

MIT 1025G: First Year Foundations for MIT

In-Person: Winter 2023
Monday 12:30-2:30pm – FNB 3210

INSTRUCTOR:

Dr. Tiara Sukhan tsukhan@uwo.ca

TEACHING ASSISTANTS:

Caitlin Burd cburd@uwo.ca
(Tutorial: Tuesday 4:30-5:30pm)

Drop-In Office Hours:

Tuesday 8-9pm (Zoom – see Owl for link)
Wednesday 1-2pm & Friday 2-3pm in FNB 4118

Brianne O’Sullivan bosulli7@uwo.ca
(Tutorial: Monday 3:30-4:30pm)

Course Description & Objectives

First Year Foundations for MIT is designed to introduce students to foundational skills they will need throughout their university careers. It focuses on the fundamentals of three key activities: critical thinking, research, and communication (both verbal and written), with the goal of helping students to build a strong knowledge base, develop reasoned and defensible arguments, and effectively communicate ideas. Students will cover the basics of critical thinking, the interpretation of texts, finding and evaluating sources, developing arguments, presenting information, formulating research questions, and essay development and revision. Academic style, plagiarism, and other key issues pertaining to university and scholarly research and writing are also covered.

After completing this course, you should be able to:

- ✓ Critically read and understand key ideas in a variety of media texts
- ✓ Identify and analyze arguments
- ✓ Find and evaluate scholarly and mainstream sources focusing on media and media-related issues
- ✓ Construct an argument/thesis and support it with appropriate evidence
- ✓ Understand the fundamentals of essay composition and development
- ✓ Apply the basics of academic style, formatting, and citation
- ✓ Further develop acquired critical thinking and writing skills

Course Materials

Flachmann et al (2013). *Reader's Choice: Essays for Thinking, Reading, and Writing*, 7th edition. This textbook is available from the bookstore or can be purchased online – just ensure you have the correct edition. We will be using this book most weeks so I encourage you to purchase a hard copy and bring it with you to lectures and tutorials.

Additional resources will be provided through Owl, either as downloadable pdfs or via web links. Most readings are directly linked with assignments or provide useful guidance to help you succeed in this course. Failure to do the readings is likely to result in a lower grade.

Required Course Work and Evaluation – see detailed assignment briefs on Owl

1. Content Quizzes (3 x 5% = 15%)

- Administered through Owl Tests and Quizzes on Weeks 4, 8 and 12 (you will have from Monday at 3pm until Friday at 11:55pm to submit your responses). Each quiz will cover the 4 weeks of course content preceding (not cumulative) and contain randomized questions in a variety of short answer formats (such as matching, multiple choice, true false). Quizzes will be timed and will auto-submit when the time is up. Quizzes are designed to be completed quickly if you are well-prepared – principles of universal instructional design will be applied to ensure equitable time limits for everyone.

2. Writing Journal (20%)

- Every student must keep a writing journal over the course of the semester. **I recommend purchasing a notebook and writing by hand.** You should bring this journal with you to lecture and tutorial each week. Writing activities will be regularly assigned (some optional) as process work to help you develop ideas for other assignments, or as a way for you to demonstrate engagement with course materials and supplement your in-class participation if you are less inclined to talk. You will select your best work to submit for grading.

3. Library Skills (15%) *Deadline TBC depending on library visit date – likely late January*

- The whole class will take a trip to the library during lecture time for an in-person library orientation and intro to research skills. After this you will work in groups to complete a library scavenger hunt, which you will turn in for grading along with a debrief about the experience. You will have an additional opportunity to apply some of the skills learned when assembling your essay proposal and annotated bibliography (see item #5). **You must attend the library visit in order to complete this assessment.**

4. Proposal with Annotated Bibliography (15%) *Due Thursday, March 16th*

- Your proposal and bibliography will reflect the early stages of planning for your essay (see item #6). While your proposal will outline your topic, approach and potential lines of inquiry, your bibliography will demonstrate your ability to select relevant, credible sources and properly format citations.

5. Essay [1500 words] (25%) *Due Thursday, April 6th*

- You will write a research-based and argumentative essay which builds on work already done in item #5. Topics will relate to themes and issues studied in the MIT program.

6. Participation (10%)

- All students must sign up to attend a weekly tutorial. This portion of your grade assesses your engagement with course material in your tutorial group. Tutorial attendance IS NOT optional. Your TA will communicate their expectations with you directly.

Course Policies

1. Check your UWO email regularly

- Announcements made from Owl will be sent to you as emails. It is your responsibility to ensure that you don't miss important communications from us. Please avoid emailing us from outside of your UWO account as messages from webmail accounts may end up in spam folders. Please ensure that your emails contain our course number in the subject line. I try to respond to emails within 24 hours between Monday morning and Friday afternoon. I generally will not reply to emails that I receive on Friday evening, or on the weekend, until Monday and as I have back-to-back classes Mondays, you may not hear from me until after our lecture.

