

MIT 2000G: WINTER 2023
The History of Communication

Man lives in a new dimension of reality, symbolic reality, and it is through the agency of this capacity that existence is produced.



Professor: Dr. Warren Steele E-mail: wsteele@uwo.ca

Office: FNB 4120 Office hours: Wednesday 12:30-2:30, and by appointment

Lecture: Wednesday 9:30-12:30, HSB 35

Required Texts: Plato, *Phaedrus*

Description: This course is about the history of writing, and the act of inscription more broadly, from cave paintings to branded content. Topics include, but are not limited to, orality, print, photography, memes, and the politics of meaning and miscommunication from Plato to Instapoetry.

Evaluation: Essay 30%; Midterm Exam 30%; Final Exam 30%; OWL Forums 10%

Course Objectives: By the end of this course, students will 1) know the history of communication from the paleolithic to the present; 2) investigate how writing in particular has evolved, and how major developments like print have changed what it means to communicate; 3) evaluate and articulate why those changes have shaped how people think and behave; 4) demonstrate why this history matters and what it can teach us about the present, if not the near future.

Essay: On January 11, I will post a list of topics to OWL. You must choose one. After which you will generate a short piece of writing (2000 words, double spaced, 12-point font), that engages with the texts encountered in class. A TA will evaluate the response and return it to you as soon as possible. Late assignments will not be accepted without accommodation. The essay is due Tuesday, February 8 by 11:55pm. Please submit it through OWL Assignments.

As always, you will be penalized for improper grammar and spelling. Papers must not include a separate title page, but should have your name, the course code, the name of your TA, and date of submission on the top left corner of the first page. All papers must include page numbers and a complete Works Cited page formatted in MLA style. If you do not have a Works Cited page, the grade on your paper will drop by 5 percent. Consult a recent edition of the MLA Handbook for details.

Midterm and Final Exams: Exams will be in person. The format of the midterm exam will be distributed at least two weeks prior to the actual exam date. Details about midterm, as well as what's expected and when, will be communicated then. The date of the midterm is March 1. The date of the final exam will be determined by the Office of the Registrar.

OWL Forum Posts: OWL forums open January 9. You must post to the OWL forums at least *five times* about the class readings and/or lectures throughout the term. Each forum post should be about 250 words in length.

Think of these posts as reflections on the course material in lieu of a tutorial. Forum posts are time specific and marked on a pass/fail basis. *Only one post per week counts toward your final grade. To pass, forum posts must be honest and substantial attempts to engage with the content of the course, or with other students about the content of the course.* Simple indications of agreement or disagreement are not good enough. You must engage with the material, or with others about the material, in a manner that requires you to think about it seriously, and to explain your thoughts clearly and politely. Each successful post is worth 2% of your final grade. Collectively they are worth 10%.

Each forum will open at 12:00am on Monday and close at 11:59pm the following Friday. Only comments and/or questions posted to the forum for the week in which we are presently engaged will receive a mark. For example, if during the week on 'Pharmakon' you want to post your thoughts about the material, you have from 12:00am Monday until 11:59pm the following Friday to

post your thoughts to the 'Pharmakon' forum. After that, the 'Pharmakon' forum will close, and we move on to the next week.

You don't have to make an argument, and there's no need to prove anything or provide citations. The point is to keep the conversation going by posting your thoughts, and by responding to those of your classmates as best as you can in about 250 words. This is not about having the right answer. It's about engaging with the material and your peers and learning from both in the process. To help you facilitate a conversation and/or articulate what you're thinking, each forum will have a prompt which you can respond to or not.

Grading Policy: The FIMS undergraduate programs have implemented a policy requiring that the final grade average in most courses fall within prescribed ranges. This was done to curb grade inflation. In light of this the MIT program has adopted the following policy: all required 2000 level courses will have a class average of between 70 and 75%.

Plagiarism: University Senate regulations state: "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 by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offense 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.

Prerequisites: University Senate regulations state: "Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

Student Health: Students who are in emotional and/or mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western. For a complete list of options on how to obtain help please visit <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>

Academic Consideration for Missed Work: Students absent from class due to illness, or potential illness, may access the weekly PowerPoints via OWL, and request notes from their classmates. Students whose absences are expected to encompass more than one week may receive academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds).

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the

academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or delaying the submission of work and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances. Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, namely disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education to determine appropriate forms of accommodation.

Students will require medical documentation in the form of a Student Medical Certificate for academic consideration based on medical grounds or appropriate documentation to support academic consideration on compassionate grounds for any work that exceeds 10%. For work which is worth 10% or less, students may approach the instructor for academic consideration.

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>

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 Counselor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. For more refer to: <http://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>

Privacy Policy: We adhere to an Ontario Provincial Government privacy legislation known as "FIPPA" (Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act). As such we cannot email you a grade or discuss a case with you via the internet unless we know it is you. As such, we will only answer UWO emails. For further information please see: <http://www.uwo.ca/privacy/links.html>

SCHEDULE

ORALITY I

Jan. 11 **Images**

Readings: James W. Carey, "Cultural Approach to Communication";
Judith Thurman, "First Impressions"

Jan. 18 **Poetry**

Readings: Walter Ong, from *Orality and Literacy*

*ST: TNG, "Darmok" (1991)**

*In Search of the Trojan War (1985)***

WRITING II

Jan. 25 **Pharmakon**

Readings: Plato, *Phaedrus*

Feb. 1 **Grid**

Readings: John Durham Peters, "Calendar, Clock, Tower"; Eric
Havelock, "The Philosophical Historian"

Feb. 8 **Codex**

Readings: Pascale Bourgain, "The Circulation of Texts"; Stephen G.
Nichols, "What is a Manuscript Culture?"

Feb. 15 **Print-Capitalism**

Readings: Benedict Anderson, "Cultural Roots" and "The Origins of
National Consciousness"

INTERLUDE III

Mar. 1 **Midterm**

Mar. 8 **Electricity**

Readings: James W. Carey, "Technology and Ideology"; Carolyn Marvin, from *When Old Technologies Were New*

Mar. 15 **Optical Media**

Readings: John Berger, from *Another Way of Telling*
*Ways of Seeing, Episodes 1 and 4 (1972)***

SCREEN IV

Mar. 22 **TV**

Readings: Neil Postman, "Now...This"; Lynn Spigel, "The Home Theater"

Mar. 29 **Screen-Capitalism**

Readings: Richard Seymour, "We are All Connected", "We are All Addicts", and "We are All Scripturient"

Apr. 5 **Content**

Readings: Bill Gates, "Content is King"

**On Netflix*

***To be screened in class*

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.