The University of Western Ontario
Faculty of Information and Media Studies

MIT 2155B – Social Media + Networked Life
Course Outline, Winter 2023

<u>Instructor Information</u>
Name: Prof. Luke Stark (pronouns: he/him/his)
Office: FNB 4035
Student Meetings: By appointment via Zoom (https://calendly.com/lukestark)
Office Phone: 519-661-2111 ext 88511
E-Mail: Please contact me through the OWL Messages feature, or at cstark23@uwo.ca *please note I will work to answer your email within 24 hours, excluding weekends*

<u>Course Information</u>
Weekly meetings: Wednesdays 3:30pm-6:30pm ET in FNB 1250 or via Zoom as required.

OWL site information: https://owl.uwo.ca/portal/site/ec1fcbd3-0cd2-4b89-a4e1-b598f399a32e
Technology requirements: Students will require regular or at least consistent access to a computer and internet connection capable of handling streaming video. If this is an issue, please contact me as soon as possible.

<u>Prerequisites or Antirequisites</u>
Antirequisites: Digital Communication 2310A/B

<u>Course Description & Objectives</u>
It's hard to deny—especially over the past three years—how central social media platforms have become to our everyday lives as citizens and social creatures. Most of you likely can't remember a time without ubiquitous social media, which now mediate much of how we experience culture, politics, and the world itself.

Yet social media platforms don't exist in a vacuum.

In this course, we'll think expansively about the relationships between social media platforms and the people who make and use them.

You'll learn how to both describe and analyze how these relationships have influenced and continue to shape our everyday lives, and those of diverse communities around the world.

You'll be introduced to a variety of scholarly perspectives on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok, and the elements of digital life increasingly associated with them: digital games and game streaming; Influencer culture; and tracking devices like FitBits and other wearables.

We'll consider how the history of the Internet has led to the business models of today's social media platforms, and how these businesses in turn influence relations of power in the world today.

You'll learn to trace how political, cultural, and social power circulates via digital media in different contexts, and how different facets of human identity, including race, disability, gender, and sexuality, are shaped by social media.

You'll become adept in applying your knowledge to the changing digital media landscape, developing a mix of critical and applied research skills and using them part of a group collaboration.

And perhaps most centrally in these perpetually challenging times, the most important objective of the course is to support each other in learning and growing throughout the semester.

Method of Evaluation

In this course, **you have access to 100 possible evaluation points.** Collecting 100 points means you will receive 100% in the course. Point values for assignments, reflections, short prompts, and other forms of evaluation are variable and commensurate with the time commitment required /difficulty of the task.

Regardless of point value, **short in-term assessments and activities will be evaluated on a binary scale (credit/no credit)** and **larger activities/group project components will be evaluated on a simple three tier scale (full credit, partial credit, or no credit)**. Your cumulative point total will be available to view in OWL Gradebook throughout the semester.

Weekly Tempo

All activities discussion pods for each module will be open for **two weeks**, starting on the Monday their corresponding module is opened to the class. **Each module will be opened to the class the week I lecture on it**; please aim to do all module readings before lecture, and complete module components in order.

Each week's module content will be available as of **Monday at 8am EST; each will close two week later at 9pm.** Lectures will take place synchronously either on Zoom or in-person from **3:30pm-6:30pm every Wednesday.** For weeks where there is a pre-planned Zoom lecture, look for a link emailed to the class.

After a module closes, **it will not be possible for you to submit assignments or participate in discussion for that module unless under *truly* exceptional circumstances**.

All discussion prompts will be available in advance. **I strongly encourage students who have signed up as Discussion Leaders to prepare their responses before the opening of the forum each week (e.g. prepare your response the Friday prior to the forum opening).** I also encourage you to complete warmup activities (which will be brief) prior to each week's lecture if possible.

