable to wear a mask for medical reasons should seek accommodation through [Accessible Education](#).
5. Students are expected not to eat or drink while in class to ensure masks stay in place. Students will be able to eat and drink outside of the classroom during scheduled breaks, provided MLHU guidelines permit this.

Required Readings are available on OWL

1. Hannah Arendt, "The Perplexities of the Rights of Man" In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken, 2004)
2. Thomas Keenan, "Mobilizing Shame" *The South Atlantic Quarterly* Vol 103 no 2/3 (2004): 435-449
3. Henry David Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government" [Civil Disobedience], *Aesthetic Papers*, ed. Elizabeth Peabody, (New York: Boston, 1849)
4. Emmeline Pankhurst, "Freedom or Death" (1913) Reprinted in *The Guardian*
5. Martin Luther King Jr. "Give Us the Ballot" (1957) + "Letter from Birmingham City Jail" (1963), In *The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (New York Harper, 1991)
6. Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet" (1964) *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990)
7. James Baldwin, "On Being White...and other lies" (1984) In *The Cross of Redemption*, (New York: Pantheon, 2010), 135-138
8. Baldwin, James. "A Letter to My Nephew" *The Progressive* (December 1962).

9. Sarah Lewis, "Vision & Justice" *Aperture* 223 (Winter 2016): 11-14
10. The Movement for Black Lives: <https://policy.m4bl.org>
11. Human Rights Watch, *Those Who Take Us Away: Abusive Policing and Failures in Protection of Indigenous Women and Girls in Northern British Columbia, Canada*, 2013. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/02/13/those-who-take-us-away/abusive-policing-and-failures-protection-indigenous-women>
12. Kelly Oliver, *Carceral Humanitarianism: Logics of Refugee Detention*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016: <https://manifold.umn.edu/read/carceral-humanitarianism-logics-of-refugee-detention/section/cd4b34b1-04db-4395-8edb-ec0ad4a43508#cvi>
13. Sandra Ristovska, *Seeing Human Rights: Video Activism as Proxy Profession*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2021
14. Rabih Mroué, et. al. "The Pixelated Revolution," *TDR: The Drama Review* Vol. 56 no 3 (2021):
15. Forensic Architecture, "<https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/shipwreck-at-the-threshold-of-europe>

Assignments

1. Seminar (25%) + Questions (15%)
2. Brief (35%) + Annotated Bibliography (15%)
3. Participation (10%)

1. Seminar in Two Parts

Part One: Questions (15%)

The class will be divided into groups of five for small seminar discussions. Each of you will take turns leading your small group in a seminar discussion. The seminars will occur during class time. It is your group's responsibility to organize your presentation schedule. Each seminar will focus on a discussion of the readings assigned for that week. As seminar leader, your task is to prepare thoughtful questions, share your thoughts, and lead a group discussion about the readings. **Construct at least five discussion questions for your group.** Your goal with the questions is to open interesting conversation about the issues raised in the article. It will be helpful to start your question with a few sentences that explain your thinking. You should prepare a typed handout of your questions and copies of any relevant visual materials to help focus the group discussion. Plan for your seminar discussion to last about 40 minutes.

Part Two: Short Reflective Paper (25%)

In the week after your seminar, write a short reflective paper on one or two of the issues raised in the reading. **This paper should not consist of a description of your seminar discussion.** Consider the seminar to be preparation for this short reflective paper about the issues raised in the reading. You may describe instances from your discussion in order to illuminate your understanding of the issues explored in the reading, but focus your discussion on the reading and the ideas it raises for media and human rights. Your paper + questions are due one week after your seminar

presentation. Your grade will be based on the quality of your questions and the quality of your reflections on the article. **Suggested Length:** questions: 400-500 words + paper: 1000-1250 words, typed, doubled-spaced.

2. A Brief, in Two parts

The most substantial assignment for the course involves preparing a brief on a particular human rights issue. Like any political or legal brief, this document should provide the most pertinent information about a particular rights issue in a concise, structured format. Each of you will have the opportunity to workshop your brief during class time.

The brief + annotated bibliography are due one week after the date of your workshop.

The workshop is your opportunity to present your brief to your colleagues. This is a role-playing workshop with you playing the role of an intern at a human rights organization or a progressive legal firm. The other members in your workshop, in turn, will play the role of senior members of the organization/firm. Your job is to prepare them to walk into a press conference on the issue.

