

MIT 2500B: Winter 2024

The Meaning of Technology

**MC-110, Thursdays 9:30 am —12:30 pm, in-
person**

January 11-April 8, 2023



Professor: [Thomas Streeter, tstreet2@uwo.ca](mailto:tstreet2@uwo.ca), +1 519-661-2111x84347

Physical Office: FNB 4190. Depending on circumstances, office hours may be on zoom or in person. Sign up here for office hours: <https://tstreete.youcanbook.me/> (or email me if you are unable to attend any of the available times).

For access to readings, see the [OWL course site](#).

Teaching Assistants: JP Mann jmann89@uwo.ca, Juan Carlos Escobar-Lamanna jescoba2@uwo.ca, Lennon Needham lneedha2@uwo.ca, Daniel Arauz Nunez darauznu@uwo.ca, Mackenzie Jessop mjessop5@uwo.ca. Students will each be assigned a primary TA to work with.

What's this course about?

Historian of technology David Noble once said, “As technology has increasingly placed the world at people’s fingertips, those people have become less able to put their finger on precisely what technology is.” This course explores “what technology is” by investigating the social construction of communication technologies that underpin both everyday life and social relations across the globe, and how they shape and are shaped by culture and the imagination. Topics include theories of technology; technologies, feelings, and social structures; understanding technologies in history; how technologies develop; technology and democracies; and machine learning and society.

The content is there for you to use, not to memorize. This course is designed to help you learn how to make sense of the interconnectedness of our world, how to understand shifting relations between grand socio-technical structures and private habits of the heart. That’s tricky. It takes some practice. Think of the work of this course as more like learning a musical instrument or a sport than a memorization game. Try out your own ideas, ask questions, look for connections and differences, don’t be afraid to doubt or disagree. You should take notes in lectures and while you read, but you’ll probably learn more if your notes include your own questions, disagreements, and reactions to the materials. It’s easier to remember details if you first focus on figuring out how they all fit together.

Course Content

Course outlines are windows into a world of thought and ideas. Sometimes they also seem like lists of rules or detailed contracts between professors and students. The contract parts of this outline, like [Weighting of Assignments](#), [Academic Integrity](#), [Marking](#), [Course Outcomes](#), or what to do about [missing classes or assignments](#), can be found below. But here I put the course content more upfront, to give you

a better idea of what the course is about, what kinds of tools and ideas it will show you, and why it might be interesting or important.

When reading, you don't always need to start at the beginning and read straight through to the end; instead, ask yourself questions, e.g., what's this author's **argument**, what point are they making? What's their evidence? Why do they write the way they do? Would they agree or disagree with other thinkers? You might find yourself hopping around in the article trying to find answers. Some articles may make sense right away, others may take multiple readings before they start to become clear to you.

It also helps to connect with others and talk things over. The course forums give you a chance to raise questions with your classmates, and you can try forming a study group with others in the class. And you can email your TA or the instructor with questions.

Schedule of topics and readings

All resources will be posted on OWL. You will need to keep up with the materials on a week-by-week basis. Before each week's lecture on Thursday, plan to have thoughtfully looked at all the readings for that week. Current events may necessitate small changes in assignments; if that happens the total amount of reading or number of assignments will not increase. Don't expect to always understand everything in the readings before you come to class. Read enough that you can come to class with questions about what you don't understand.

To help you understand how to use the readings listed here, they are color coded into three types: 1) **scholarly, peer reviewed works**; 2) **journalistic and cultural commentaries**; and 3) **historical documents** that reveal something about the time when they were written.

