



# MIT 3100G

## Information and the Public Sphere

Faculty of Information and Media Studies – Winter 2023

### Instructor

Dr. Atle Mikkola Kjösen  
akjosen2@uwo.ca

### Office hours

Thursdays 5-6.30pm, FNB 4118  
By appointment (Zoom)

### Lecture time

Mondays 1.30-4.30pm,

### Lecture location

FNB-1240

### Teaching assistants

#### *TA group 1*

Dominique Kelly  
dkelly48@uwo.ca

#### *TA group 2*

Ryan Schroeder  
rschroe3@uwo.ca

### Office hours

Both by appointment (Zoom)

## Prerequisites

The prerequisite for MIT 3100 is registration in an honours module in MIT or MPI. Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course, and it will be deleted from your record.

## Course Description

This course examines the emergence and structural transformation of the public sphere, and a variety of issues pertaining to a public sphere for free and democratic flows of information. The point of departure is the influential philosophical and sociological work of Jürgen Habermas. Habermas' theory of the public sphere and his critics are used to frame an investigation into what public sphere is, how it has developed, its location, media specificity, and how information circuits influence the production, organization, and dissemination of knowledge requisite for rational-critical debate in liberal, capitalist democracies. Habermas argued that the bourgeois public sphere had a temporary existence due the historically specific socioeconomic, political, and cultural conditions of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. A core concern of the course is whether a public sphere is possible and can be reconstituted under today's radically different socioeconomic, political, and cultural conditions as well as a completely new media environment dominated by electronic media.

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of this class students will be able to

- Define the public sphere in terms of its function and location.
- Explain how the emergence of a public and its sphere was tied to the rise of the capitalist mode of production, the rise of the bourgeoisie as a class, and liberal democracy.
- Discuss the limitations of the bourgeois public sphere and the necessity of counter publics based on gender, class, and race.
- Explain or discuss the media specificity of the public sphere in its print, TV, and internet-based incarnations.
- Explain the relationship between the public sphere, public opinion, and PR.
- Discuss the structural transformation of the public sphere in relation to the ongoing development of the state, political system, the capitalist mode of production, and media environment.
- Discuss whether a public sphere is possible in today's post-truth and surveillance capitalist era.

## Assignments

A detailed description of these assignments has been uploaded to the course's OWL site in the **RESOURCES=>Assignment description** folder.

All written assignments must be uploaded to the corresponding **ASSIGNMENT** tab on OWL. These assignments will be submitted to Turnitin.

To mark papers, the TAs make use of the "track changes" function in MS Word to make suggested edits and provide marginal comments. This means that all papers must be submitted in a *word doc format*. Papers in other formats will receive only a global comment.

All marked papers will be uploaded to the corresponding assignment tab, from which you can download the marked-up document.

**Note: for the research paper, you have the option to write individually or in a pair.**

### Reading reflection paper (30%)

- *Due:* Various Thursdays, 11:55pm; submit through appropriate assignment tab in OWL.
- *File format:* word doc
- *Format:* 750-1000 words (1.5-2 line-spacing, 12pt, Times New Roman, consistent citation system).

There are several reading reflection assignments tied to course content (lectures and assigned texts) to lessons 2-9. A more detailed assignment descriptions can be found in the 'resources' => 'assignments' folder on OWL.

Due dates depend on the assignment you choose but will always be on the Thursday the week after thus giving you ten days from the lecture to finish. For example, if you choose to write a reaction paper to lesson 2 on January 16th (The emergence of the public and the location of politics), the due date is Thursday January 26th, 11:55pm.

You have the option to re-write and thus improve the grade of this paper after receiving comments and suggestions. The due date for the rewrite is one week after you've received your graded paper back (you may ask your TA for an extension on this deadline).

### Final research paper (40%)

- *Due: April 10<sup>th</sup>, 11:55pm*; submit through appropriate assignment tab in OWL.
- *File format: word doc*
- *Format: 2000-2500 words (1.5 or double line-spacing; 12pt Times New Roman; consistent citation system).*
- *Research: Refer to minimum five (4) academic texts not assigned in the course and at least two (2) appropriate course-assigned texts.*
- *Research question/ thesis statement: your paper must have a clear research question or thesis statement.*
- *Theoretical framework: your paper must use the public sphere as its theoretical framework/ core analytical concept.*
- *Note: You have the option to write individually or in a pair.*

For this assignment you are asked to research and write a paper on a phenomenon related to the public or about the public sphere itself. If you have trouble coming up with a topic, I strongly recommend that you meet with the course instructor or your TA to discuss potential ones, preferably as early as possible in the term. *Note: You may use parts of your short paper for your final paper.*

### **Final in-person exam (30%)**

- *Date: TBA, during exam period.*
- *Format: essay; open book.*

The final exam question will be a version of: What is the most significant or striking thing you've learned in this course? Write an essay that answers this question by using two to three course assigned texts as your primary sources. Make explicit connections between the texts and any lecture content. You may bring your chosen articles to the final exam. A more complete final exam description will be made available close to the end of the term.