Points are divided up among various forms of evaluation as follows:

- *Weekly Completion/Exit Ticket***: up to 12 points**
  You will receive points for completing all aspects of the module each week: this will be assessed by your completion of weekly "entry ticket" and "exit ticket" forms at the beginning and end of each class. **It is critical you complete both the entry and exit tickets each week if you wish to receive full points.**

- *Discussion Pod:* **up to 17 points**
  At the beginning of the semester, you will be assigned to a discussion pod of between 8-10 students. You will meet as a pod **both in-person during class time and online using Voice Thread** (where each pod will have its own dedicated space). Each week, I will provide discussion prompts both in-class and online to help structure your observations and discussions with other students.

  At the beginning of the semester, each student should pick and list three social media accounts they follow regularly as their discussion focus. These accounts can be on any platform, and of any character (within the guidelines around etiquette and course conduct listed in this syllabus). **You should track these three accounts throughout the entire course**. You'll relate the themes of each week's class to one or more of the social media accounts you have chosen as part of your discussions.

  Please use the audio recording feature of VoiceThread for discussions. The goal here is to give you a break from typing and let you engage in discussions via a different medium.

  Within your discussion pod, you can earn points in the following ways:

- Discussion Leader (2 points): preparing a 300-word reflection on a particular week's discussion topic, recording it, and sending a transcript to me. **Please note you must send me a transcript** to receive credit as a discussion Leader; otherwise, you will only receive credit as a Respondent.

- Discussion Respondent (1 point): Engaging with the reflections and prompts in your pod, and with the conversation throughout the week.

If it so happens that there is no Discussion Leader in a pod for a particular week's module, Discussion Respondents should feel free to engage with the prompts provided by me.

You are responsible for making sure you have participated in discussion forums in any combination up to the maximum 15 points. Please note that you cannot receive more than the maximum points for discussion activities.

- *Weekly Short Assessments***: up to 18 points**
  You will be asked to complete short assignments throughout the semester. Please see the detailed course schedule for the list of assignments and point values. These activities are not meant to be onerous, nor are they intended as busy work. They are designed to help you reflect on how key concepts in the course relate to your own experience of social media, and to apply your knowledge to real-world case studies. As noted, these activities will be assigned some number of points graded on a simple binary scale (full credit/no credit) based on whether you have completed them satisfactorily.

- *Social Media Self-Audit:* **up to 15 points**
  This individual activity is intended to help you document and interpret your own social media use patterns and reflect on them about the content of the course. The activity includes three components, each worth 5 points: these focus on hardware, on apps, and on personal data. A more detailed assignment rubric will be available later in the semester.

  Due dates:
  Part 1: Friday, February 3rd
  Part 2: Friday, February 17th
  Part 3: Friday, March 17th

- *Collaborative Group Project:* **up to 30 points**
  Early in the semester, you will be assigned to a project group of between 3-5 students. This group will be a subset of your larger discussion pod group. As a group, you will prepare a multimedia research portfolio focusing on a social media platform or network, *assigned randomly to you by me*.

  The finished portfolio will include:
  - **A 3000-word research brief** on the *organizational history, business model, and public impacts/controversies* of the platform (10 points for initial draft/5 points for finished version)

  - **An annotated bibliography** of at least 10 articles from academic journals (5 points)

  - **A 10-minute video** exploring how *three or more themes* from the course modules (such as the circulation of power, disability gender and misogyny, racism and antiblackness, surveillance) are visible or expressed via the platform in question (10 points)

  Due dates:
  Draft of group research brief: Friday, March 3rd
  Annotated bibliography: Friday, March 10th
  Final version of group research brief: Friday, March 24th

10-minute video: Friday, March 31st

A more detailed assignment rubric will be available at the beginning of the semester.

- *Collegiality:* **up to 8 points**
    Throughout the semester, I will provide opportunities for students to gain extra points for going above and beyond. Students can gain a maximum of 8 collegiality points over the course of the term by doing the following:

    Notetaking (1 point per notetaking session, available to each student four times): Take **detailed, thorough** notes of lecture and any class discussion and share them with your peers through a dedicated OWL page. T**o access these points, your notes must be submitted within 48 hours of the lecture.** I reserve the right to give partial mark for more schematic notes and will check for copying – please be honest with this one!

