

# MIT 1050B Navigating our Media Landscape

IN-PERSON Winter 2024 – Monday, 9:30am-12:30pm, SH 3345

**Instructor:** Dr. Tiara Sukhan

**Email:** [tsukhan@uwo.ca](mailto:tsukhan@uwo.ca)

**Office:** FNB 4118, ext. 80015

**Drop-in Hours:** Monday 3-5pm; Wednesday 1-3pm

## TEACHING ASSISTANTS:

Mark Ambrogio

[mcambrog@uwo.ca](mailto:mcambrog@uwo.ca)

Houda Houbesh

[hhoubesh@uwo.ca](mailto:hhoubesh@uwo.ca)

Ali Seven

[aseven@uwo.ca](mailto:aseven@uwo.ca)

Eduard Sviridenko

[esviride@uwo.ca](mailto:esviride@uwo.ca)

## Course Description & Objectives

This course provides an introduction to the study of Media for both prospective MIT majors and non-majors, the latter of whom may want to augment their chosen course of study, explore the MIT minor option, or simply learn about something new. Now more relevant than ever, Media Studies helps us understand how media content (“software” such as apps, TV programs, films, video games, ads, the internet, news stories), and user technologies (“hardware” such as smartphones, computers, TV sets, game consoles) shape our daily lives, inform what we think we know about the world, and influence our ideas about who and what is important.

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- ✓ Interpret, analyze and evaluate a variety of different media texts
- ✓ Apply interdisciplinary critical thinking in your other classes and in daily life.
- ✓ Understand contexts in which media texts are produced, both industrially and ideologically, which inform media’s impact on how we think about the world and everything in it.
- ✓ Critique media messages, in terms of what we see, but also what we don’t; analyze connections between form and content (medium and message)
- ✓ Understand connections between media and technology, in terms of how our engagement with media content is facilitated
- ✓ Effectively communicate in writing, regarding your critical understanding of media texts, technologies and industries

## Course Materials

**Textbook:** [Media Studies, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition](#), by Paul Long et al (available from the Western bookstore)

Readings are a reference point for lecture content and will also be featured in quizzes and exams. Students generally do better in the course when they do the readings, and this textbook is pretty up to date (2021) with relevant contemporary examples.

## Course Policies

### 1. Drop-in Office Hours

- Weekly consultation hours (see details at the top of the syllabus); Emails (see policy below) 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 me from personal accounts – these messages are more likely to end up in the spam filter
- Help me identify you and effectively address your query by including the course number in 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 (big time saver for exam cramming)

### 4. Deadlines and Assignment Submission

- Submission dates are not flexible, but there are choices (4 assignment options – you choose 2)
- All assignments are submitted online via Owl (no printing required).
- Don't submit corrupted files – anything we can't read or open doesn't count; 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).**

### 5. Attendance

- I don't take a roll in a large class so there is no penalty for not attending, however you will find it difficult to do well in the course if you don't come to 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 (you need to come to class to make a friend)
- You may also come to office hours to discuss lectures you have missed or content you don't understand – I will do my best to address questions which clearly demonstrate you have completed set readings and reviewed lecture slides but please note that I will not re-present lecture content in office hours for students who miss class

## 6. Academic Consideration

- When life disruptions happen, I am open to short-term extension requests
- Consult with UGSS (Undergraduate Student Services – this is academic counselling in your home faculty) about medical or compassionate academic consideration if you need more than a day or two of deadline relief
- If you are approved for academic consideration, 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 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 in advance of a due dates to discuss options (if you don't contact me in advance or you don't submit assignments by the new deadlines we agree to, late penalties may still apply).

### Some advice for first-year students

Even though it's now your second semester, you may still be finding the pace and workload of university classes challenging. Here are some suggestions to help keep yourself on track:

- **Checklists and other organizational tools** – make lists to keep on top of weekly tasks, assignment deadlines, study priorities, etc. See [here](#) for a comprehensive selection of apps to help you with time management, note-taking, and mind mapping.
- **Work ahead** – A full course load is a full-time job, but the work is often not balanced equally over the semester. Take advantage of downtime early in the term to get ahead on assignments before they start to pile up.
- **Don't procrastinate** – I am the queen of cleaning my entire house instead of doing my work, so I know that the struggle is real – you just have to get started – every task becomes more manageable once you begin.
- **Check in** – talk to your prof or TA during class breaks or come to Office Hours; if you're feeling bored, lonely, confused, or discouraged, talking helps. Bring a friend along if it feels scary. If you don't know what to talk to your prof about, ask them about themselves (they may not stop though – I warned you 😊)
- **Come to class!** I know – 9:30am on Monday is a sucky timeslot – I didn't pick it! I'll try to make it engaging. Don't make your life harder by trying to teach yourself things that you can absorb more easily by sitting in class and listening to your prof.
- **Study smarter** – DON'T TRY TO WRITE DOWN EVERYTHING I SAY! Practice strategies for discerning what is most important and effectively documenting it for review later.

