

MIT 1025G: First Year Foundations for MIT

In-Person: Winter 2024
Monday 12:30-2:30pm – TC 309

INSTRUCTOR:

Dr. Tiara Sukhan tsukhan@uwo.ca

Office: FNB 4118; ext. 80015

Drop-in Hours (in person): Monday 3-5pm;
Wednesday 1-3pm; or by appointment

TEACHING ASSISTANTS:

Caitlin Burd cburd@uwo.ca
Tutorial: Monday 3:30-4:30pm, SEB 1056)

Emma Lynch elynch27@uwo.ca
Tutorial: Tuesday 4:30-5:30pm, UC 1225)

Shawn Casado mcasado@uwo.ca
Tutorial: Tuesday 4:30-5:30pm, FNB 1220

Course Description & Objectives

First Year Foundations for MIT is designed to introduce students to foundational skills they will need throughout their university careers. It focuses on the fundamentals of three key activities: critical thinking, research, and communication (both verbal and written), with the goal of helping students to build a strong knowledge base, develop reasoned and defensible arguments, and effectively communicate ideas. Students will cover the basics of critical thinking, the interpretation of texts, finding and evaluating sources, developing arguments, presenting information, formulating research questions, and essay development and revision. Academic style, plagiarism, and other key issues pertaining to university and scholarly research and writing are also covered.

After completing this course, you should be able to:

- ✓ Critically read and understand key ideas in a variety of media texts
- ✓ Identify and analyze arguments
- ✓ Find and evaluate scholarly and mainstream sources focusing on media and media-related issues
- ✓ Construct an argument/thesis and support it with appropriate evidence
- ✓ Understand the fundamentals of essay composition and development
- ✓ Apply the basics of academic style, formatting, and citation
- ✓ Further develop acquired critical thinking and writing skills

Course Materials

Thomas Curran (2023). *The Perfection Trap: Embracing the Power of Good Enough*. This book is available from the UWO bookstore or can be purchased online. We will be using this book throughout the semester, so I encourage you to purchase a hard copy and bring it with you to lectures and tutorials.

Additional resources will be provided through Owl, either as downloadable pdfs or via web links. Most readings are directly linked with assignments or provide useful guidance to help you succeed in this course. Failure to do the readings is likely to result in a lower grade.

Required Course Work and Evaluation – see detailed assignment briefs on Owl

1. Short Writing Tasks (15%)

- You must keep a writing journal over the course of the semester. You should bring (or have access to) this journal every time you are in class (it's fine to just keep files on your laptop). In class activities will be regularly assigned as process work to help you develop ideas for your essay, as individual or collaborative tasks designed to cultivate critical thinking skills, and as a way for you to demonstrate engagement with course materials and supplement your in-class participation if you struggle to talk. You may be invited to discuss your journal work with us at any point in the semester. You will be directed when to choose work to submit for grading.

2. Library Skills (15%) *Due February 9*

- The whole class will take a trip to the library in January during lecture time for an in-person library orientation and intro to research skills. After this you will be required to complete a short assessment, which you will turn in for grading along with a debrief about the experience. You will have an additional opportunity to apply some of the skills learned when assembling your essay proposal and annotated bibliography (see item #3). **You must attend the library visit in order to complete this assessment.**

3. Proposal with Annotated Bibliography (15%) *Due Friday, March 15*

- Your proposal and bibliography will reflect the early stages of planning for your essay (see item #5). While your proposal will outline your topic, approach and potential lines of inquiry, your bibliography will demonstrate your ability to select relevant, credible sources and properly format citations.

4. Midterm (25%) *Week 10 (March 18), will be administered during class time*

- The midterm will assess both writing and critical thinking, and involve analysing a variety of media texts

5. Essay [1500 words] (20%) *Due Friday, April 5*

- You will write a research-based argumentative essay which builds on work already done in item #3. Topics will relate to themes and issues studied in the MIT program.

6. Participation (10%)

- All students must sign up to attend a weekly tutorial. This portion of your grade assesses your engagement with course material in your tutorial group. Tutorial attendance IS NOT optional. Your TA will communicate their expectations with you directly but be advised that simply showing up is the minimum requirement of this component of the course grade. Being visibly distracted or off-task in tutorials is likely to result in a lower participation grade even if your attendance is perfect.

