

MIT 2025-001 (Winter 2023)
Faculty of Information & Media Studies
Research Methods for the Digital Age
January 10-April 4

Instructor Information

Name: Melissa Adler

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Course Information

9:30-11:30 am, Tuesdays

Room: Health Sciences, FNB-3210

For information on tutorials and TAs, see your Tutorial syllabus and OWL site

Course Description

An introduction to the range of research methods that are appropriate for understanding scholarship in the fields of communications, information, and media studies, including surveys, interviewing, content analysis and ethnography. Students will study specific methods in the context of the media-related topics that these methods have been used to address.

Course Learning outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Construct research questions to explore specific issues in a particular area of media studies, such as social media, journalism, film, or television. (Ask)
- Identify the best approach for a research project in media studies with human participants.
- Identify and collect appropriate data to address a specific research question. (Collect)
- Apply qualitative methodological framework to analyze data. (Analyze)
- Interpret the results of findings by discussing implications for practice and/or theory in media studies. (Interpret)
- Effectively communicate research findings through digital media (Disseminate)

- Critically evaluate qualitative and quantitative research in media studies. (Evaluate)
- Articulate ethical concerns associated with media studies research
- Explain decision making processes at each step of the research process

Required textbook: Leavy, Patricia. *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches*. Guilford Publications, 1st or 2nd edition is okay.

Other readings and resources will be available via OWL.

Course design and structure

Community partners: This semester we are working with Community Partners who are interested in your input about certain challenges that they are facing. You will be assigned to a group of four-five people to develop a research plan for a community partner. Your group mark will be based on the oral and web-based presentation to the industry partner (15 points) and a written proposal (15 points). We have ten tutorials this semester, and each tutorial will have six groups. It's going to be very important that you attend tutorial and be prepared to work on this project there. You will all meet with the community partners during the lecture period via Zoom in week 2.

Structure: We are going to use an unconventional course design to maximize interaction and make the best use of our time.

Lecture material will all be posted to Professor Adler's 2025b 001 OWL site.

We will use the lecture period to meet with the groups across all of the tutorials that are assigned to the same community partners. In the schedule below you'll see that I plan to meet with each group twice during the semester. Attendance is required for these sessions.

We will also use this time to meet with community partners twice over zoom and to review for the final over zoom.

You also have tutorials, during which you will work in your groups, discuss lecture material, and get feedback from your TAs.

Modules: The course is arranged into four modules. My intention for this design is to allow for more flexibility. You should view all of the lecture material and complete any activities that are due by the end of each module. See the Module schedule below and in OWL under Course Content.

Our Partners:

Mind Your Mind

Life*Spin

Wilma

Hutton House

Alice Saddy

Reimagine Co.

How to be successful in this class

- View all of the lecture material, keep up with the readings, and take notes (don't wait until the end of the module to do everything!)
- Be prepared to discuss material in tutorial
- Make sure you are clear about your TAs expectations for tutorials
- Don't be afraid to ask questions. If you are struggling with a topic, check the online discussion boards or contact your instructor(s) and or teaching assistant(s).
- Come to office hours!
- Follow the checklists in OWL
- Reward yourself for successes. It seems easier to motivate ourselves knowing that there is something waiting for us at the end of the task.
- FIMS Undergraduate Services (fims@uwo.ca) and Western Student Experience are resources to help students succeed.
- Communicate with your team members for your group project
 - Agree on preferred mode of communication (text, email, etc.)
 - Set dates for meeting and connecting
 - Be sure to have clear tasks and deadlines assigned for everyone
 - Agree on an approach for dealing with the possibility of a team member falling behind, not attending/responding, or not doing their part

Assignments: To be submitted in OWL, unless otherwise specified.

Midterm: Analyze and rewrite a research article for a popular news audience: (15 points, individual) Instructions will be posted in OWL two weeks ahead of the due date.

Community partners project: (30 points total, group) You will work in groups of four-five people to develop a research plan for a community partner. Your mark will be based on the oral and web-based presentation to the industry partner (15 points) and a written proposal (15 points).

Ethics quiz: (5 points) Posted in OWL

Literature review exercise: (10 points, individual) Find four peer-reviewed articles that are related to your community partner challenge. For each, provide a brief annotation that includes a summary of the article, and specific points that are relevant to your project. Also indicate how you found each article, including your keywords/subject terms and the database you consulted.

Quantitative activity (Silly survey): (5 points, individual) Everyone will take a “silly survey” and provide a 400-500-word critique of the survey design.

Research question activity: (5 points, individual) You will come up with a researchable question for your community partner challenge.

Final exam: (20 points, individual)

Class participation and preparedness: (10 points) Participation and preparation marks will be based on attendance in tutorial and participation in class discussions, as well as evidence that you have engaged with the course materials and are prepared and ready to engage in class discussions and your group work.

Absences and late work

- Attendance in tutorial is necessary, so if you will be absent, please notify your group members and TA. You are allowed one unexcused absence. Please contact your TA and cc Professor Adler for subsequent absences. We may ask for documentation.
- Attendance is also mandatory when your group is assigned to meet during the lecture hour and during the meetings with the community partners (online and in person). If you must be absent for any reason, please contact the professor.
- Some assignments are due at the end of modules. If you need an extension for any deadlines, please contact your TA and cc Professor Adler with an extension request ahead of the deadline.
- The group project requires that you contribute regularly and on time so that the group can meet the final proposal deadlines. If you need extra time, please contact your TA and the professor so that we can help you make adjustments if necessary.
- The midterm is a take-home and should be submitted on time. Any requests for extensions for the midterm must be accompanied with documentation of medical or compassionate grounds.
- If you have documented accommodations, be sure to clarify expectations with your TA and professor. This course has quite a lot of flexibility built into it, but there may be certain situations or assignments that you need accommodations for.