2. Communication

- I am available for consultation every week during regularly scheduled **Drop-In Office Hours** (see top of p.1 for details). Please reserve emails for brief queries. Substantial discussions about grades or assignments are better live (via Zoom or face to face). Your TA will also hold scheduled consultation hours which you will learn about in Tutorials. Please come see me, whether to discuss assignment ideas, readings, grading feedback, or just to have a chat. There will be snacks. 😊

3. Deadlines

- Do your best to submit your work on time. All written assignments are due on Thursdays to give you an optimum chance to apply new learning from lectures and tutorials earlier in the week. Assignments should be submitted through the appropriate assignment portals on Owl. Please do not email your work to me, or your TA unless you have been granted permission to do so. Work that is submitted on time will be graded and returned within two weeks. Work that is submitted early may be graded and returned earlier. Work that is submitted late, without appropriate documentation, will be graded at our convenience and ***we reserve the right to apply a penalty of 3% per day late.***
- Sometimes things happen which make it very difficult to meet deadlines with work you are proud of. Please speak to me or your TA if you are struggling and investigate appropriate channels of accommodation for late assignments (see the appended notes from the Dean's Office) where warranted. If you are granted accommodation, you are expected to contact us as soon as you are able to negotiate a new deadline for missed work.

4. Accessible Education Accommodations

- This applies to you if you have an IEP. All accommodations of this type need to be activated through [Accessible Education](#). This needs to be done at the start of every semester and updated every time you make changes to your timetable. If you have flexible deadlines as one of your accommodations, it is expected that you will contact us **before** an assignment is due to discuss possible deadline relief. Should you fail to contact us in advance or fail to meet new negotiated deadlines, late penalties may still apply.

Lesson Schedule

Our lecture schedule is built around the chapters of our textbook – *Reader’s Choice: Essays for Thinking, Reading and Writing* (7th ed) by Flachmann et al.

Date	Week	Lecture Topics, Textbook Readings & Assignment Deadlines (See Owl Course Content for links to non-textbook readings)
Jan. 9	1	Introductions
Jan. 16	2	READ: INTRODUCTION – Reading, Writing, and Thinking Critically
Jan. 23	3	Research Basics Library visit (TBC), with Library Skills assignment due the following week
Jan. 30	4	READ: CH.1 – Description: Exploring Through the Senses Quiz 1 – complete by February 3rd (covers weeks 1-4)
Feb. 6	5	READ: CH.7 – Definition: Limiting the Frame of Reference
Feb. 13	6	READ: CH.2 – Narration: Telling a Story
READING WEEK (February 18-26)		
Feb. 27	7	READ: CH.3 – Example: Illustrating Ideas
Mar. 6	8	READ: CH.4 – Process Analysis: Explaining Step by Step Quiz 2 – complete by March 10th (covers weeks 5-8)
Mar. 13	9	READ: CH.5 – Division / Classification: Finding Categories Proposal + Annotated Bibliography due March 16th
Mar. 20	10	READ: CH.6 – Comparison / Contrast: Discovering Similarities and Differences
Mar. 27	11	READ: CH.8 – Cause / Effect: Tracing Reasons and Results
Apr. 3	12	READ: CH.9 – Argument / Persuasion: Inciting People to Thought or Action Quiz 3 – complete by April 7th (covers weeks 9-12) Essay due April 6th
Apr. 10	13	Conclusions Option to give a 3-minute presentation on Essay topic for bonus marks

NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Winter 2023

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 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 required 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

Academic Accommodation

Students with disabilities work with [Accessible Education \(AE\)](#) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing.

Medical Consideration

Students who have medical grounds for academic consideration 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 (for FIMS students this is [Undergraduate Student Services](#)).

Students are required to provided

documentation in the form of a [Student Medical Certificate](#). It will be the Dean's Office that will determine if consideration is warranted.

For work worth less than 10% of the final grade, the instructor will consider requests for academic consideration on medical grounds made in a timely manner in writing or during office hours. Such requests need not be accompanied by documentation. The instructor may decide to require documentation be submitted to the appropriate Academic Counselling office.

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 must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.**

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 crisis, obtain a copy of the police report or be prepared to provide the necessary documentation upon request.

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 should contact their Academic Counsellors with valid documentation.

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 Advisor. Additional information is given in the [Western Academic Calendar](#).

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence, you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts, [here](#). The gender-based violence and survivor support case managers are located in Thames Hall (3114-3127 office suite.) To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to [Health and Wellness](#) for a complete list of supports.

SUPPORT SERVICES - LINKS

[FIMS UGSS](#): *academic advising; career services*

[Psychological Services](#): *Information about accessing mental health supports*

[Medical Services](#): *Student health related services*

[Office of the Registrar](#): *Financial Information, Timetable, Exam Schedules, Academic Calendar Information*

[Academic Support and Engagement](#): *Central Academic Supports, including Writing Centre, Learning Development, Transition and Leadership Supports, and Careers and Experience*

[Accessible Education](#): *Assessment and recommendations for students with disabilities*

[Accessibility Information](#): *Information to help support barrier free access, including floor plans, accessible washroom locations, service disruptions etc.*

[Indigenous Student Services](#): *Includes information about financial support, indigenous self-identification, orientation, and tutor support*

[Western International](#): *Information and support for international students and students seeking to go on exchange*

FIMS Grading Policy

FIMS Undergraduate programs now have the following class average policy:

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%.

Second year required courses (MIT 2000, 2025, 2100, 2200, 2500) are expected to have a course average between 70 and 75%. The third year required (MIT 3100) is expected to have a course average between 72 and 77%.

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

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.