    Gratitude Assignment: Email an Author (1 point per email, available to students three times): Email the author or authors of one of the course's assigned readings to recognize their work and express your appreciation/gratitude. **Please note that you must send this email within two weeks of the module for which the reading is assigned.** Choose a quote from the reading that resonated with you and describe your reaction to it. Briefly reflect on how the author's writing might shape your thinking and academic work in the future. **Make sure to let the author(s) know you do not expect a response, and that the message is simply to recognize their work**. Please either CC or BCC me on the email.

    Letter to Future Students (1 point): in the last week of the course only, write a short letter to next semester's students with tips and tricks for navigating the class, along with my teaching style, that would have been helpful to know from the start.

    Please note that other than the Letter to Future Students, all collegiality assignments must be submitted prior to March 31, 2023.

At the end of the term, point totals will be converted to letter grades according to the following scale, which corresponds to the Western marking scale (https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/general/grades_undergrad.pdf):

A+   90 – 100 points

A   80 – 89 points

B   70 – 79 points

C   60 – 69 points

D   50 – 59 points

F   below 50 points or assigned when course is dropped with academic penalty

What do these grading tiers and the point system mean for you, the student?
You will have to work in this class—that's unavoidable. However, I'm interested in giving you some control over your experience of the course. Using this grade scale, you should be able to modulate the amount of work that corresponds with your course goals and bandwidth for this semester.

If you want an A+, then make sure you put together a minimum of 90 points by the end of the term. If all you want or need is a C, then make sure you get at least 60 points; it's up to you. Moreover, you never have to wonder where you stand in the class—you can look at your points, look at the grade scale, and plan accordingly.

What do these grading tiers and the point system mean for me, the professor?
By simplifying evaluation scales and assigning point tiers, I'm able to focus on the important things, like designing engaging content and interacting with your ideas. It also helps me limit the most subjective dimensions of grading—dimensions that often implicitly reproduce gendered, racial, ethnic, class, ability or other biases. I want an A grade to be reasonably attainable by all who want to do the appropriate work; it shouldn't only be something "natural" talents or stereotypically "good" students can get, since "natural" and "good" are often just codes for certain kinds of privilege.

Etiquette & Course Conduct

In this course, I'd like you to strive to embody Western's equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) principles. Western's institutional commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) supports the University's mandate as a research-intensive institution of higher learning, an employer of choice and a community leader. The University is enriched by the diversity of our campus community and strengthened by our shared commitment to equity and inclusion. Black Lives Matter, as do the lives and experiences of Indigenous peoples, other visible minorities, and all underrepresented and equity-seeking groups*. Your conduct in this course should be guided by the principles below:

Equity – We value equity of access and opportunity for members of underrepresented and equity-seeking groups*. We take action to identify and address barriers to the full participation of members of these groups at the University.

Diversity – We value and respect the diversity of our campus community. We recognize the important contributions that diverse perspectives and lived experiences bring to Western's learning, teaching, working and research environments.

Inclusion – We value inclusion and active engagement with and across diverse communities in all aspects of university life. We foster a welcoming campus community where everyone feels respected, valued and included.

*Members of underrepresented or equity-seeking groups includes, but may not be limited to, women, Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Inuit and Métis), persons with disabilities, members of racialized groups and members of LGBTQ2+ communities. In recognition that all individuals have multiple aspects of identity, an intersectional lens will also be used when assessing barriers and/or developing policies/programs at the University.

Your goal is full attendance, attention, participation, listening and reading all of required texts. That said, while I expect the very best you can give, this semester is unlike many others, and goals are always aspirational. Do your best, but don't beat yourself up when (as we all do) it feels to you as if you come up short.

