

MIT 2150G Media, Representation, Identity

In Person – Winter 2024
Wednesday 9:30am-12:30pm, FNB 1200

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

Course Description & Objectives

This course explores the role of media and visual culture in shaping our environment, worldviews, and senses of self and identity, including issues related to gender, sexuality, class, race and ethnicity, and ability and disability.

In this course, you will learn to:

- Understand identity as intersectional and rooted in structures of power.
- Identify positive and negative examples of representation in news and entertainment media and understand how these depictions influence the ways that we see each other and ourselves.
- Critique media representations by identifying stereotypes and systems of signification and analysing the ideological work they do to reinforce or disrupt social norms.
- Apply relevant theoretical concepts to analyses of representation in a range of media texts including news broadcasts, TV shows, movies, short stories, graphic novels, advertisements, video games, music videos, websites, and social media platforms.
- Create your own media representations, which illustrate a comprehensive understanding of key course concepts.

Required Course Materials (available from the UWO bookstore or online)

1. **Emma Donoghue, *Learned by Heart: A Novel* (2023)**
2. **Rachel Held Evans, *A Year of Biblical Womanhood: How a Liberated Woman Found Herself Sitting on Her Roof, Covering Her Head, and Calling Her Husband 'Master'* (2012)**
3. **Susan Neiman, *Left is Not Woke* (2023)**
4. **Ian Williams, *Disorientation: Being Black in the World* (2021)**
5. Other assorted book excerpts, journal articles and web links are provided on **Owl**. You will also be required to screen a number of films. See lecture schedule for a full list and Owl Course Content for a weekly breakdown of required readings/screenings, including downloadable short readings).

PLEASE NOTE: A significant portion of class time each week is devoted to discussing assigned readings in small groups. For this reason, you are encouraged to acquire hard copies of the assigned books so that you can bring them to class and annotate them by hand as you read, should you wish to. Please note also that both the midterm and final exam will be open book, but you will not be permitted to bring digital versions of books to exams which will be held in-person on campus.

General 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 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 crazy – good advice [here](#).

3. Electronic Devices

- Be proactive about distractions in lectures – both for yourself and those around you (being regularly visibly distracted in class will count against you when I'm assessing participation)
- 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

- The first assignment in this course (questions + response paper) has variable deadlines depending on the seminar you sign up for (your group will work together to make your own schedule) and the reading journals you choose to submit for each unit. You are responsible for ensuring that you know when things are due and where/how to submit them. Late penalties of 3% per day may apply.
- All written assignments are submitted online via Owl
 - Seminar questions and keyword representations should also be submitted as hard copies to me in person
- Assignments submitted on time will be graded and returned within two weeks. Early submissions may be graded and returned early. Late submissions (without permission or accommodation) will be graded at my convenience, may not receive feedback and **may be subject to a penalty of 3% per day late (deadlines are all at 11:55pm – a new day starts at midnight).**

5. Attendance & Participation

- You are expected to complete assigned readings and screenings in advance of the class they are assigned for and participate in class activities and discussion in our weekly class sessions throughout the semester.
- Your participation in this course is worth 15% of your final grade – consistent attendance is the minimum requirement, particularly during the 5 weeks of small group seminars (**see schedule on p.5**). As there are only 5-6 students in each group, missing these discussion sessions lets your groupmates down. If you must be away, please inform your group ASAP and if possible, send through some questions/comments as your contribution to the discussion.
- **If you feel that you will not be able to meet attendance requirements outlined above, then this course may not be for you.**
- Lecture slides will be posted to OWL each week, but these do not include notes; you should be prepared to contact colleagues in the class to obtain a more detailed summary of content you miss or come to office hours to discuss with me.
 - I will do my best to address questions that clearly demonstrate you have completed set readings/screenings and reviewed lecture slides **but please note that I will not re-present lecture content in office hours for students who are absent**

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 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 also 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 do not submit assignments by the new deadlines we agree to, late penalties may apply).