Lecture Date	Theme	Readings	Assignments
1/11	1) Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cho, Julia. "How the Loss of the Landline Is Changing Family Life." <i>The Atlantic</i>, December 12, 2019. Solnit, Rebecca. "Diary." <i>London Review of Books</i>, August 29, 2013, pp. 32-33. "The Power and Problem of Culture, The Power and Problem of Technology," from Chapter 1 of <i>Culture and Technology: A Primer</i>. Second Edition by Slack, Jennifer Daryl, Wise, J. Macgregor (2014) Peter Lang Publishing Inc., pp. 5-11. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forum posts
1/18	2) Technologies and Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excerpts from Steven Johnson, <i>The Ghost Map</i> (New York: Riverhead Books, 2006), pp. 66-69, 72-75, 97-100, 122-126, 135-143, 146-149, 153-154, 158-163. Tufekci, Zeynep. 2020. "It Wasn't Just Trump Who Got It Wrong." <i>The Atlantic</i>, March 24, 2020. https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archiv 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forum posts

		<p>e/2020/03/what-really-doomed-americas-coronavirus-response/608596/.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optional: https://www.uvm.edu/~tstreete/powerpose/ Harnett, Sam. "Here's How Much You Are Worth to Facebook in Dollars and Cents." KQED, April 12, 2018. "Fifteen Million Merits," Season 1, Episode 2 of the Netflix series <i>Black Mirror</i>. 	
1/25	3) Technologies and Feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streeter, Thomas. "Desperately Seeking Bandwidth," <i>Flow</i>, November 5, 2004. Raymond Williams, "Structures of Feeling," from <i>Marxism and Literature</i>, Oxford Univ. Press, 1978, pp. 128-135. Jordan, Tim. Chapter 3: "Letters: Pre-Internet Communicative Practices," and Ch. 4, "Virtual Worlds: Internet Communicative Practices," from <i>Internet, Society and Culture: Communicative Practices Before and After the Internet</i>. 2013. Excerpt from Wang, Xiaowei. <i>Blockchain Chicken Farm: And Other Stories of Tech in China's Countryside</i>. New York: FSG Originals, 2020, pp. 47-65. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forum posts
2/1 9:30-10:50	Hourly exam 1	Short Answer, in the regular classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hourly Exam 1
2/1 11:00-12:30	4) What is Technology, Anyway?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Merchant, Brian. Chapter 4, "Multitouched," of <i>The One Device: The Secret History of the iPhone</i>. Back Bay Books, 2017, pp. 69-92. Edgerton, David. "Introduction," pp. ix-xviii; "Time," 28-51; and "Conclusion," pp. 206-212, from <i>The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History since 1900</i>. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forum posts
2/8	5) Mobile Privatization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Williams, Raymond, "The technology and the society," from <i>Television: Technology and Cultural Form</i>, pp. 9-19; Williams, Raymond, "The Social History of the Uses of Television Technology," from <i>Television: Technology and Cultural Form</i>, pp. 19-31. Oldenburg, Ramon, and Dennis Brissett. 1982. "The Third Place." <i>Qualitative Sociology</i> 5(4):265-284 Kafka, Franz. <i>Letter of March 1922</i>, from <i>Letters to Milena</i>. Schocken Books, 1990, pp. 223-225. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forum posts First writing assignment due Sunday
2/15	6) History of the Internet 1: Big Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bush, Vannevar. "As We May Think." <i>The Atlantic Monthly</i>. 1945. Hughes, Thomas P. Chapter 2, "MIT as System Builder: SAGE" from <i>Rescuing Prometheus: Four Monumental Projects That</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forum posts