Disagreements are expected, but while arguments are not contests, they often have high stakes (sometimes invisible to you, but highly compelling to others – see the EDI principles above). Personal attacks, bullying, or intimidation are not acceptable under any circumstance. Please keep nitpicking to a minimum; all questions, whether basic or advance, are valuable. Remember, you are free to change your mind at any time -- as are others.

Do not engage in "seek and destroy" criticism of others' ideas, or of ideas in the readings. Critique is a powerful tool and can do damage. If you have something critical to say about a reading, please be ready to explain how the piece could be improved; if you disagree with the premise of a piece, read to understand what motivates the argument -- without knowing your adversary, how can you defeat it?

The testimony of personal experience is a necessary and often valuable part of our intellectual grounding and trajectory. However, like critique, testimony is also a powerful tool that can cut both ways. Please be thoughtful about mobilizing personal experience in class. Ask yourself if the testimony is relevant, and safe for you to share; ask yourself too if you are prepared to seriously consider others' interpretations of your experience if they differ from your own? Anecdotes are a different kind of evidence that systematically collected scholarly data, and useful (or harmful) in different ways.

For more information on Western's policies around academic integrity, including plagiarism, please visit https://teaching.uwo.ca/teaching/assessing/academic-integrity.html

Course Materials & Grading Policy

All course materials will be available via OWL, including short video lectures, accessible PDFs, links to external online content, discussion fora, and text-based assignment prompts.

There are no late penalties for this course, other than the polices regarding course modules and points already described.

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, 2022. Students can find details about this academic policy here: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/evaluation_undergrad.pdf. Please note, students are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of the grades they have received in their courses.

The final date to drop this course without academic penalty is **March 7th, 2023.**

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.~~

Statement on the Use of Zoom Recording

Class Zoom sessions for this course will be recorded for accessibility and remote learning purposes. The data captured during these recordings may include your image, voice recordings, chat logs and personal identifiers (name displayed on the screen). The recordings will be used for educational purposes related to this course, including evaluations. The recordings may be disclosed to other individuals under special circumstances. Please contact the instructor if you have any concerns related to session recordings. Participants in this course are not permitted to record sessions themselves, except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor.

Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge that Western University's buildings are located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Attawandaron peoples, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present, and future, and acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced removal from this territory. This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous peoples (e.g. First Nations, Métis and Inuit) whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors of our society, and we honor and respect the Indigenous communities still living on and connected to this land by striving for restorative justice for First Nations peoples, and for all.

Course Credit

This syllabus is in part grounded on and inspired by on materials developed by Drs. Gabriella Coleman of McGill University, Jamie Levine Daniel of IUPUI, Casey Fiesler of the University of Colorado-Boulder, Anna Lauren Hoffmann of the University of Washington, Max Liboiron of Memorial University, Sarah J Martin of Memorial University, Jonathan Sterne of McGill University, and M. Sauter of the University of Maryland.

Detailed Weekly Description

Week of January 9th
Module 1: Hello, World! **[module open January 9th to January 23rd]**
3 points total

Warmup Activity: How are you holding up? **(1 point)**

Lecture **[January 11th]**: Introduction/Surveying the landscape/Course nuts and bolts

Assessment: Syllabus scavenger hunt **(1 points)**

Discussion (via VoiceThread): Introduce yourself!
Introduce yourself with the following information:
- your preferred name
- your preferred pronouns (only if you feel comfortable doing so)
- your program and year at Western
- the social media platform you spend the most time on, and why

Complete checklist on OWL and entry & exit tickets via MS Forms **(1 point)**

Week of January 16th
Module 2: Power, Online and Offline **[module open January 16th to January 30th]**
3 points total

Warmup Activity: Define "power" in your own words **(1 point)**

Watch: Michel Foucault on Power (1981)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7x5M-Gs2X1M

Read: Couldry, Nick. "Power." *Keywords for Media Studies*. Ed. Laurie Ouellette and Jonathan Gray. New York: NYU Press 2017. 145–148.

