



Carl Juste: Christopher Columbus monument in Miami, June 2020.

## MIT 3772G: Media & Human Rights

Western University  
FIMS • Winter 2023

Location:

Thurs. 11:30-1:20

Dr. Sharon Sliwinski

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### Course Description

Our course examines human rights from the vantage of media studies. The first part of our course asks: Who is the subject of human rights? How did these ideas and concepts come to be invented? We will also examine several case studies, both contemporary and historical in order to understand the relationship between media and human rights.

Throughout the course, we will be especially attentive to the various media that support and enable the claims made in the name of human rights. The concept of human rights is at once a political demand and an established legal discourse, but it is also a relatively fragile idea that must be nurtured and sustained in the social imaginary. Our common world must be constantly imagined and reimagined by human actors – a task that falls to artists, journalists, activists, filmmakers, and other storytellers. There are no human rights without someone demanding them and these demands require a narrative, an image, or a performance.

This course aims to provide students with the critical tools needed to understand the use of media and its impact on the recognition and restitution of human rights claims. To do so, we will examine various visual practices (documentation, archiving, witnessing, advocacy, and surveillance) as well as a range of visual imagery (photography, children's drawings, video, monuments, and crowd-sourced material).

**Learning Outcomes:** Upon the completion of this course, students should:

1. Be able to define human rights and identify major debates and players in human rights advocacy
2. Understand how media plays a role in human rights claims
3. Develop a capacity to evaluate media coverage of human rights issues

## Class Rules

1. Respect yourself and your colleagues. Care and sensitivity are required when dealing with race, nationality, age, ability, religion, sexuality and sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or political affiliation. We seek to establish a “call in” culture (rather than a “call out” or “cancel” culture); you are encouraged to challenge each other’s views—and mine—but in a manner that aims for deeper listening, discussion, understanding, and reflection.
2. Participation—particularly in your small working groups—is essential and required.
3. Communicate with me about any absences or if you are facing issues that are impeding your capacity to complete the course.

## Course Calendar

|          |    |  |
|----------|----|--|
| January  | 12 | <b>Introductions</b>   |
|          | 19 | <b>Inventing Human Rights:</b> Hunt, <i>Inventing Human Rights</i> (excerpt) + Sliwinski, “Human Rights”<br><b>Seminar 1</b>   |
|          | 26 | <b>The Perplexities of Human Rights:</b> Arendt, “The Rights of Man: What Are They?” + DeGooyer & Hunt “The Right to Have Rights”<br><b>Seminar 2</b>  |
| February | 2  | <b>Civil Disobedience:</b> Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience” (1849) + Pankhurst, “Freedom or Death” (1913) + King, “Letter from Birmingham Jail”<br><b>Seminar 3</b>   |
|          | 9  | <b>Black Lives:</b> Lewis, “Vision & Justice” + Richardson “Bearing Witness while Black” + Zuckerman “Why filming police violence has done nothing to stop it”<br><b>Seminar 4</b>   |
|          | 16 | <b>Sovereign Violence &amp; Sovereign Resistance:</b> Human Rights Watch, “Those Who Take Us Away” (Summary and Recommendations + Photo Feature) + Land Back: A Yellowhead Institute Red Paper (Executive Summary)<br><b>Seminar 5</b> |
|          | 23 | READING WEEK – NO CLASS  |
| March    | 2  | <b>Drawing:</b> Poli, “The Children of Kukës + Zion & Keenan, “A Conversation”)<br><b>Workshop 1</b>   |