		<p><i>Changed Our World</i>. Reprint edition. New York: Vintage, 2000, pp. 15-67.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Light, Jennifer S. "When Computers Were Women." <i>Technology and Culture</i> 40, no. 3 (1999): 455–83. 	
2/29	7) History of the Internet 2: Amateurs, Hackers, Counterculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Douglas, Susan J. "Popular Culture and Populist Technology: The Amateur Operators 1906-1912," Chapter Six of <i>Inventing American Broadcasting</i>, pp. 187-215. Brand, Stewart. "Spacewar: Fanatic Life and Symbolic Death Among the Computer Bums." <i>Rolling Stone</i>, December 7, 1972. http://wheels.org/spacewar/stone/rolling_stone.html Barlow, John Perry. "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace." Electronic Frontier Foundation, February 8, 1996. https://www.eff.org/cyberspace-independence 	Forum posts
3/7 9:30 – 10:50	Hourly Exam 2	Short Answer, in the regular classroom	Exam
3/7 11:00-12:30	8) Communication, Technology, and Democracy 1: Mass Media in the 20 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Herman, Edward S., and Noam Chomsky. Chapter 1 of 2002. <i>Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media</i>. Reprint edition. New York: Pantheon. https://chomsky.info/consent01/ Gloria Steinem, "Sex, Lies, and Advertising," from Joan Gorham (ed.), <i>Mass Media Annual Editions</i> 99/00, Dushkin/McGraw-Hill, pp. 139173-181; originally published in <i>Ms. Magazine</i>, July/August 1990, pp. 18-28. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forum posts
3/14	9) Communication Technology and Democracy 2: from Democratization to Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tufekci, Zeynep. "How Social Media Took Us from Tahrir Square to Donald Trump." <i>MIT Technology Review</i>. August 14, 2018. https://www.technologyreview.com/s/611806/how-social-media-took-us-from-tahrir-square-to-donald-trump/. Teachout, Zephyr. "Cyborgs on the Highways." <i>The American Prospect</i>, December 8, 2022. https://prospect.org/api/content/fa0e82ca-7649-11ed-b363-12b3f1b64877/. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forum posts
3/21	10) Machine Learning 1: Prediction and its Limits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hendrickson, Josh. "Alexa, Siri, and Google Don't Understand a Word You Say," <i>How-To Geek</i>, Feb. 19, 2019, https://www.howtogeek.com/405011/voice-assistants-dont-really-understand-you/ Bogost, Ian. 2022. "Google's 'Sentient' Chatbot Is Our Self-Deceiving Future." <i>The</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forum posts

		Atlantic, June 14, 2022. https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archives/2022/06/google-engineer-sentient-ai-chatbot/661273/.	
3/28	11) Machine Learning 2: Industrialization and Technologies of the Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sato, Mia. "The Store Is for People, but the Storefront Is for Robots." <i>The Verge</i>, June 15, 2023. https://www.theverge.com/23753963/google-seo-shopify-small-business-ai. Schüll, Natasha Dow. "Gambled Away: Video Poker and Self-Suspension." <i>Anthropology Now</i> 4, no. 2 (2012): 1–13. Hao, Karen. "He Got Facebook Hooked on AI. Now He Can't Fix Its Misinformation Addiction." <i>MIT Technology Review</i>, March 11, 2021. https://www.technologyreview.com/2021/03/11/1020600/facebook-responsible-ai-misinformation/. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forum posts Second writing assignment due Sunday
4/4	12) Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feenberg, Andrew. "Democratic Rationalization: Technology, Power, and Freedom." In <i>Readings in the Philosophy of Technology</i>, 139–55. Rowman and Littlefield Lanham, MD, 2009. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forum posts
TBA	Final Exam		

Course Rules and Expectations

Course Materials: Readings, lecture slides, exercises, and videos will be accessed through the course OWL site, whether we remain online or are able to move to the classroom. Streams and recordings of live classroom lectures, where they exist, will generally only be available to students with accommodations approved by your faculty's Undergraduate Student Services (e.g., fims@uwo.ca.)

- All course materials created by the instructor 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

Weighting of Assignments: Briefly, in this course there will be two in-class hourly exams (16% each, tentatively on Feb. 1 and March 7th), two essays (16% each, due 2/11, and 3/31); and a final exam (26%, at a time scheduled by the registrar). You must receive a passing grade across the three exams to pass the course. (In other words, if you receive less than a 50 average for the exams, you will not pass the course even if the other assignments are better.) In addition, attendance will be taken randomly during lectures (5%), and there will be small exercises, especially forum postings, spread throughout the course (5%).