Read: Bucher, Tanya. 2017 "The algorithmic imaginary: exploring the ordinary affects of Facebook algorithms." *Information, Communication & Society* 20(1): 30–44.

Read: MacCallum, Lindsey. *Choosing & Using Sources: A Guide to Academic Research, 1st Canadian Edition.* University of Regina Open Texbooks, https://opentextbooks.uregina.ca/choosingsources/

Lecture **[January 18th]**: Some different views on power/ How does power circulate online and off?/Finding and using academic sources

Assessment: Writing Reflection on power in your own digital life **(1 points)**
In a one-page essay (~250 words), identify a situation in your own everyday digital life where you see power at work. Make sure you use the definitions of power covered this week to analyze how power is circulating in your chosen example, and cover the following topics: a) what relationships are involved? b) What types of power (symbolic, political, economic) are visible? c) Who benefits and in what way? d) And how do these definitions of power differ from the definition you proposed in the warm-up activity?

Discussion (VoiceThread): Pick your discussion focus

Each student should pick (and list) five social media accounts they follow regularly (as per instructions for Discussion Pods above). Tell your fellow pod-mates what interests you about these accounts, and how you expect them to potentially relate to the themes of the course.

Complete checklist on OWL and entry & exit tickets via MS Forms **(1 point)**

Week of January 23rd
Module 3: The History & Political Economy of Platforms **[module open January 23ʳᵈ to February 6th]**
    3 points total

Read: Read: Driscoll, Kevin. 2016. "Social Media's Dial-Up Ancestor: The Bulletin Board System". *IEEE Spectrum*, 53, 11: 54-60.

Read: Nooney, Laine. 2021. "How the Personal Computer Broke the Human Body." *Motherboard*, May 12. https://www.vice.com/en/article/y3dda7/how-the-personal-computer-broke-the-human-body

Read: Gillespie, Tarleton. 2015. "Platforms Intervene." *Social Media + Society* 1.1, 1–2.

Read: Read: Sauter, Molly. 2017, May 15. "The Apophenic Machine." *Real Life*. https://reallifemag.com/the-apophenic-machine/

Read: Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong and Jorge Cotte. "Reimagining Networks: An interview with Wendy Hui Kyong Chun." *The New Inquiry*, 12 May 2020. https://thenewinquiry.com/reimagining-networks/

Read: Stark, Luke, and Kate Crawford. 2014. "The Conservatism of Emoji." *The New Inquiry,* August 20. https://thenewinquiry.com/the-conservatism-of-emoji/

Lecture **[January 25ᵗʰ]**: A brief history of "social media"/how platforms intervene/homophily, nudges, and dark patterns/case study: emotion in social media

Activity: Emoji Design Challenge **(2 points)**
    Propose a new or modified emoji character that would fill what you see as a gap in the emoji character set and explain (in 150-200 words) how and why your proposal should be accepted. Make sure you support this argument with evidence from this week's readings. Please include a sketch or image of your proposed emoji. Further instructions are available via OWL.

Discussion (VoiceThread): What's your attention worth?
    Do the accounts you've chosen as a focus have a business model? If so, what is it? And how do you think social media platforms could change their business models to better balance preserving your attention and serving the public good?

Complete checklist on OWL and entry & exit tickets via MS Forms **(1 point)**

Week of January 30ᵗʰ
Module 4: We're All Influencers Now (Yikes!) **[module open January 30ᵗʰ to February 14ᵗʰ]**
4 points total

Read: Cotter, Kelley. 2018. "Playing the Visibility Game: How Digital Influencers and Algorithms Negotiate Influence on Instagram." *New Media & Society* 21.4: 895–913.