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

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software 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. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Support services

Student Support Services (including the services provided by the USC): <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre, including Services for Students with Disabilities: https://studentexperience.uwo.ca/student_development/index.html

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Important Dates for Winter 2022/23 Semester

1. Last day to add a second term course: January 17, 2023
2. Reading Break: February 18, 2023 - February 26, 2023
3. Last day to drop a second term course without academic penalty: March 7, 2023
4. Good Friday: April 7, 2023
5. Last day of classes: Monday, April 10, 2023
6. Study days: April 11 and 12, 2023
7. Examination period: April 13, 2023 - April 30, 2023.

Students will receive graded work worth no less than 15% at least 3 days prior to the deadline for withdrawal without academic penalty. This year, the date by which students are to have received at least 15% of their grade in a first semester course is March 11, 2020. Students can find details about this academic policy here:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/evaluation_undergrad.pdf

Photography and video or audio recording are allowed only with permission. See me if you need to record any aspect of the class session.

Please, when you write emails to me or the teaching assistants, provide [MIT 3000] in the subject and maintain a professional tone and delivery. For more on this see: Laura Portwood-Stacer, [How to email your professor \(without being annoying AF\)](#) 😊

Weekly schedule of meetings in lecture period, Tuesdays 9:30-11:30 am

January 10: Whole class meets
January 17: Meet with Community Partners via Zoom
January 24: Group 1 (9:30), Group 2 (10:30)
January 31: Group 3 (9:30), Group 4 (10:30)
February 7: (Prof Adler away) <u>Check in with community partners via zoom</u>
February 14: Group 5 (9:30), 6 (10:30) *Midterm due February 17 for everyone
February 21 (reading week)
February 28: Group 1 (9:30), 2 (10:30)
March 7: Group 3 (9:30), 4 (10:30)
March 14: Group 5 (9:30), 6 (10:30)
March 21: Drop in/workshop *Written proposals due in tutorial this week
March 28: Proposal presentations: In person <u>No tutorials this week</u>
April 4: Final exam review
Final exam date TBD

Module 1: Getting started (January 10-January 23)

Introductions, Community engaged research, Ethics, Asking questions

Due at end of module: Ethics quiz

Introductions	Community engaged research	Ethics	Paradigms, Theory
Read the syllabus View introductory video Familiarize yourself with the OWL site Leavy Chapter 1	View the CEL video Read the materials from the community partners Leavy Chapter 9	View Ethics lecture Leavy Chapter 2 Apologies for Philippe Rushton first step forward for Western University <u>Feminist Data Manifest-no</u>	View paradigm lecture Stuart Hall: Representation & the Media

Module 2: Literature, theory, methodology (January 24-February 13)

Libraries and archives – Reading research/Reporting research – Asking question – Qualitative research

Due at end of module: (1) Citations to 4 peer reviewed articles + annotation and (2) Research Question

Libraries and archives	Reading research, Reporting research	Asking questions	Qualitative research
View library and archives lecture	View citation lecture	View asking questions lecture	Leavy Chapter 6

<p>Subject headings</p> <p>Revising your search strategy</p> <p>Refining your search with fields</p> <p>Indigenous residential school records can be destroyed, Supreme Court rules</p> <p>Colleen Burgess & Tom Peace: 19th Century Legacies in 21st Century Historical Research Practice</p> <p>Archivist Deb Majer-Fraser video</p>	<p>Leavy Chapter 3</p> <p>Katherine McKittrick, <i>Dear Science and Other Stories</i>: Footnotes (Books and Papers Scattered about the Floor), begins on p. 14</p> <p>How to write a science news story based on a research paper</p> <p>How to Read and Understand a Scientific Paper: A Guide for Non-Scientists</p>	<p>Leavy chapter 4</p>	<p>Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Unbecoming Claims"</p> <p>David Nemer, <i>Technology of the Oppressed</i>, Chapter 1 (Introduction)</p>
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Module 3: Methods (February 14-March 13)

Field research/interviews – Content analysis/discourse analysis – Quantitative research/surveys – Research creation

Due at end of module: Silly survey reflection.

<p>Field research/Interviews</p>	<p>Content analysis/Discourse analysis</p>	<p>Quantitative research/surveys</p>	<p>Research creation</p>
<p>Cormac McGrath, Per J. Palmgren & Matilda Liljedahl (2019) Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research</p>	<p>Erika Yi, "Themes don't just emerge," <i>Medium</i>, July 23, 2018</p>	<p>Leavy Chapters 5 and 7</p> <p>10 Simple Rules for Responsible Big Data Research</p>	<p>Leavy, Chapter 8</p> <p>Check out the Research Creation toolkit in OWL</p>

interviews, <i>Medical Teacher</i> , 41:9, 1002-1006	Hsieh, Hsiu-Fang, and Sarah E. Shannon. " Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis ." <i>Qualitative Health Research</i> 15, no. 9 (November 2005): 1277–88.		
David Nemer, <i>Technology of the Oppressed</i> . Appendix (Methodology)			

Module 4: Putting your research to work (March 14-April 4 + final exam)

Storytelling – proposals – final projects, final exam

Delivering your proposal	Storytelling	Final projects/exam
On the Art of Writing Proposals	Listen to part one: Thomas King, The Truth about Stories	Final written proposals due in tutorial the week of March 21 Presentation on March 28 Exam review April 4 Final exam TBD in person

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.