Course Outcomes

Students should come away from this class having developed 1) an appreciation for a social and historical understanding of media and information technologies, 2) an understanding of how to analyze structures of feeling and their relations to technologies, 3) some tools for critiquing the ways in which technologies are often misunderstood, and 4) a capacity to demystify technologies and their uses.

Additionally, a goal of this course is to help you become part of a community of active thinkers, who go beyond memorizing the material to actively engaging, as a group, the controversies and problems of media technologies today. We will do our best under the circumstances to create an active learning community. You will be able to consult regularly with your TAs via email or office hours, and there may be some optional review sessions offered synchronously.

Expectations: on behaving professionally

In all your classes try, to the best of your ability, *act professionally*. This does not mean dressing a certain way or never taking no for an answer or otherwise acting like someone you've seen on TV. Rather, it means doing your absolute best to be honest, reliable, and effective in a way that treats others around you with respect. This means things like meeting deadlines, but also admitting when you don't understand something. It means showing your instructor and the others around you that you are doing your best to do your part and thinking about the good of the whole group. For example, if you find that a link to a reading doesn't work, contact the professor or a TA to let us know; don't try to use it as an excuse not to do the reading. I and everyone else in the class will be grateful you took a minute or two to help us all out. Similarly, in class forum discussions, it is good if you disagree with something somebody said -- discussing disagreements is central to progress -- but if you do so, do it with respect, with thoughtfulness and taking care to try to understand the other person's point of view.

And it means that your presence and actions in this class should be conducive to your own learning and to that of others.

That said, all students should make themselves familiar with the University's Student Code of Conduct: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/board/code.pdf>.

General Policies

Sharing your notes with other individual students in the class during the semester is fine, as long as you do not charge for them. In this course, unless you have prior permission from the instructor, you are

prohibited from mass distributing or selling notes to other students, online or otherwise, or from uploading notes to open or commercial websites like notehall.com or sharenotes.com.

Laptops and cell phones can be handy, and in some circumstances, they are necessary. They also can be incredibly distracting, for oneself and others. There is growing evidence that many students who take notes on paper and read paper books learn more than students who read and write electronically. (There are of course, exceptions.) So during class, unless you have explicit permission from the instructor, you are required to close your laptop, take notes on paper, and turn off your cellphone. You'll be able to focus better.

Academic Integrity

UWO has a system of "Academic Integrity" and a set of strict policies to go with it (see [here](#)). You need to know that offering someone else's work as your own or cheating on an exam is a major offense. But I think that just listing the rules does not always help folks understand what's really at stake.

Academic integrity is about much more than just not cheating in the obvious ways, like paying someone else to write your paper for you or copying stuff and pretending it's your own. It's about respect for the many-centuries-old disciplined human conversation we call scholarship and learning how to helpfully take part in that conversation.

By taking a class, you are joining a team, a community. To feel part of that community of scholarship, you need to learn how it works and do your fair share within it. Learning how to, say, do a proper citation or write a good summary of a scholarly article is like learning to take care of a sick roommate, or making dinner for a group of your friends, or doing your best for your team. In the end, you don't do scholarly things because the law says you have to, but because it's satisfying and makes it better for everybody if you do, and helps maintain your friendships, your connections to the conversation. Scholarly rules like proper citations are not just an arcane set of hoops for students to jump through. Following them helps make you part of a community, a team.

So, think of cheating on an exam as more like stealing from your best friend than it is like skipping out on a study hall in high school; it poisons your relationships to people and activities you care about. And cultivate an enthusiasm for the scholarly worlds your classes expose you to; talking about ideas with friends is just as important (and can be just as fun) as talking about, say, GOT. You just have to get in the right frame of mind.

On Generative AI (like ChatGPT)

The main reason NOT to use online tools to compose your assignments is because you are stealing from yourself. Someone is paying a lot of money for you to be here, and one of the most important skills you can gain from a college education is effective writing in your own voice. If you have ChatGPT write your paper for you, you are throwing away a learning opportunity. But it's also the case that ML systems are frequently just plain wrong, and even more often misleading. And using machine learning systems to write papers can be a violation of academic integrity. (In this course, we do have ways to know.)