Read: Hill, Kashmir. 2020, July 31. "I Tried to Live Without the Tech Giants. It Was Impossible." *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/31/technology/blocking-the-tech-giants.html

Read: Bishop, Katie. 2020, May 2. "The pandemic and the influencer: will the lifestyle survive coronavirus?" *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/media/2020/may/02/influencers-coronavirus-future-income-marketing-lifestyle

https://www.wired.com/story/meet-the-lobbyist-next-door/

https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/29/well/mind/tiktok-mental-illness-diagnosis.html

https://www.salon.com/2022/08/23/andrew-tate-shows-how-fascists-recruit-online-men-fall-victim-to-the-insecurity-to-fascism-pipeline/

Lecture **[February 1]**: Famous for fifteen seconds/TikTok/Intersectionality and influence

Activity: TikTok PSA **(3 points)**
> Create and upload a 7-second video in the style of a Vine, TikTok, or IG Reel. The video should seek to influence, but the message is up to you: it can be advocating for a product, a cause, or a current issue. Be as creative as possible within the constraints of the assignment and current pandemic conditions. Please attach a short text (~250 words) explaining the message you are seeking to promote and relating your video to the course readings this week.

Discussion (VoiceThread): Influencers and Us
> Are you or is someone you know an influencer? Are the accounts you've chosen? What are your/their strategies for gaining and maintaining influence? Is there money involved? How do you/they fit into the business models of platforms? How do you/they seek to subvert those business models?

Complete checklist on OWL and entry & exit tickets via MS Forms **(1 point)**

Part 1 of Social Media Self-Audit due Friday, February 3rd

Week of February 6th
Module 5: Surveillance, Propaganda & Misinformation [module open February 6th to February 20th]
3 points total

Read: "The Pandemic Is No Excuse to Surveil Students" by Zeynep Tufekci, *The Atlantic* (4 September 2020) https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2020/09/pandemic-no-excuse-colleges-surveil-students/616015/

Read: Jack, Caroline. 2017. *Lexicon of Lies: Terms for Problematic Information*. New York: Data & Society Research Institute. https://datasociety.net/pubs/oh/DataAndSociety_LexiconofLies.pdf

Read: Donovan, Joan, Emily Dreyfuss, and Brian Friedberg. 2022. Introduction (pages 1-23) from *Meme Wars: The Untold Story of the Online Battles Upending Democracy in America*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Read: "All of YouTube, Not Just the Algorithm, is a Far-Right Propaganda Machine" by Becca Lewis, *FWWD* (8 January 2020) https://ffwd.medium.com/all-of-youtube-not-just-the-algorithm-is-a-far-right-propaganda-machine-29b07b12430

Lecture [**February 8**]: A short history of surveillance/Propaganda goes digital/Meme wars

Discussion (VoiceThread):

Activity: *Black Mirror* Writer's Room Exercise **(2 points)**

> The Netflix show *Black Mirror* imagines dystopian future technologies *just* fictional enough to creep us out and make us think critically about the role of these technologies in our lives. The University of Colorado-Boulder's Prof. Casey Fiesler has developed an assignment to help students use science fiction to explore different possible futures: the "Black Mirror Writer's Room" (you can learn more at https://howwegettonext.com/the-black-mirror-writers-room-teaching-technology-ethics-through-speculation-f1a9e2deccf4). Create your own ~350-word synopsis of a possible Black Mirror episode about a possible surveillance technology AND a brief postscript describing how we can avoid your scenario actually coming to pass.

Complete checklist on OWL and entry & exit tickets via MS Forms **(1 point)**

Week of February 13th
Module 6: Gig Work **[module open February 13th to February 27th] [NOTE: CLASS WILL BE VIA ZOOM]**
2 points total

Warmup Activity: Mid-term reflection on the course thus far **(1 point)**

Read: Ticona, Julia. 2017, June 14. "The Future of Work: The Digital Hustle." *Pacific Standard*. https://psmag.com/economics/the-future-of-work-the-digital-hustle

Read: Métraux, Julia. 2021. "The Complex Future of Post-Pandemic Work." *Bitch Media,* November 21. https://www.bitchmedia.org/article/post-pandemic-work-access-issue.