## **Grading and rewriting papers**

All assignments will be graded per the MIT grading guideline, which are summarized below (the complete MIT grading guidelines can be found on the last page of this outline).

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
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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

*Rubric:* The mechanical aspects of writing (correct spelling, grammar, and syntax, as well as structure) and correct use of a consistent citation system (e.g. MLA, APA, Chicago) will be weighted 30%, while the overall quality of the argument (comprehension of topic, analysis and critical thinking, critical use of evidence, depth and breadth of argument) will be weighted 70%.

*Note on citations and writing errors:* over the last few years, some common mistakes in citations and grammar have crept into undergraduate writing. With regards to citations: students either don't cite in-text sufficiently or provide incomplete citations, in particular not providing page numbers in citations. With regards to writing, too many students submit papers that have clearly not been proofread for grammar, typos, punctuation and so on. In many cases, most of these mistakes are even pointed out by the spell check on word. **For incomplete in-text citations (missing page numbers in particular), 0.25 points per infraction will be deducted from the grade.** Even if you use the APA citation format, it is required to include page numbers in your in-text references.

All grades will be posted to OWL's **GRADEBOOK**. All graded papers will come with comments and suggested edits in track changes. Graded papers can be downloaded from the **ASSIGNMENT** tab on OWL.

*Rewrite:* A rewrite means that you must engage with comments and suggested edits as provided in track changes, otherwise it will not be graded. **The grade you receive for your rewrite will be the final grade of your assignment.** I strongly recommend you choose to rewrite an assignment because you can make some remarkable improvements; past students have managed to increase their grade by two whole letter grades. Rewriting is one of the best ways to improve and become confident your scholarly writing and knowledge.

Students are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of the grades they have received in their courses. For your own protection, always keep a copy of your assignments. In case of loss, theft, destruction, dispute over authorship, or any other eventuality, it will be your responsibility to provide a copy of the assignment.

## Extensions, Late Penalty and Make-up Tests

*Extensions will be given out like candy on Halloween, you just have to ask your TA (you don't have to give a reason because that is none of my business).* Both shit and life happens. Please note that due to senate policy, extensions cannot be granted into the final exam period. This policy has an effect only on the final paper.

If you haven't asked for an extension or submitted accompanying documentation of illness or emergency to the FIMS front office, you will receive a penalty of 3% a day for up to four days; on the fifth day, the paper will receive an automatic FAIL.

Travel schedules, employment, etc. will NOT count as legitimate reasons for missing or rescheduling an exam.

If you have a medical illness or compassionate grounds (i.e., death in family, house fire), please contact the FIMS front office for accommodation.

## Communication Policy

The best way to contact me is via email (akjosen2@uwo.ca). When you send me an email, please put the course code (MIT 3100) in the subject line. I respond to most email inquiries within 48 hours. If you send an email after 5pm, I will most likely not answer it until the following morning. Emails sent after 5pm on Friday may not be answered until Monday morning.

Please send inquiries that can be answered with a sentence or two. For inquiries that require more thorough responses, please talk to me during a break in class, drop-in to my office hours, or request a meeting over Zoom.

To keep in touch and give you updates about the course, tips, and suggestions for assignments and more, I send announcements via OWL. These announcements will be pushed to your email. You are therefore required to periodically check your Western email account. Students are responsible for ensuring that their email account is working properly, including making sure it is not full.

The TAs will inform you about their own communication policy.

## PPE Requirements

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](#).

### **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 (e.g., due to instructor having to self-isolate or a significant proportion of students isolating/being sick), 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). In the eventuality of the course being moved online, the instructor will provide an updated course outline, which will outline online course lessons and related policies. The grading scheme will not change. Any assessments affected will be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

### **Statement on the Use of Zoom Recording**

Participants in this course are not permitted to record Zoom sessions (office hours or lectures if the course is forced to be delivered online), except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Zoom sessions will not be recorded by the instructor.



### **Course Schedule**

All assigned texts, weekly lesson slides, and external course content are accessible on OWL, in the **RESOURCES** folder.

#### **January 9 – Lesson 1: Introduction**

*No assigned texts.*

## **January 16 – Lesson 2: The emergence of the public and the location of politics (private and public spheres)**

Habermas, Jürgen (1989 [1962]). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. Pp. xvii-xix, 1-26.

Kant, Immanuel (2010 [1784]) "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'" In Gripsrud, J., Moe, H., Molander, A. and Murdock, G. (Eds.) (2010). *The Idea of the Public Sphere: A Reader*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. Pp. 3-8.

Van Horn Melton, James (2001). "Chapter 3: Reading publics: transformations of the literary public sphere". *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 81-119.

### Optional

Gerstenberger, Heide (2005). *Impersonal Power: History and Theory of the Bourgeois State*. Chicago, IL; Haymarket Books. Pp. 3-36

Habermas, Jürgen (1989 [1962]). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. Pp. 79-88.