Students who use AI-content generators (such as ChatGPT) to complete assignments without attribution or permission from the instructor are committing a scholastic offence.

Writing Assignments: The first assignment will ask you to write a summary and short discussion or critique (1250 words TOTAL) of one article from a specific list of course readings identified on OWL. The second assignment will ask you to write a short piece of criticism about an aspect of contemporary technology using at least one of the theoretical perspectives or approaches covered in the class. All assignments are due at 11:55 pm EST unless otherwise specified. Written assignments will be submitted to Turnitin, and perhaps to other services such as GPT-2 Output Detector. More details about these assignments will be made available on OWL.

Paper Format: Papers must be double-spaced (250 words per page approximately), and should be submitted as pdfs on the assignments tab in OWL. Papers need not include a separate title page, but should have student name, class, and date of submission on the top left corner of the first page. Citations should be in conventional Chicago Style author-date format (see <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/files/styleguides/ChicagoStyleAuthorDate.pdf>). All papers must include page numbers.

Withdrawal: Students will receive graded work worth no less than 15% at least 3 days prior to the deadline for withdrawal without academic penalty. This year, the date by which students are to have received at least 15% of their grade in a first semester course is March 4, 2023. Students can find details about this academic policy here: [Evaluation of Undergraduate Performance](#). Please note, students are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of the grades they have received in their courses.

If you might miss a class or an assignment deadline

In general, it is on your shoulders as an adult to adapt to a university's schedules. If you miss a class, powerpoint slides will be posted online, you can borrow another student's class notes, and once you've done that, you can check in with your TA or the professor to discuss what you've missed.

But remember that whatever else is going on in your life, your job is being a student. If you have a lot of work in several courses all due around the same time, plan ahead and do some of it early. If you planned to be out of town on the day an exam gets scheduled, it's up to you to change your plans. (Don't promise someone you can go to a wedding or a vacation towards the end of final exam period until *after* all your final exam times have been announced.) If you missed a ride and it will be therefore difficult for you to get to class, your choice is to either make the extra effort to get there or make arrangements with a friend to get the notes and make an appointment with your TA to go over the material.

But if you think you will miss a lecture, assignment, or exam for reasons *truly* outside your control, here's the current set of procedures:

1. **Covid-19:** Do you need to isolate for covid-related reasons, such as symptoms, a positive test, or a roommate who tested positive?
 - a. Take the [Covid-19 Self Assessment](#).
 - b. If the self-assessment says you should isolate, let Prof. Streeter know: tstreet2@uwo.ca. Do not email him the completed self-assessment.
2. **Accommodated exam:** Have you already been approved for relevant special accommodations for Accommodated Exams by Accessible Education?

- a. If you need extra time or other accommodations for an exam, **you must schedule a time with Accommodated Exams at least ten days before the exam**, preferably sooner. You may contact your assigned accommodations counselor for help. Your instructors can not schedule these for you.
 - b. *After* you have scheduled the accommodated exam, let the instructor of the course know that you have done so.
3. **Deadline flexibility:** Do you have already-approved accommodations for flexibility for deadlines or attendance?
- a. Know that “flexibility” means that on occasion you might get **up to** a week’s extension on some assignments, or the instructor might be able to spend extra time to help you if you miss one or two classes.
 - b. As soon as possible, contact your Faculty’s **Undergraduate Students Services**, which if you are a FIMS student is fims@uwo.ca, and let them know full details. It is generally up to them, not your instructor, to determine how to proceed.
 - c. Only **after** contacting UGSS, let your instructor know, providing full details.
4. **Other issues beyond your control:** If you have some other circumstance truly beyond your control preventing you from attending class or an exam or turning in an assignment, you should:
- a. Contact your faculty’s Undergrad Student Services Office (for FIMS: fims@uwo.ca) and provide details.
 - b. Only **after** that, you should **also** contact the professor.
5. If none of the above apply, or if you are told that your circumstances do not warrant accommodations, **plan to make your own adaptations** to deal with the situation.