Course Policies

1. Drop-in Office Hours

- I will hold weekly consultation hours (see details at the top of the syllabus)
- Your TA will also hold scheduled consultation hours which you will learn about in Tutorials.
- Emails (see policy below) should be reserved for brief queries only
- Come hang out! Bring a friend! There will be snacks.

2. Email Communication

- Check Western email regularly for Owl announcements
- Don't email us from personal accounts – these messages are more likely to end up in the spam filter
- Help us identify you and effectively address your query by including the course number in your email subject line
- 24-hour response time applies Monday-Friday; no emails on the weekend please
- Learn how to write an email that doesn't make your prof or TA crazy – good advice [here](#).

3. Electronic Devices

- Be proactive about distractions in lectures – both for yourself and those around you
- Silence your phone and put it away
- Don't surf the net on your laptop when you're supposed to be listening – better yet, close your laptop and take notes by hand as [research shows](#) this will help consolidate memory and understanding

4. Attendance

- Attendance will be recorded in both lectures and in tutorials; only tutorial attendance will affect your participation grade, but you may find it difficult to succeed in the course without attending lectures
- This is an IN-PERSON course – while lecture content may be delivered online periodically as circumstances warrant, **there is no library of video lectures** available for students who choose not to come to class
- Lecture slides will be posted to Owl each week – these provide an outline of course concepts only – it's your responsibility to take your own notes, or get them from a friend if away

5. Deadlines and Assignment Submission

- All written assignments are due on Fridays to optimize your opportunity to apply new learning from lectures and tutorials earlier in the week.
- All assignments should be submitted online via Owl (no printing required).
- It is your responsibility to ensure that the work you submit is complete and accessible – anything we can't read or open will not count as submitted and late penalties will accumulate until a readable complete assignment is received.
- Do not email work to your prof or TA unless you have been granted permission to do so.

- Assignments submitted on time are graded and returned within two weeks. Early submissions may be graded and returned early. Late submissions (without permission or accommodation) will be graded at our convenience, may not receive feedback and **will be subject to a penalty of 3% per day late (deadlines are all at 11:55pm – a new day starts at midnight).**

6. Academic Consideration

- Sometimes things happen which make it very difficult to meet a deadline with work you are proud of. Please speak to me or your TA if you are struggling – we may be able to offer you a short (24-48 hour) extension.
- Consult with UGSS (Undergraduate Student Services – this is academic counselling in your home faculty) about medical or compassionate consideration if you need more than a day or two of deadline relief.
- If you are approved for academic consideration accommodations, contact me ASAP to discuss a new deadline for missed work.
- Students who miss the midterm must complete a make-up exam, scheduled at my convenience. **Do not expect the make-up exam to have all of the same questions as the original. Make-up exams may include material covered after the original midterm date if applicable.**

7. Accessible Education Accommodations

- Exam accommodations are managed by Accommodated Exams – if this is applicable to you, it's your responsibility to keep track of exam request deadlines and make your requests through the online portal.
- A **flexible deadline** accommodation does not mean you can hand in work whenever you want – if you have this accommodation and want to use it, please contact me or your TA in advance of due dates to discuss options (if you don't make contact in advance or you don't submit assignments by the new deadlines agreed upon, late penalties may still apply).