- 9      **Video:** Ristovska, “Seeing Human Rights” + Gregory, “Ubiquitous Witnesses: Who Creates the Evidence and the Live(d) Experience of Human Rights Violations?”  
**Workshop 2**
- 16      **Monuments:** Warren, “The Monuments Must Go: Reflecting on Opportunities for Campus Conversations” + Bonder, “On Memory, Trauma, Public Space, Monuments, and Memorials”  
**Workshop 3**
- 23      **Digital Investigations:** Paquete & Dubberley “An Open Source Methodology for Mapping Tear Gas Misuse (and Other Human Rights Abuses)” + Row Farr, “Not everything is verifiable, but that’s OK: lessons from a failed geolocation”  
**Workshop 4**
- 30      **Architectural and Forensic Evidence:** Forensic Architecture: “The Grenfell Fire”  
**Workshop 5**
- April      6      **Chorus:** Thomas Keenan, “Human Rights” + WATCH (in class): Greyson, *International Dawn Chorus Day*  
*\*participation grades due*

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. SEMINAR IN TWO PARTS: Questions (15%) + Reflective Paper (25%)
2. MEDIA ANALYSIS IN TWO PARTS: Questions (15%) + Application Paper (35%)
3. Participation (10%)

### 1. SEMINAR IN TWO PARTS

#### Part One: Questions (15%)

The class will be divided into groups of five for small seminar discussions. Each of you will take turns leading your small group in a seminar discussion. The seminars will occur during class time. It is your group’s responsibility to organize your presentation schedule. Each seminar will focus on a discussion of the readings assigned for that week. As seminar leader, your task is to prepare thoughtful questions, share your thoughts, and lead a group discussion about the readings.

Construct at least five discussion questions for your group. Prepare a typed handout of your questions for each member of the group. Your goal with the questions is to open

interesting conversation about the issues raised in the article. It will be helpful to start your question with a few sentences that explain your thinking. Plan for your seminar discussion to last about 45 minutes.

### **Part Two: Reflective Paper (25%)**

In the week after your seminar, write a short reflective paper on one or two of the issues raised in the reading. This paper is NOT a description of your seminar discussion. Consider the seminar to be preparation for this short reflective paper about the issues raised in the reading. You may describe instances from your discussion in order to illuminate your understanding of the issues explored in the reading but focus your discussion on the reading and the ideas it raises for media and human rights.

Your paper + questions are due one week after your seminar presentation. Your grade will be based on the quality of your questions and the quality of your reflections on the article. Suggested Length: questions: 350-500 words + paper: 1000-1250 words (4-5 pages), typed, doubled-spaced, 12pt font.

## **2. MEDIA ANALYSIS IN TWO PARTS**

### **Part One: Questions, again (15%)**

In the second half of the course we be working in small groups again, and once more, each of you will be leading a small group discussion. The discussion will occur during class time and it is your group's responsibility to organize your schedule. This time, however, the focus of your conversation will be on a particular medium and its affordances in terms of establishing human rights evidence.

Construct at least five discussion questions for your group based on the reading assigned for the week. Prepare a typed handout of your questions for each member of the group. This time your goal is to query the way evidence of a human rights violation is established using a particular medium (or mediums) in the reading. As you prepare your questions you may wish to consider: What human rights claim is being made here? What do the image(s) depict? Who made them? How does the media make an evidentiary claim? Does this example follow a familiar trope (i.e. present a "spectacle of suffering")? How is the media content positioned in relation to the written account?

Plan for your seminar discussion to last about 45 minutes.

### **Part Two: Application Paper (35%)**

Using the analysis that you've established during the group discussion, now pick a *different* human rights campaign or social movement that works with the same medium. While this is entirely your choice, you will find examples of campaigns/movements related to each week's topic in the resources section on OWL. Your job in this paper is to apply what you've learned. Write a discussion paper introducing the campaign or movement and provide an analysis of how media is being used in relation to the human rights violation. Apart from the guiding questions provided above, you might consider:

How does the medium bear witness to the violation? What does the media ask of its audience and how? What kind of relationship with the suffering of others do the images establish?

You may wish to bring your example to the small group discussion so your colleagues can help think this through with you.

The evidence questions + application paper are due one week after your presentation. Your grade will be based on the quality of your questions and the quality of your analysis of the human rights campaign. Suggested Length: questions: 350-500 words + paper: 1250-1500 words (5-6 pages), typed, doubled-spaced, 12pt. font

#### **4. Participation: 10%**

Write a short description of your participation in the class. Describe both your experience in the larger class and in your smaller groups. Be sure to reflect on how you supported your colleagues during their presentations. Grade yourself out of 10. **Length:** approx. 250 words, typed and double-spaced.