Read: Gray, Mary L. 2019, May 1. "The hidden global workforce that is still fighting for an eight-hour workday." *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/05/01/hidden-global-workforce-that-is-still-fighting-an-eight-hour-workday/

Read: Sinders, Caroline and Cade Diehm. 2020. ""Technically" Responsible: The essential, precarious workforce that powers A.I." *Feminist Data Set Project*. http://trk.network/essay

Lecture **[February 15th]**: Social media and gig work

Discussion (VoiceThread):

Complete checklist on OWL and entry & exit tickets via MS Forms **(1 point)**

Part 2 of Social Media Self Audit due Friday, February 17th

Week of February 20th
Spring Reading Week

Week of February 27th
Module 7: Platform Racism, Anti-Blackness, and Digital Colonialism **[module open February 27th to March 13th]**
2 points total

Warmup Activity: Pre-reflection on module **(1 point)**

Read: "Preface" and "Introduction" (pp. ix-48) in Benjamin, Ruha, *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2019.
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Read: McIlwain, Charlton. 2020, August 29. "Racism Cannot Be Reduced to Mere Computation." *Slate*. https://slate.com/technology/2020/08/algorithms-artificial-intelligence-racism-reparations-history.html

Read: Jackson, Lauren Michele. "We Need to Talk About Digital Blackface in Reaction GIFs" by , *Teen Vogue* (2 August 2017) https://www.teenvogue.com/story/digital-blackface-reaction-gifs

Read: Birhane, Abeba. 2019, July 18. "The Algorithmic Colonization of Africa." *Real Life*. https://reallifemag.com/the-algorithmic-colonization-of-africa/

Read: Read: Tuck, Eve and K. Wayne Yang. "Decolonization is not a metaphor." *Decolonization, Indigeneity, Education & Society 1* (1), 2012.

Watch: Kimberly TallBear on Decolonizing Science and Technology
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlK1QoM_qAo

Lecture **[March 1]**: Race and/as technology/Race and representation on social media/situating colonialisms/settler colonialism/digital colonialism

Discussion (VoiceThread): Racism Online and Off
> In North America, we live in a society shaped by racism and white supremacy, online and off. How, if at all, did the accounts you follow respond to the #BlackLivesMatter protests of 2020? How did those responses differ? Were there accounts you felt responded badly, and why?

Complete checklist on OWL and entry & exit tickets via MS Forms **(1 point)**

Draft version of group research brief due Friday, March 3rd

Week of March 6th
Module 8: Gender & Misogyny Online **[module open March 6th to March 20th]**
2 points total

Read: Gill, Rosalind. 2020. "Gender." In *Keywords for Media Studies*, 77–81. New York: NYU Press.

Read: Sharma, Sarah. 2018, June 19. "Going to Work in Mommy's Basement." *Boston Review*. http://bostonreview.net/gender-sexuality/sarah-sharma-going-work-mommys-basement

Read: Brewer, Kirstie. 2017, August 10. How the tech industry wrote women out of history. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/careers/2017/aug/10/how-the-tech-industry-wrote-women-out-of-history

Watch: *#Tropes vs Women in Video Games,* Damsels in Distress Part 1 by Anita Sarkeesian
https://feministfrequency.com/video/damsel-in-distress-part-1/

Lecture **[March 8]**: The history of gender and technology/misogyny online

Discussion (VoiceThread): Social media representation and misogyny
> Representations of women across media have come a long way, but not far enough. Do any of the accounts you've chosen address misogyny as a problem? Do they represent women appropriately and with nuance?

Complete checklist on OWL and entry & exit tickets via MS Forms **(1 point)**

Group annotated bibliography due Friday, March 10th

Week of March 13th
Module 9: Sexuality, Homophobia, and Transphobia **[module open March 13th to March 27th]**
2 points total

Warmup Activity: Short reflection **(1 point)**

Read: Walsh, James. 2020. "Social media and moral panics: Assessing the effects of technological change on societal reaction." *International Journal of Cultural Studies, 23* (6): 840-859

Read: Baker, Katie J. M. "The Road to Terfdom." *Lux Magazine*, https://lux-magazine.com/article/the-road-to-terfdom/

Read: Hicks, Marie. 2019. "Hacking the Cis-Tem." *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing* 41 (1): 20–33.

