



MIT 2154G



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Journalism Practices and Principles Course Outline for Winter 2023

1. Contact Information

Course Instructor

Mark Kearney

Contact Information

FNB 4134, mkearney@uwo.ca

Office Hours

Tuesdays 1:30 p.m. – 3 p.m.

2. Course Overview and Important Dates:



Delivery Mode	Location	Day	Time
In-person but if things change re the pandemic, we will go online	Talbot College 309	Tuesdays	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

*Details about design and delivery of the course are listed below in Section 6

Classes Start	Reading Week	Classes End	Study day(s)	Exam Period
January 9	February 18-26	April 10	April 11-12	April 13-30

* March 7: Last day to drop a second-term half course without penalty

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely 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 remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

3. **Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30 p.m. – 3 p.m. in FNB 4134.** Other times on Zoom by appointment.



4. **Technical or PPE Requirements if anything is done online:**



Stable internet connection



Laptop or computer



Working webcam



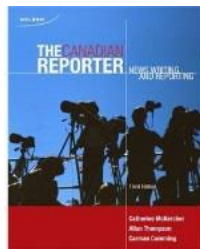
Mask – when in the classroom

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. **Resources**

Some class notes will be posted on the course OWL site following class

Recommended Reading:



This text is **not required** but it has good information that some students in the past have found useful. I will try to have this on reserve in Weldon library. There may be a copy in the FIMS library as well.

The Canadian Reporter, 3rd edition, by Catherine McKercher, Allan Thompson and Carman Cumming (Nelson, 2011).

- . Try to view at least one newspaper regularly – online or paper.
- . In addition, you should regularly view or listen to broadcast news.

. You should acquaint yourself with Canadian Press style which I will discuss in class

Other required or suggested readings may be posted on the course site.

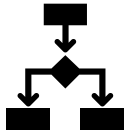
6. Course Description and Design

This course investigates some of the controversies about, and skills of journalism, studying both mainstream news services and citizen journalism, and providing an introduction to journalistic writing and news production, and the everyday practices of various types of news organizations.

In this course, we will study a variety of genres of journalistic writing, from hard-news stories written on deadline to event coverage and profiles/features. The genres of writing will be examined in several ways — as products of the news media system, as sources of information, and as the first rough draft of history. Students will have opportunities to practise different journalistic genres.

Writing for the mass media incorporates the basic requirements of good writing as well as knowledge of the special requirements of journalism. The course will focus on the skills and techniques of writing for mainstream media such as daily newspapers but will also offer insight into citizen journalism and journalism in electronic media.

The course will also examine some of the ethical aspects of journalism and how these affect the daily practices of journalists.



FIMS Prerequisite statement:

Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enrol 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. It's my understanding there is not prerequisite for this course.

Delivery Mode [specify]	Dates	Time	Frequency
Face to face	Jan. 10 – April 4	Tuesdays 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.	weekly
Virtual asynchronous (if applicable)	N/A		weekly

All assignments should be double-spaced and in **Word** (no PDFs, Pages etc. please) and as close to the assigned word count as possible. **Assignments must be submitted via the OWL site for the course.** Emailed assignments may be acceptable in certain circumstances.

I hope to have in-class workshopping for two of your assignments; you will do so in small groups of about five to which you may be assigned. You should have copies of your draft work for fellow students so they can provide you feedback before you submit your final version to me. **There are no final exams in this course.**

Assignments Submission

I don't like to penalize late assignments; however, since one of the purposes of this course is to familiarize you with journalism, you need to know that **deadlines are crucial**. For this reason, all assignments will be due on the date and time specified **unless you negotiate an extension at least 48 hours in advance**. Following any other policy would be an injustice to you as a future writer. Assignments are submitted electronically via OWL and in Word.

- Attendance at face to face or synchronous sessions is required

All course material will be posted to OWL: <http://owl.uwo.ca>. Any changes will be indicated on the OWL site and discussed with the class.

If students need assistance, they can seek support on the [OWL Help page](#). Alternatively, they can contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#). They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

[Google Chrome](#) or [Mozilla Firefox](#) are the preferred browsers to optimally use OWL; update your browsers frequently. Students interested in evaluating their internet speed, please click [here](#).

7. Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand how news is gathered
- Recognize genres of journalistic writing
- Evaluate the appropriate use of each genre
- Produce journalistic stories in specific genres
- Identify ethical concerns relating to journalism and evaluate the appropriate response
- Critically engage with contemporary issues and debates relating to journalism and the movement of information

8. Course Content and Schedule



Topic

Week One

Jan. 10 Journalism Guidelines, what is news, news writing practice

Week Two

Jan. 17 Writing for a Mass Audience
Writing Leads, the inverted pyramid, differences between journalism and academic writing, more news writing practice

Week Three

Jan. 24 Other types of leads, the importance of accuracy,
Canadian Press style, story ideas

Week Four

Jan. 31 Covering Events, event story samples,
writing follow-up stories such as ones on Covid-19
News Assignment 1 due on Feb. 1
Submit story via OWL

Week Five

Feb. 7 Interviewing and quoting people,
More story examples of event and follow-up coverage

Week Six

Feb. 14 Features/Profiles
 Writing for the Web and Social Media

Feb. 20 -Feb 24 Reading Week - no classes

Week Seven

Feb. 28 Features/Profiles, Continued grammar review
**Assignment Two due via OWL on
March 1**

Week Eight

March 7 Basic Editing/ Headlines
 Structuring Stories
Working on group assignment during class time

Week Nine

March 14 **Finishing up group assignment which is due today March 14**
 More profile tips.
 Other kinds of journalism – opinion, columns,
 longer features, beat reporting

Week Ten

March 21 Specialized reporting, freelancing, recycling your stories,
 query letters, payment for articles, profile checklist

Profile Proposal due March 24

Week Eleven

March 28 Ethics and Legalities, copyright
 Discussing profile progress

Week Twelve

April 4

Future of Journalism

Workshopping Profile

Assignment Three (Profile) due April 5

Wrap up

Term ends on April 10

9. Evaluation



Below is the evaluation breakdown for the course. Any deviations will be communicated.