## Course Assessments

- 1. Doing Media Studies (2 x 15% = 30%)** ***TWO** submissions of the four available options are required – deadlines vary – some conditions apply (see below)*
  - These short assignments require you to research current issues and apply concepts and methods learned in class to contemporary media texts and examples. The instruction briefs will be distributed through the “Submit Assignments” and “Assignment Instructions” tabs on Owl. You can also track deadlines on the lecture schedule on p.5 of this document.
  - All DMS assignments should be submitted online via the appropriate submission portal on Owl. **Read the assignment briefs and submission checklists carefully.** Failure to follow instructions is a key reason why many students lose marks needlessly.
  - **CONDITIONS:** At least one DMS assignment must be submitted BEFORE Reading Week – this is to ensure that you get some feedback on your writing and thinking before the midterm exam. This means every student must submit at least ONE of the first two assignments (DMS#1 and DMS#2). You are also welcome to submit both of them. What you are **NOT** permitted to do is only submit DMS#3 and #4.
- 2. Midterm (25%)** *Will take place during class time in Week 8 (March 4<sup>th</sup>). You will have 2 hours and 45 minutes to complete the exam. Info on the format and content will be provided in advance. Location TBC as not all students will be writing in our regular classroom.*
- 3. Quizzes (2 x 2.5% = 5%)** *See lecture schedule on p. 5 for release dates and submission deadlines*
  - You will find these quizzes in **Owl Tests & Quizzes**. You can take each quiz at any point during the 5 days that it is available. These quizzes are timed and must be completed within the allotted time once you begin (**when the time runs out your quiz will auto-submit**).
  - There will be two sections in each quiz: A) Matching (2 question sets of 10 matches, worth 5 points each) and B) Multiple Choice (20 questions, worth 1 point each). Each quiz will be graded out of thirty points. Questions will be randomly selected from a test bank.
  - Quizzes are designed for a well-prepared student to complete them in 30 minutes; **all students** will be given a 60-minute time limit. This addresses the needs of students with extra time accommodations.
- 4. Final Exam (40%)** *Scheduled by the Registrar’s Office to take place during the Final Exam period (in April). More info will be provided closer to the time.*

## Lecture Schedule

Lecture Date	Week	Topic/Readings/Assignments Due
Jan. 8	1	Introduction to Media Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read: Textbook – Introduction (pp.1-30)</li> </ul>
Jan. 15	2	Making Meaning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read: Ch.1 How do media make meaning?</li> </ul>
Jan. 22	3	Organizing Meaning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read: Ch.2 Organizing meaning in media texts</li> </ul> <b>DMS #1 “Semiotic Detective” due January 26 at 11:55pm</b>
Jan. 29	4	Media Power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read: Ch.8 Media power</li> </ul>
Feb. 5	5	Representation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read: Ch.3 Media representations</li> </ul> <b>Quiz 1 – complete by Fri, Feb.9<sup>th</sup>, 11:55pm (covers weeks 1-5)</b>
Feb. 12	6	Reality Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read: Ch.4 Reality media</li> </ul> <b>DMS #2 “Constructing a Celebrity” due February 16 at 11:55pm</b>
<b>READING WEEK – no class</b>		
Feb. 26	7	Media Industries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read: Ch.5 The business of Media</li> </ul>
Mar. 4	8	<b>MIDTERM – will take place during class time</b>
Mar. 11	9	Media Regulation & Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read: Ch.6 Media regulation and policy</li> </ul> <b>DMS #3 “Cinema Synergy” due March 15 at 11:55pm</b>
Mar. 18	10	Mass Media & Society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read: Ch.9 Mass media and society</li> </ul>
Mar. 25	11	Audiences & Fans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read: Ch.7 Media audiences</li> </ul> <b>Quiz 2 – complete by Fri, Mar. 29, 11:55pm (covers weeks 6-11)</b>
April 1	12	Advertising & Consumer Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read: Ch.11 The consumer society and advertising</li> </ul> <b>DMS #4 “Understanding Audiences” due April 5 at 11:55pm</b>
April 8	13	Postmodernism & Post-truth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read: Ch.10 Postmodernism and post-truth</li> </ul>

**\*\*\* Please note that you are only required to complete *TWO* of the four possible Doing Media Studies (DMS) assignment tasks, and at least one must be completed *BEFORE* Reading Week. Briefs for each of these assignments can be found on Owl.**

# 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](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 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.