

MIT 2025-001 (Winter 2024)
Faculty of Information & Media Studies
Research Methods for the Digital Age
January 10-April 4

Instructor Information

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Course Information

9:30-11:30 am, Tuesdays

For information on tutorials and TAs, see your Tutorial syllabus and OWL site

Course Description

An introduction to the range of research methods that are appropriate for understanding scholarship in the fields of communications, information, and media studies, including surveys, interviewing, content analysis and ethnography. Students will study specific methods in the context of the media-related topics that these methods have been used to address.

Course Learning outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Construct research questions to explore specific issues in a particular area of media studies, such as social media, journalism, film, or television. (Ask)
- Identify the best approach for a research project in media studies with human participants.
- Identify and collect appropriate data to address a specific research question. (Collect)
- Apply qualitative methodological framework to analyze data. (Analyze)
- Interpret the results of findings by discussing implications for practice and/or theory in media studies. (Interpret)
- Effectively communicate research findings through digital media (Disseminate)
- Critically evaluate qualitative and quantitative research in media studies. (Evaluate)
- Articulate ethical concerns associated with media studies research
- Explain decision making processes at each step of the research process

Required textbook: Leavy, Patricia. *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed methods, Arts-based, and Community-based Participatory Research Approaches*. Guilford Publications, 2nd edition. (1st edition is okay, but the chapters are arranged differently so adjust accordingly according to chapter titles.) Other readings and resources will be available via OWL.

How to be successful in this class

- Be prepared to discuss material in tutorial
- Make sure you are clear about your TAs expectations for tutorials
- Don't be afraid to ask questions. If you are struggling with a topic, contact your instructor(s) and or teaching assistant(s).
- Come to office hours!
- Reward yourself for successes. It seems easier to motivate ourselves knowing that there is something waiting for us at the end of the task.
- FIMS Undergraduate Services (fims@uwo.ca) and Western Student Experience are resources that help students succeed.
- Communicate with your team members for your group project
 - Agree on preferred mode of communication (text, email, etc.)
 - Set dates for meeting and connecting
 - Be sure to have clear tasks and deadlines assigned for everyone
 - Agree on an approach for dealing with the possibility of a team member falling behind, not attending/responding, or not doing their part

Assignments: To be submitted in OWL by 11:55 pm EST, unless otherwise specified.

Literature review: (10 points, individual) Find four peer-reviewed articles that are related to your research topic. We will provide a template for you to complete.

Content analysis project: (40 points total, group)

Research question (5 points)

Data collection (5 points)

Infographic or research poster (10 points)

Written paper (10 points)

Presentation (10 points)

Ethics module: (15 points, individual)

Final exam: (25 points, individual)

Class participation and preparedness: (10 points, individual) Participation and preparation marks will be based on attendance in tutorial and participation in tutorial discussions, as well as pop quizzes (pop quizzes can only be taken in class on the day they are given).

Rubrics will be used to evaluate assessments and will be posted with the instructions.

After an assessment is returned, students should wait 24 hours to digest feedback before contacting their evaluator; to ensure a timely response, students must connect with their instructor within 7 days of receiving feedback.

Grading:

Click [here](#) for a detailed and comprehensive set of policies and regulations concerning examinations and grading. The table below outlines the University-wide grade descriptors. Detailed FIMS specific descriptors are included in the Notes from the Dean's Office appended to this syllabus. The following chart lists the rubric for FIMS undergraduate grading.

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

Absences and late work

- Attendance in tutorial is necessary, so if you will be absent, please notify your group members and TA. You are allowed one unexcused absence. Please contact your TA and cc Professor Adler and/or Amber Matthews for subsequent absences. We may ask for documentation.
- The group project requires that you contribute regularly and on time so that the group can meet the final proposal deadlines. If you need extra time, please contact your TA and the professor so that we can help you make adjustments if necessary.
- If you have documented accommodations, be sure to clarify expectations with your TA and professor.
- Late assessments without academic consideration will be subject to a late penalty 5% /day
- Late assessments with academic consideration require the student to work with the Academic Advising unit in their Faculty of registration; once that has been approved, students need to contact the instructor to arrange for an alternate submission date.

Statement on Academic Offences and the Use of Generative AI Technology

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

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 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. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Should a concern about plagiarism arise, instructors may require the student to share their rough work, research notes, or previous drafts. Students are advised to retain these materials until the graded assignment is returned.

Support services

Student Support Services (including the services provided by the USC): <http://westernusc.ca/services/>
Student Development Centre, including Services for Students with Disabilities: https://studentexperience.uwo.ca/student_development/index.html
Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Important Dates for Winter 2023/24 Semester

1. Last day to add a second term course: January 16, 2024
2. Reading Break: February 17, 2023 - February 25, 2024
3. Last day to drop a second term course without academic penalty: March 7, 2024
4. Good Friday: March 29, 2024
5. Last day of classes: Monday, April 8, 20234
6. Study days: April 9 and 10, 2024
7. Examination period: April 11, 2024 - April 30, 2024.