Assessment	Format	Weighting	Due Date
News Assignment One (started in class)	Written	20%	Feb. 1
Assignment Two (Event/Follow-up)	Written	25%	March 1
Group Reporting Project	Written with oral presentation	15%	March 14
Final Assignment (Profile)	Written	35%	April 5 ((Profile proposal due week of March 20)
Participation/In class work	In class and online	5%	Continuous

- All assignments are due at 11:55 pm EST unless otherwise specified
- Rubrics will be used to evaluate assessments and will be posted on OWL and with the instructions
- After an assessment is returned, students should wait 24 hours to digest feedback before contacting their evaluator; to ensure a timely response, reach out within 7 days
- *Journalistic Assignments:* Please note that **you will not be allowed to profile and/or interview any family members for any assignments. Any use of relatives in any story will result in an automatic five-mark deduction.**
- **Yes, grammar and spelling do matter in all written work.**
- There is one *news writing assignment*: it will be completed in a specific time frame online at the OWL site.
- The *second assignment* asks you to either write a follow-up story on some news item of your own choosing) OR you'll cover an event of some kind if you can do that safely.
- The group assignment (likely five students per group) will involve choosing from topics suggested by the instructor where you will interview people, take photos, and

provide a written compilation of the work done by members of the group. More details to come in class.

- The *final writing assignment* will be in the form of a profile on a person of your choosing (no family members). A short three or four-line proposal must be sent to me for approval and input by March 24. **The proposal will not be marked, as such, but must be submitted by the due date or you will receive up to a five-mark deduction on the grade of the profile.**
- **Detailed information on assignments will be posted on OWL.**

Click [here](#) for a detailed and comprehensive set of policies and regulations concerning examinations and grading. The table below outlines the University-wide grade descriptors. Detailed FIMS specific descriptors are included in the Notes from the Dean's Office appended to this syllabus.

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

Information about late or missed evaluations:

- Deadlines are sacred in journalism and assignments should be submitted electronically before the specified time via OWL. I will indicate that for each assignment. Unless prior arrangements for an extension have been made with the instructor **at least 48 hours in advance** of the due date.
- Late assessments without academic consideration will be subject to a late penalty 5 %/day
- Late assessments with academic consideration require the student to work with the Academic Advising unit in their Faculty of registration; once that has been approved, students need to contact the instructor to arrange for an alternate submission date
- For work worth 10% or less, students should contact the instructor directly about how to make up missed work

10. Participation and Engagement



- Students are expected to attend each class and participate and engage with content as much as possible during class by asking questions and offering their own insights
- Students can participate during class sessions. **Missing classes means missing an opportunity to participate and can affect your overall grade for participation.**
- Students can also participate by interacting in the forums with their peers and instructors
- I will track your postings to the Forums, and it will be part of your 5% Participation grade. **Failure to meet the minimum posting requirements or discussions in the classroom can result in a significant deduction to your participation grade in the course.**

11. Communication



- Students should check the OWL site every 24 – 48 hours
- A weekly update will be provided on the OWL announcements
- Students should email their instructor(s) and teaching assistant(s) using OWL “messages”
- Emails will be monitored daily during the week; students will receive a response in 24 – 48 hours
- This course may use the OWL forum for some discussions
- Students should post all course-related content on the discussion forum so that everyone can access answers to questions
- The discussion forums will be monitored weekly by the instructor

12. Professionalism & Privacy:



- Western students are expected to follow the [Student Code of Conduct](#). Additionally, the following expectations and professional conduct apply to this course:
- Students are expected to follow online etiquette expectations provided on OWL
- All course materials created by the instructor(s) are copyrighted and cannot be sold/shared
- Recordings are not permitted (audio or video) without explicit permission
- Permitted recordings are not to be distributed
- Students may be expected to take an academic integrity pledge before some assessments
- All recorded sessions will remain within the course site or unlisted if streamed

13. How to Be Successful in this Class:

Students enrolled in this class should understand the level of autonomy and self-discipline required to be successful.



1. Make note of all your deadlines at the start of the term and schedule time at the start of each week to get organized and manage your time.
2. Make it a daily habit to log onto OWL to ensure you have seen everything posted to help you succeed in this class.
3. Follow weekly checklists created on OWL or create your own to help you stay on track.
4. Take notes in class as we go through the lesson material and revisit the lessons when posted on OWL. Keeping handwritten notes or even notes on a regular Word document will help you learn more effectively than just reading or watching any videos.
5. Do not be afraid to ask questions in class and outside of it. If you are struggling with a topic, check any online discussion boards or contact me. your instructor.
6. Reward yourself for successes. It seems easier to motivate ourselves knowing that there is something waiting for us at the end of the task.
7. FIMS Undergraduate Services (fims@uwo.ca) and [Western Student Experience](#) are resources to help students succeed.

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.