#### **All Required Readings are available on OWL**

1. Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights* (New York: Norton, 2008)
2. Sharon Sliwinski, "Human Rights," In Roland Bleiker, *Visual Global Politics*. London: Routledge, 2018
3. Hannah Arendt, "The Perplexities of the Rights of Man" In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Schocken, 2004.
4. Stephanie DeGooyer & Alastair Hunt, "The Right to Have Rights," *Public Books*, May 3, 2018: <https://www.publicbooks.org/the-right-to-have-rights/>
5. Henry David Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government" [Civil Disobedience], *Aesthetic Papers*, ed. Elizabeth Peabody. New York: Boston, 1849.
6. Emmeline Pankhurst, "Freedom or Death" (1913) Reprinted in *The Guardian*
7. Martin Luther King Jr. "Give Us the Ballot" (1957) + "Letter from Birmingham City Jail" (1963), In *The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (New York Harper, 1991)
8. Sarah Lewis, "Vision and Justice," *Aperture: Vision and Justice* 223 (2016)
9. Allissa Richardson "Bearing Witness While Black: Theorizing African American mobile journalism after Ferguson," *Digital Journalism*, Volume 5 (2017): 673-698
10. Ethan Zuckerman, "Why filming police violence has done nothing to stop it," *MIT Technology Review* June 3, 2020  
<https://www.technologyreview.com/2020/06/03/1002587/sousveillance-george-floyd-police-body-cams/>
11. Human Rights Watch, *Those Who Take Us Away: Abusive Policing and Failures in Protection of Indigenous Women and Girls in Northern British Columbia, Canada*, 2013. Summary and Recommendations + Photo Feature  
[https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/canada0213\\_insert\\_low.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/canada0213_insert_low.pdf)

12. The Yellowhead Institute, "Executive Summary," *Land Back: A Yellowhead Institute Red Paper*, October 2019 <https://redpaper.yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/red-paper-report-final.pdf>
13. Giacomo Poli, "The Children of Kukës" In *Petrit Halilaj: Very volcanic over this green feather* Ed. Anne Barlow (London: Tate, 2021)
14. Amy Zion & Thomas Keenan, "A Conversation" In *Petrit Halilaj: Very volcanic over this green feather* Ed. Anne Barlow (London: Tate, 2021)
15. Sandra Ristovska, *Seeing Human Rights: Video Activism as Proxy Profession*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2021
16. Sam Gregory, "Ubiquitous Witnesses: Who Creates the Evidence and the Live(d) Experience of Human Rights Violations?" *Information Communication & Society* Volume 18 (2015): 1378-1392
17. Jack Christian Warren, "The Monuments Must Go: Reflecting on Opportunities for Campus Conversations," *South* Volume 50 no 1 (2017): 47-56
18. Julian Bonder, "On Memory, Trauma, Public Space, Monuments, and Memory," *Places* 21 (1): 62-69.
19. Mitchell Paquete & Sam Dubberley "An Open Source Methodology for Mapping Tear Gas Misuse (and Other Human Rights Abuses)" Amnesty International/Citizen Evidence Lab <https://citizenevidence.org/2020/06/12/dvc-methodology/>
20. Ray Adams Row Farr, "Not everything is verifiable, but that's OK: lessons from a failed geolocation" Amnesty International/Citizen Evidence Lab <https://citizenevidence.org/2021/12/10/not-everything-is-verifiable-but-thats-ok-lessons-from-a-failed-geolocation/>
21. Forensic Architecture, "The Grenfell Tower Fire," <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/the-grenfell-tower-fire>
22. Thomas Keenan, "Human Rights" In *LUMA: ABCD* Eds. Eccles, et al. (Colonge: Walther Koenig, 2021)

# 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.