Students will receive graded work worth no less than 15% at least 3 days prior to the deadline for withdrawal without academic penalty. Students can find details about this academic policy here:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/evaluation_undergrad.pdf

Check the Academic Calendar for a complete list of sessional dates. Dates for commonly observed religious holidays can be accessed through the diversity calendar housed on the Human Rights site.

Professionalism and Privacy:

Please, when you write emails to the instructors or the teaching assistants, provide [MIT 2025 Tutorial #] in the subject and maintain a professional tone and delivery. For more on this see: Laura Portwood-Stacer, [How to email your professor \(without being annoying AF\) ☺](#)

Western students are expected to follow the Student Code of Conduct.

Additionally, the following expectations and professional conduct apply to this course:

- All course materials created by the instructor(s) are copyrighted and cannot be sold/shared

- Recordings are not permitted (audio or video) without explicit permission
- Permitted recordings are not to be distributed
- All recorded sessions will remain within the course site or unlisted if streamed
- Students are expected to follow online etiquette expectations provided on OWL
- Students may be expected to take an academic integrity pledge before some assessments

Health Emergency Contingency:

In the event of a health emergency, during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will not change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

If university policy and public health directives necessitate additional measures to manage the spread of disease, students may be required to resume masking in instructional spaces. Students who are unable to wear a mask for medical reasons should seek accommodation through [Accessible Education](#).

Weekly schedule

Lecture topics, required readings, and assignment due dates

January 10: Intro to the Course

Leavy Chapter 1

January 16: Guest Speakers; Intro to Content Analysis

Ferrucci, Giada. 2022. "Canadian Mining Project in Guatemala Opposed in Local Vote over Environmental Concerns." *The Conversation*

<https://theconversation.com/canadian-mining-project-in-guatemala-opposed-in-local-vote-over-environmental-concerns-189858>

TBD

January 23: Guest speakers; Library Research

Matthews, Amber. 2021. "Reading the Silence: Canadian Library Responses to Racial Injustice." *Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science* 44(1): 82–104. <https://doi.org/10.5206/cjilsrscsib.v44i1.11008>.

Melton, Brittany. 2024 (in press). "By Women For Women" Communicating Gender Discourse in r/FemaleDatingStrategy. *Feminist Media Studies*.

January 30: Citations; Asking Questions

Pinar Barlas, JP Mann, Daniel Arauz Nuñez, Takuya Maeda, André Wolmer de Melo – ChatGPT report

Leavy Chapters 3 and 4

Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories: Footnotes (Books and Papers Scattered about the Floor)*, begins on p. 14

Colleen Burgess & Tom Peace: [19th Century Legacies in 21st Century Historical Research Practice](#)

***Assignment due in tutorial this week: Literature Review**

February 6: Ethics

Leavy Chapter 2

Laura Hartenberger. 2023. "What AI Teaches Us About Good Writing," *Noema*: <https://www.noemamag.com/what-ai-teaches-us-about-good-writing/>

Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS) Core

***Assignment due in tutorial this week: Research Question**

February 13: Qualitative Content Analysis; Grounded Theory

Leavy Chapter 6

Charmaz, Kathy. 2017. "Special Invited Paper: Continuities, Contradictions, and Critical Inquiry in Grounded Theory." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16 (1): 160940691771935-. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917719350>

*** Assignment due in tutorial this week: TCPS Core**

February 17-25: Reading Week

February 27: Qualitative Research; Interviews; Field work

Cormac McGrath, Per J. Palmgren & Matilda Liljedahl. 2019. "Twelve Tips for Conducting Qualitative Research Interviews," *Medical Teacher*, 41 (9): 1002-1006. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0142159X.2018.1497149>

David Nemer. 2021. *Technology of the Oppressed*, MIT Press, Appendix (Methodology)

***Assignment due in tutorial this week: Content analysis—Data Collection**

March 5: Community-engaged Research; Research Creation

Leavy Chapters 8, 9

Choudry, Aziz. 2020. "Reflections on Academia, Activism, and the Politics of Knowledge and Learning." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 24 (1): 28-45.

March 12: Quantitative Methods; Mixed Methods

Leavy Chapters 5 and 7

Zook, Matthew, Solon Barocas, Danah Boyd, Kate Crawford, Emily Keller, Seeta Peña Gangadharan, Alyssa Goodman et al. "Ten Simple Rules for Responsible Big Data Research." *PLoS Computational Biology* 13, no. 3 (2017): e1005399.
<https://journals.plos.org/ploscompbiol/article?id=10.1371/journal.pcbi.1005399>

March 19: Drop-in (optional)

*** Assignment due in tutorial this week: Poster and Written project**

March 26 (no lecture)

***Presentations in tutorials**

April 2: Final exam review

***Presentations in tutorials**

Final exam date TBD

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.