Late Paper Policy: You may turn in **one** of the three papers up to two days late **ONCE** during the semester without penalty, if you notify the instructor **before** the due date that you will be doing so. Otherwise, papers turned in late will be assessed a **five point (out of 100) penalty per day** they are late. Any exceptions to this rule requires students to seek accommodation through the Dean’s Office in their home faculty. (FIMS students should contact Student Services at fims@uwo.ca.) Please refer to the Notes from the Dean's Office pages below for how to go about seeking academic consideration.

Missed hourly exam: In the case of a missed exam with Academic Consideration approved by a student’s home faculty student affairs office, a makeup will be scheduled at the instructor’s discretion, typically at a specific time such as a Friday or on a weekend. The format of the exam might differ from that of the originally scheduled exam.

Prerequisites: University Senate regulations state: “Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.”

Student Health: Students who are in emotional and/or mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western. For a complete list of options on how to obtain help please visit <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>

Privacy Policy: We adhere to an Ontario Provincial Government privacy legislation known as “FIPPA” (Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act). As such we cannot email you a grade or discuss a case with you via the internet unless we know it is you. As such, we will only answer UWO emails. For further information please see: <http://www.uwo.ca/privacy/links.html>

Health Emergency Contingency Statement:

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](#).

Marking

Grades give you some feedback to help you learn, and the act of reading and evaluating assignments gives us some feedback about how well we are communicating to you. I encourage you to talk to your TA about how you did on your assignments after they are turned back; direct discussion is often more helpful to learning than just looking at a grade.

I will explain in detail how we evaluate particular assignments during the term. A grading rubric, however, in any of your classes, is not a substitute for the expert judgment of your highly trained instructors and TAs.

The hourly and final exams will likely involve short answers to questions; for each question, the possible scores are 0, 1, 2, or 3. An ideal answer is one where a literate person who did not know the answer would understand it after reading what you wrote. Zero means you communicated nothing showing you knew the answer to the question. One means you communicated something indicating you knew something about the question, but your answer is incomplete or not very coherent. A 2 shows that you understand the answer to the question pretty well, and are able to explain it clearly. A 3 means you truly hit the nail on the head, and provided an exceptionally precise, accurate, and/or particularly astute answer to the question.

Assignments will generally be curved

To ensure that grading is fair and rigorous, assignments will usually be graded on a rough bell curve, a common practice at many universities, but perhaps not so common at Western. It's no less fair than other systems of marking, and arguably is more fair than many of them. But some students find it confusing to discover that in a curved assignment, 75% correct may not translate into a grade of 75. The general idea is to set grades by comparing students to each other within a class. If most students, for example, do worse than 75%, then 75% correct could result in a grade of 80; if most students do better than 75% correct, then it might result in, say, a grade of 70. Grading on a pre-established 100 point scale works best only if an instructor knows in advance exactly what will be hard for students and what will be easy; I've only taught a few courses here, so I'd be guessing. (If you want to better understand why many instructors think curves are a good thing, try this: <http://volokh.com/2011/05/01/grading-on-a-curve-2/>.)

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.

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

Statement on sexual or gender-based 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.

Course delivery with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic: official Western statement

Although the intent is for this course to be delivered in-person, the changing COVID-19 landscape may necessitate some or all of the course to be delivered 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 assessments affected will be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

When deemed necessary, tests and examinations in this course will be conducted using a remote proctoring service. By taking this course, you are consenting to the use of this software and

acknowledge that you will be required to provide personal information (including some biometric data) and the session will be recorded. Completion of this course will require you to have a reliable internet connection and a device that meets the technical requirements for this service. More information about this remote proctoring service, including technical requirements, is available on Western's Remote Proctoring website at: <https://remoteproctoring.uwo.ca>.

Land Acknowledgement: Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Attawandaron peoples who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local First Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region, there are eleven First Nation communities and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of indigenous peoples.

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.