## **January 23 – Lesson 3: The bourgeois public sphere**

Habermas, Jürgen (1989 [1962]). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. Pp. 57-79

Habermas, Jürgen (2010 [1964]). "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article". In Gripsrud, J., Moe, H., Molander, A. and Murdock, G. (Eds.) (2010). *The Idea of the Public Sphere: A Reader*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. Pp. 114-120.

## **January 30 – Lesson 4: Critiques of the bourgeois public sphere**

Fraser, Nancy (1990) "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy," *Social Text*, 25/26, pp. 56-80. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/466240>.

Habermas on rise of welfare state?

Negt and Kluge?

## **February 6 – Lesson 5: Non-bourgeois public spheres**

Van Horn Melton, James (2001). "Chapter 6: Women in public: enlightenment salons". *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 197-224.

Murray, Billie (2016). "The Sphere, the Screen, and the Square: 'Locating' Occupy in the Public Sphere". *Communication Theory* 26, pp. 450-468

Roderick, Graham (2016). "The Content of Our #Characters: Black Twitter as Counterpublic" *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* vol.2, issue 4, pp. 433-449.



## **February 13 – Lesson 6: The media specificity of the public sphere**

Habermas, Jürgen (1989 [1962]). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. Pp. 159-175.

Garnham, Nicholas (1992). "The Media and the Public Sphere". In Calhoun, C. (Ed.) (2010) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. Pp. 359-376

Postman, Neil (1985). *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. New York, NY: Penguin Books. Pp. 16-17, 24-29, 44-51, 76-80, 83-92

### Optional

McLuhan, Marshall (1964). "The Printed Word", "Press", and "Television". *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. London: Routledge.

## **February 20 – Reading week**

*No class.*

## **February 27 – Lesson 7: The masculine public sphere (guest lecture by TA Ryan Schroder)**

Assigned texts TBA.

## **March 6 – Lesson 8: The Internet as a Public Sphere**

Dean, Jodi (2005). "Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics." *Cultural Politics an International Journal*, vol. 1, issue 1: 51-74

Papacharissi, Zizi (2002). "The Virtual Sphere: The Internet as Public Sphere." *New Media & Society*, vol. 4, issue 1, pp. 9-27

Zuboff, Shoshana (2015) Big other: surveillance capitalism and the prospects of an information civilization. *Journal of Information Technology*, vol 30, issue 1, pp. 75-89.

### Optional

Rosa, Harmut (2005) "The Speed of Global Flows and the Pace of Democratic Politics," *New Political Science*, vol. 27, issue 4, pp. 445-459.

## **March 13 – Lesson 9: Spinning the Public Sphere – Public Opinion and Public Relations**

Bennett, W. Lance and Steven Livingston (2018) "The disinformation order: Disruptive communication and the decline of democratic institutions." *European Journal of Communication*, 33, (2): 122 -139.

Lippman, Walter (2010 [1925]). "Excerpt from *The Phantom Public*". In Gripsrud, J., Moe, H., Molander, A. and Murdock, G. (Eds.) (2010). *The Idea of the Public Sphere: A Reader*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. Pp. 25-42.

Sussman, Gerald (2011) "The Propaganda Society," in Gerald Sussman ed. *The Propaganda Society: Promotional culture & politics in global context*, New York: Peter Lang. Pp. 1-21.

Terranova, Tiziana (2004). *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age*. London: Pluto Press. Pp. 6-20.

### **March 20 – Lesson 10:** Polarization, political violence, and naturalization of hate speech/ *The Edge of Democracy*

In-class screening of the documentary *The Edge of Democracy*.

Boris, S., Costa, P., Natasegara, J., Pavan, T. (Producers) & Costa, Petra (Dir.) (2019). *The Edge of Democracy*. [Video File] Retrieved from <https://www.netflix.com/ca/title/80190535>

### **March 27 – Lesson 11:** Legitimation Crisis & the Public Sphere

Fraser, Nancy (2015) "Legitimation Crisis? On the Political Contradictions of Financialized Capitalism." *Critical Historical Studies*, vol. 2, issue 2, pp. 157-189.

Bennett, W. Lance and Barbara Pfetsch (2018) "Rethinking Political Communication in a Time of Disrupted Public Spheres," *Journal of Communication*, vol 68, issue 2, pp. 243–253.

Comor, Edward (2015) "Hegemony". *The International Encyclopedia of Political Communication*. Mazzoleni, Gianpietro et al. (Eds) (2015). Boston, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. Pp. 463-470.

### **April 3 – Lesson 12:** Writing clinic and final paper topic feedback session

This lesson will be devoted to an in-person writing clinic. Show up to write collectively and get feedback on your topic, thesis statement and introduction, bibliography, or a particular argument you're developing.

The instructor may give a short writing workshop on how to write a thesis statement and introduction, as well as going over some dos and don'ts.

### **April 10 — Lesson 13:** Final exam review

*Final paper due at 11:55pm on OWL.*

# 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](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](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](mailto: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 4<sup>th</sup> 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.