Required Course Work and Evaluation

1. **Seminar: Questions (5%) + Response Paper (20%):** *ongoing from Weeks 4-9*
2. **Midterm (15%):** in class, week 7 (February 28)
3. **Keyword (20%):** *representation + rationale due March 29th*
4. **Contribution to our Community of Learning (15%):** *Partially self-assessed – statement due April 3rd (last class) – can be submitted online or in-person*
5. **Final Exam (25%):** 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.

Descriptions below provide a brief overview of assignments - see detailed instructions on Owl

Seminar: Questions + Response Paper

- Each student will prepare a set of 5-6 questions and lead a small group discussion of assigned course material (you will be assigned to groups of 5-6 people and given time to break off together for discussion during class) then submit a response paper on that same course material the following week.

Contribution to our Community of Learning

- You must attend class each week, prepare assigned readings and screenings and participate consistently in class discussion – this constitutes your contribution to our learning community.
- Rather than seeing participation as anxiety-inducing, consider the classroom a space to experiment with trying out your ideas on other people. In many workplaces, community groups and even personal relationships, it can be hard to feel listened to. Developing some strategies in a low-risk environment may help you feel more comfortable taking initiative.

Keyword

- You are required to prepare a representation of a keyword term of your choice, related to our course content. There are two components to this assignment: a) you will create a visual **text*** (using whatever materials you would like) to represent the keyword you have chosen; b) you will include a statement which explains your choices, outlines your creative approach and clarifies your intended meaning(s). You should consider the origins of your chosen word as well as how its meaning has shifted and evolved over time, particularly as it applies to the themes of our course.
- ***IMPORTANT:** in media studies a text is anything which can be “read” and decoded for meaning. Your representative text could be a static image, a sculpture, or a multi-media work. Please come see me in office hours to discuss your ideas if you are unsure if they are suitable for this assignment.

Lecture Schedule

Links to assigned reading/screening content listed below (aside from whole books) can be located in Owl in the Course Content section (look under individual weeks for the content you are seeking).

Week/ Date	Topic	Readings/Screenings/Assignments
1 Jan. 10	Introductions	
2 Jan. 17	Enlightenment	WATCH: <i>The Truman Show</i> (Criterion-On-Demand with UWO credentials; see link in Owl) READ: 1) Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , Book VII; 2) Toni Morrison's Nobel Lecture
3 Jan. 24	Dialogue	READ: Emma Donoghue, <i>Learned by Heart</i> (pp.1-143)
4 Jan. 31	Medium	*SEMINAR 1 READ: Emma Donoghue, <i>Learned by Heart</i> (p.147 to end – beginning at “Rarities, January 1806”)
5 Feb. 7	Nation	*SEMINAR 2 READ: Chris Hedges & Joe Sacco, <i>Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt</i> , Intro and Ch.1
6 Feb. 14	Race	*SEMINAR 3 READ: Ian Williams, <i>Disorientation</i> ; 2) James Baldwin, “Letter to my Nephew”
Feb. 21	READING WEEK – no class	
7 Feb. 28	MIDTERM – in class	
8 Mar. 6	Class	*SEMINAR 4 READ: Susan Neiman, <i>Left is Not Woke</i>
9 Mar. 13	Faith	*SEMINAR 5 READ: Rachel Held Evans, <i>A Year of Biblical Womanhood</i> , Intro and October-March OPTIONAL: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on “Faith”
10 Mar. 20	Gender	WATCH: <i>Gender Revolution</i> (documentary) READ: Rachel Held Evans, <i>A Year of Biblical Womanhood</i> , April-September
11 Mar.27	Desire	KEYWORD project due READ: Catherine Belsey, <i>Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture</i> (excerpts)
12 April 3	Love	WATCH: <i>The Breakfast Club</i> (Netflix) READ: bell hooks, <i>All About Love</i> (excerpts)

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.