Watch: Queer Tropes vs Video Games, *Feminist Frequency*. https://feministfrequency.com/series/queer-tropes/

Lecture **[March 9]**: Queer cultures online, and backlash

Discussion (VoiceThread): Sex panic?
> How do the accounts you follow address sex and sexuality, especially with regards to LGBTQ+ people? Are they sex positive? If so, how? If not, why not? Is sex positivity becoming less common on social media? If you think so, why?

Complete checklist on OWL and entry & exit tickets via MS Forms **(1 point)**

Part 3 of Social Media Self-Audit due Friday, March 17th

Week of March 20th
Module 10: Disability & Ableism **[module open March 20th to April 3rd]**
2 points total

Read: Couser, G Thomas. "Illness." *Keywords for Disability Studies*. Ed. Rachel Adams, Benjamin Reiss, and David Serlin. New York: NYU Press, 2015. 105–107.

Warmup activity: Noticing disability in your own life **(1 point)**

Read: Blake, Melissa. 2020, August 26. "A Message To TikTok Parents Who Use My Face To Make Their Kids Cry", *refinery29* (26 August 2020) https://www.refinery29.com/en-ca/2020/08/9989497/new-teacher-challenge

Read: Wong, Alice. 2019. "The Rise and Fall of the Plastic Straw: Sucking in Crip Defiance" *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience 5*(1), 1-12.

Read: Wong, Alice. 2021. "Coronavirus and the disability community #HighRiskCOVID19."
https://wakelet.com/wake/1633ef52-2ade-43a9-b118-50d19f821cb7

Lecture **[March 16]**: Disability Studies meets media Studies/Disability, social media, and COVID-19

Discussion (VoiceThread): Social media, COVID-19, and disability
> COVID-19 has meant many cases of "Long Covid" -- chronic symptoms that persist for months. Is Long Covid a topic of discussion on any of the accounts you follow? More generally, in what ways are

disability and impairment visible in the accounts you've chosen? What narratives about disability, if any, occur frequently? How are these social media channels accessible? How are they not?

Complete checklist on OWL and entry & exit tickets via MS Forms **(1 point)**

Final version of group research brief due Friday, March 24th

Week of March 27th
Module 11: Games and Gamification **[module open March 27th to April 10th]**
2 points total

Warmup activity: What have you been playing, and with whom? **(1 point)**

Read: Gershon, Ilana. 2015. "What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Animation." *Social Media + Society* 1 (1): 1–2. doi:10.1177/2056305115578143.

Lecture **[March 29th]**: Animation and persuasion/Games invade life/Games and social media

Discussion (VoiceThread):
How does video game content appear in your everyday social media life? What kinds? Are any of your chosen accounts devoted to gaming, and if so, how?

Complete checklist on OWL and entry & exit tickets via MS Forms **(1 point)**

Group 10-minute video due Friday, March 31

Week of April 3rd
Module 12: The Metaverse and the Uncertain Future of Social Media **[module open April 3rd to April 10th]**
2 points total

Warmup activity: Final course feedback **(1 point)**

https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2022/11/twitter-facebook-social-media-decline/672074/

Read: Zuckerman, Ethan. 2021. "The Metaverse Was Always Terrible." *The Atlantic*, October 29. https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2021/10/facebook-metaverse-was-always-terrible/620546/

https://slate.com/technology/2022/09/facebook-metaverse-zuckerberg-horizon-worlds-josh-gondelman.html

https://spectrum.ieee.org/metaverse-meta-misfire#toggle-gdpr

Lecture **[April 6]**: Welcome to the Metaverse/Social media is dead/Long live social media

Discussion (VoiceThread): The future of social media

Complete checklist on OWL and entry & exit tickets via MS Forms **(1 point)**

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.

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.