Lesson Schedule

Date	Week	TOPIC	Textbook Readings & Assignment Deadlines (See Owl Course Content for links to non-textbook readings)
Jan. 8	1	INTRO	READ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alberto Manguel, "Reading Ourselves and the World Around Us" Matthew Overstreet (2019), "First year writing as <i>the</i> critical thinking course," <i>Double Helix</i>.
Jan. 15	2	READING, WRITING, THINKING CRITICALLY	READ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thomas Curran (2023), <i>The Perfection Trap</i>, Prologue and Part One "What is perfectionism?" (Ch.1&2) Betty Flowers (1981), "Roles and the Writing Process"
Jan. 22	3	THE PERFECT ARGUMENT	READ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jay Heinrichs (2007), <i>Thank You for Arguing</i>, Ch.1 -6 Emma Pettit (2023), <i>The Chronicle of Higher Education</i>, "The student-professor power dynamic has shifted"
Jan. 29	4	RESEARCH BASICS	Library visit (TBC), with Library Skills assignment due February 9 (visit could end up being Jan 22, but deadline will remain the same)
Feb. 5	5	FINDING & SYNTHESING INFO	READ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curran, Part 2 "What does perfectionism do to us?" (Ch.3-5) How to do a lit review
Feb. 12	6	TELLING A STORY	READ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curran, Part 3 "Where does perfectionism come from?" (Ch.6-7) Peter Ellerton (2020), "We should use "I" more in academic writing," <i>The Conversation</i>
READING WEEK (February 17-25)			
Feb. 26	7	PLANNING YOUR ESSAY	READ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wayne C. Booth (2008), <i>The Craft of Research</i> Ch.3-5 Gordon Harvey (2009), "Guide to elements of the academic essay," Harvard College Writing Program
Mar. 4	8	EVALUATING SOURCES	READ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curran, Part 3 "Where does perfectionism come from?" (Ch.8-9) "Should I believe it?" (hand-out) University of York
Mar. 11	9	TEXTUAL ANALYSIS 101	READ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curran, Part 3 "Where does perfectionism come from?" (Ch.10-11) Proposal + Annotated Bibliography due March 15
Mar. 18	10	MIDTERM – in class	
Mar. 25	11	THEORY & RHETORIC	READ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anne Lamott (1994), "First Drafts," <i>Bird By Bird</i> Kurt Vonnegut (1980), "How to Write with Style" Graff & Birkenstein (2018), "Yes/No/Okay, But," <i>I Say, They Say</i>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heinrichs, Ch.14 "Spot Fallacies" and Ch.18 "Speak Your Audience's Language"
Apr. 1	12	CRITICAL KARAOKE	<p>READ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curran, Part 4 "How can we embrace imperfection in the republic of good enough?" (Ch.12-13) • Clover et al (2005), "Critical Karaoke." <i>Popular Music</i>. <p>Essay due April 5</p>
Apr. 8	13	FINALE	<p>Option to give a 3-minute presentation on your Essay topic for bonus marks</p>

NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Winter 2024

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 [Academic Calendar](#).

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 [here](#).

Plagiarism

Students in this class are reminded that plagiarism – using another's work, ideas, or words without giving credit -- is a serious scholastic offence. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized use of generative artificial intelligence to create content that is submitted as one's own.

Students who use AI-content generators (such as ChatGPT) to complete assignments without attribution or permission from the instructor are committing a scholastic 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 Advising office of their home Faculty (for FIMS students this is [Undergraduate Student Services](#)).

Students are required to provide

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 Advising 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 Advising 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 Advisor.

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 Advisors with valid documentation.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Advisor. Additional information is given in the [Western Academic Calendar](#).

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone

through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence, you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts, [here](#). The gender-based violence and survivor support case managers are located in Thames Hall (3114-3127 office suite.) To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to [Health and Wellness](#) for a complete list of supports.

SUPPORT SERVICES – LINKS

[FIMS UGSS](#): *academic advising; career services*

[Psychological Services](#): *Information about accessing mental health supports*

[Medical Services](#): *Student health related services*

[Office of the Registrar](#): *Financial Information, Timetable, Exam Schedules, Academic Calendar Information*

[Academic Support and Engagement](#): *Central Academic Supports, including Writing Centre, Learning Development, Transition and Leadership Supports, and Careers and Experience*

[Accessible Education](#): *Assessment and recommendations for students with disabilities*

[Accessibility Information](#): *Information to help support barrier free access, including floor plans, accessible washroom locations, service disruptions etc.*

[Indigenous Student Services](#): *Includes information about financial support, indigenous self-identification, orientation, and tutor support*

[Western International](#): *Information and support for international students and students seeking to go on exchange*

FIMS Grading Policy

FIMS Undergraduate programs now have the following class average policy: **First year courses required** for entry into a FIMS module (MIT 1020E; MIT 1025F/G) have an expected course average between 68-72%. **Second year required courses** (MIT 2000, 2025, 2100, 2200, 2500) have an expected course average between 70 and 75%. The **third year required course** (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.