Part One: Annotated bibliography (15%)

Your brief should include an annotated bibliography of **at least six** resources. This bibliography should include the key documents that pertain to your brief. Try to include a mix of high-quality resources in your bibliography, such as: scholarly works (referred journal articles or books); formal reports by human rights organizations (such as Human Rights Watch or Amnesty International); major cultural or artistic works dealing with the issue (ex. documentary films, novels, etc.); long-form journalism (ex. in-depth articles from *The Atlantic* or *The New York Times*).

You will be graded on the quality of the resources you have chosen to include as well as the quality of your annotations. The annotations should include a concise summary and evaluation of the resource as well as provide a general idea of the content (the author's viewpoint, the audience, the purpose and scope of the work, etc.). Be sure to include some discussion of the types of evidence that each of the resources relies upon (such as eye-witness testimony, forensic evidence, statistics, etc.) **Suggested length:** 1250-1500 words

Part Two: Brief (35%)

The main body of your Human Rights Brief should consist of: **(1) an opening section** that provides a clear, concise statement of the issue. You may wish to describe the approach you have taken in your brief here. **(2) The body** of the brief should provide background, including a short historical description of the significant events that help frame and identify the issue. You should provide a snapshot of the current situation where applicable. Include a section that outlines the key considerations (imagine these to be something like the "speaking points" for the press conference) and note any formal recommendations or actions that have been taken to redress the issue. Utilize your work from the annotated bibliography to support the brief. You may wish to take a

position about a proposed course of action, although this is not necessary. **Suggested length:** approx. 2000-2500 words.

4. Participation: 10%

Write a short description of your participation in the class. Describe both your experience in the larger class and in your smaller groups. Be sure to reflect on how you supported your colleagues during their presentations. Grade yourself out of 10. **Length:** approx. 250 words, typed and double-spaced.

NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Winter 2022

Rights and Responsibilities

The conditions governing a student's ability to pursue their undergraduate education at Western are ratified by Senate and can be found on the Academic Policies section of the University Secretariat:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/rights_responsibilities.html

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments, including take-home exams, in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence. All papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software Turnitin under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system.

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#)

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

Students will have two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment

for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- during exam periods,
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are NOT met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate or equivalent documentation, if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact the FIMS Undergraduate Student Services Office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see [Policy on Academic Consideration For Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#) and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

In the event of a Covid-19 resurgence, it is possible that different procedures may need to be put in place on short notice.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Academic Calendar](#).

Grading at FIMS

- Normally, first year courses required for entry into an MIT or MPI module (MIT 1020E and MIT 1025F/G) are expected to have a course average between 68-72%.
- Normally, second year required courses (MIT 2000, 2100, 2200, 2500) are expected to have a course average between 70 and 75%.
- Normally, third year required courses (MIT 3000, 3100) are expected to have a course average between 72 and 77%.

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

Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwo.com/mentalhealth/>

SUPPORT SERVICES – LINKS

Office of the Registrar:

www.registrar.uwo.ca

Mental Health

Support:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>

Accessible Education:

http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

Accessibility

Information:

www.accessibility.uwo.ca/

Writing Support

Centre:

<http://writing.uwo.ca/>

Learning Skills

Services:

<https://www.uwo.ca/sdc/learning/>

Academic Learning and Support for Online Learning:

<https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital/types/academic-and-learning-support.html>

Indigenous Services:

<https://indigenous.uwo.ca/>

Western International:

<https://international.uwo.ca/>

Career Centre:

<http://careerexperience.uwo.ca/>

Appendix A: Suggested Grade Ranges in MIT, MPI and MTP

Guidelines to the MIT Grade Range

These guidelines are benchmarks, and are not to be followed as rigid regulations. They will be adjusted as appropriate to take into account the level of the course and any specific instructions given by a professor. As well, competency in English language usage (including spelling and grammar) may be taken into account in the assignment of grades by individual instructors. Note that the 70-79 grade range is broken into two divisions, as this is the grade range into which a large number of students fall.

90-100 (Outstanding, A+)

The report shows sparkling originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic. Sophisticated synthesis and analysis of the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the topic are demonstrated. Mastery of complex material and ideas is immediately evident. The topic is treated with sensitivity and subtlety of thought. The quality of the writing and background research is exemplary.

80-89 (Excellent, A)

The report shows originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic; it gets to the heart of the matter with comments and/or questions. It is clearly focused and logically organized. The quality of writing makes the report immediately understandable. Mastery of complex material and ideas is demonstrated. The report is of appropriate length, while preserving the priorities and emphasis of the material, so that the result is meaningful, not simplistic.

75-79 (Very Good, B+)

The report shows above average analysis, critical thinking and independent thought. Claims are supported by ample evidence and the components of the topic are well-researched and presented. The topic is addressed in reasonable depth and/or breadth and covers material appropriate to the course. The analysis is organized around focal points and the argument is easily followed. The report demonstrates an above average ability to write in an intelligible style and to condense material meaningfully and with a concern for priorities of that material.

70-74 (Good, B)

The report shows an attempt at analysis and critical thinking. Claims are supported by reasonable evidence. The topic is addressed in some depth and/or breadth, with references to the appropriate literature and course material. The analysis is organized around focal points. The report is generally well written and well argued.

60-69 (Competent, C)

The report demonstrates adequate comprehension of the topic. The report is on topic and is a reasonable summary of material covered in the course, but goes no further. Facts are stated accurately; the quality of writing is sufficiently intelligible with enough elaboration and enough connections made between ideas to permit a reader to understand the point of the report.

50-59 (Marginal, D)

The report shows less than adequate comprehension of the topic and of the material covered by the course. The report is a less than adequate summary of sources and/or is considerably off-topic. Facts are stated inaccurately or ambiguously; the writing style is difficult to follow; there is insufficient elaboration to permit reader's comprehension of relations among ideas; little judgment is shown in selecting detail for inclusion in the report.

Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)

The report demonstrates a failure to comprehend the topic. The material is disorganized and unintelligible. The report clearly does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment.

Appendix B: Guidelines of Academic Appeals for FIMS Students

Grounds for Appeal:

The Faculty of Information and Media Studies does not view the appeals process as an opportunity for students to solicit a second opinion on a grade assigned to a particular piece of work. Appeals must pertain to the final grade in a course, and will only be entertained if sufficient grounds for appeal can be met, including: medical or compassionate circumstances, a defect in the evaluation process, bias, inaccuracy or unfairness.

Stages in the Appeals Process:

The first stage of the process is a discussion of the disputed grade with the appropriate Teaching Assistant (if applicable), and subsequently, the course Instructor. For grades assigned to individual assignments, essays, lab reports, projects and tests completed throughout the term, the student first must appeal to the Teaching Assistant or Instructor of the course, within three weeks of the date on which the Instructor or Teaching Assistant returned the assignments to the class. The Appeals Committee will not hear any further appeals about the final grade in any course unless this first step has been taken.

If completion of the first stage has not resolved the matter, the student may appeal the final grade in the course to the FIMS Appeals Committee. Appeals of final grades must be **within the time frame indicated in the Undergraduate Calendar.** It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the appeal is submitted within the deadline. The student shall submit a formal letter to the FIMS Appeals Committee outlining the grounds for the appeal, the remedy sought and relevant materials including the information about when and with whom (Teaching Assistant and/or Instructor) the student met, as described in Stage 1. If the appeal involves a request for work to be regraded, the original marked work and a clean copy (if possible) must be included. If the appeal is commenced once the deadline has passed, it will not be considered either by the Appeals Committee or by the Associate Dean.

The FIMS Appeals Committee has the discretion to determine whether the grounds for appeal have been met.

If the Committee deems that the reasons for the appeal are not legitimate, the Associate Dean will be informed. The appeal will be terminated and the student will be informed.

If the Committee decides that the grounds for appeal have been met, the following steps will be taken:

1. the course Instructor will be shown the appeal letter and offered an opportunity to make a written response;
2. if work is to be regraded, a reader will be appointed who is competent in the area in question and was not involved in the assignment of the original mark. The reader will consider the work in question and will arrive at an independent evaluation. If there is a large discrepancy between the original mark and the regraded mark, a second reader may be appointed by the Committee. **If the appointed reader(s) arrive at a grade within five marks of the original, the original grade will stand.**

The FIMS Appeals Committee will review the evidence and will make a recommendation on the case to the Associate Dean Undergraduate.

The Associate Dean Undergraduate will consider the recommendation from the Appeals Committee, and will make a decision. The student and the instructor will be notified promptly and in writing by the Associate Dean of the decision and of the change in grade, if any. Within the Faculty of Information and Media Studies, the Associate Dean's decision on the matter is final.

Further appeals are possible under certain circumstances to the Senate Review Board Academic (for Undergraduate students) or to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (for Graduate students) but the student should carefully consult the guidelines regarding such Appeals.