

# MIT 3110G - Global Political Economy of Communication

Winter 2024

Wednesdays 9:30 am-12:20 pm in SEB-1056

Professor Edward Comor – FNB-4138 – ecomor@uwo.ca

Office hours: Thursdays 5:30-6:20 pm *and by appointment*

This course applies concepts and examines questions concerning the subjects of communication and culture to illuminate the long-term dynamics shaping our global political economy. More specifically, throughout the semester, the power relations that influence (and are influenced by) developments related to international and transnational capitalism will be assessed using Marxist and non-Marxist approaches. While technological aspects of these developments will be addressed, our focus will be on much broader concerns, including the following areas of enquiry: how do political-economic relations influence cultural developments?; how is knowledge itself influenced by political-economic dynamics and how does it, in turn, shape these dynamics?; and how might the insights garnered from our work this semester clarify the underpinnings, implications, and fate of contemporary developments related to what many call ‘globalization’?

The class will meet most weeks for three-hour lectures. **Students must complete required readings prior to each class** (otherwise, it is unlikely that lectures will be fully understood).

***Warning: students who are not disciplined readers and capable writers likely will find this course to be very challenging!***

*Students are asked to wear triple layered masks in the classroom if they are experiencing any signs of illness. In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence or related factors that necessitates course delivery be moved away from face-to-face interaction, this class may be delivered entirely online (either synchronously or asynchronously).*

**Re. plagiarism and AI technology:** Students 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 (AI) to generate answers or create content that is represented as one’s own. In this class, *students who use AI-content generators (such as ChatGPT) are committing a scholastic offence.*

**IMPORTANT:** THIS COURSE DISCOURAGES THE USE OF ALL ELECTRONIC DEVICES DURING LECTURES. IF SUCH DEVICES ARE USED FOR ANYTHING OTHER THAN NOTETAKING, THEY MAY BE BANNED FOR THE REMAINDER OF CLASS OR THE SEMESTER.

## **Assessments\*:**

**Participation.** Although weekly attendance will be recorded, students will be assessed based on their *qualitative* contributions throughout the semester. These may include asking thoughtful questions or making helpful observations concerning concepts and readings: **10%**

**Test 1.** Sixty-minutes in class on January 31<sup>st</sup>. Students will answer eight multiple choice questions and four identification questions: **20%**

**Test 2.** Ninety-minutes in class on March 6<sup>th</sup>. Students will answer ten multiple choice questions and one essay question: **30%**

**End of semester assignment.** Due April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Students will answer one essay question of approx. 2500 words (choice will be provided). *Late submissions will not be accepted in the absence of a formal recommendation issued by FIMS Student Services.*

\*Documentation will be REQUIRED for all accommodations involving the completion of a Student Medical Certificate for academic consideration based on medical grounds *or* the presentation of appropriate documentation to the FIMS Student Services office supporting academic consideration on compassionate grounds. Students who are unsure as to whether or not they have grounds to request a medical or compassionate consideration/accommodation are advised to contact this office directly (fims@uwo.ca).

## **Course Schedule and Required Readings:**

Unless otherwise indicated, all readings are available via the OWL *Course Reading* tab. Although lecture slides will be posted on OWL shortly after each class, these are not substitutes for direct notetaking and discussion. Students missing classes are strongly encouraged to borrow notes from fellow students, if available.

### **Week I. January 10 – Introduction**

No readings.

### **Week II. January 17 – Marxist Political Economy, part I: the dynamics of global capitalism**

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party” in *The Marx-Engels Reader* Second Edition (W.W. Norton, 1978), R. Tucker (ed.), pp. 473-483.

**Week III. January 24 – Marxist Political Economy, part II: labour, culture, and technology**

Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (Monthly Review Press, 1998), pp. 31-40 (ch.1), 117-126 (ch.8), and 188-196 (ch.13).

**Week IV. January 31 – Test 1**

60 minutes in class beginning at 9:35am.

**Week V. February 7 – Capitalism since 1945, part I: from Fordism to post-Fordism**

Frank Webster, *Theories of the Information Society* (Taylor & Francis, 1995), pp. 62-82.

**Week VI. February 14 – Capitalism since 1945, part II: from modernity to postmodernity**

Frank Webster, *Theories of the Information Society* (Taylor & Francis, 1995), pp. 228-241 and 259-261.

**Week VII. No class (Spring Reading Week)**

**Week VIII. February 28 – Capitalism since 1945, part III: the postmodern condition, communication, and politics**

David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 226-239 (ch. 14) and pp. 284-307. Available via OWL Resources folder.

**Week IX. March 6 – Test 2**

90 minutes in class beginning at 9:35am

**March 7 – Last day to drop course without academic penalty.**

**Week X. March 13 – Innisian Political Economy I: biases and centre-margin relations**

Edward Comor, ‘Harold Innis’s Concept of Bias: Its Intellectual Origins and Misused Legacy’ for *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. J. Nussbaum, ed. (Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 1-13. Available via OWL Resources folder.

**Week XI. March 20 – Innisian Political Economy II: ubiquitous media and power**

Edward Comor, “Ubiquitous Media and Monopolies of Knowledge” in M. Daubs and V. Manzerolle (eds.), *From Here to Ubiquity* (Peter Lang, 2018), pp. 186-200.

Harold Innis, “The Mechanization of Knowledge” in *Staples, Markets, and Cultural Change*. D. Drache, ed. (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), pp. 350-355.

**Week XII. March 27 – Digital capitalism and neo-imperialism**

Edward Comor, ‘Marx’s Value Theory: a Critical Response to Analyses of Digital Prosumption’ in *The Information Society* Vol.31 No.1 (January 2015), pp. 13-19.

Petter Törnberg and Justus Uitermark, “Tweeting ourselves to death: the cultural logic of digital capitalism” in *Media, Culture & Society* Vol. 44(3), pp. 574-590.

*Final assignment distributed today (due in one week).*

**Week XIII. April 3 – No class** (Final assignment due at 11:55pm via OWL Assignments folder)

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FYI, please review **Notes from the Dean’s Office** in OWL Resources folder.

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# NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Winter 2024

## Rights and Responsibilities

The conditions governing a student's ability to pursue their undergraduate education at Western are ratified by Senate and can be found on the [Academic Policies](#) section of the [Academic Calendar](#).

## Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence [here](#).

## Plagiarism

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

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

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software Turnitin under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system.

## Accommodation Policies

### [Academic Accommodation](#)

Students with disabilities work with [Accessible Education \(AE\)](#) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing.

### [Medical Consideration](#)

Students who have medical grounds for academic consideration for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth **10% or more of their final grade** must apply to the Academic Advising office of their home Faculty (for FIMS students this is [Undergraduate Student Services](#)).

Students are required to provide

documentation in the form of a [Student Medical Certificate](#). It will be the Dean's Office that will determine if consideration is warranted.

For work worth less than 10% of the final grade, the instructor will consider requests for academic consideration on medical grounds made in a timely manner in writing or during office hours. Such requests need not be accompanied by documentation. The instructor may decide to require documentation be submitted to the appropriate Academic Advising office.

Students should also note that **individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student**, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation must be submitted to the Academic Advising office of a student's home Faculty.**

## Compassionate Accommodation

Academic accommodation (extensions, makeup tests and exams, additional assignments etc.) may be given to students on compassionate grounds. The situations for which compassionate accommodation can be given must be serious, including significant events such as death in the immediate family, trauma (fire, robbery, harassment, muggings, car accidents, etc.) or emergency situations. Documentation is required.

If a member of your immediate family is seriously ill, obtain a medical certificate from the family member's physician and submit the documentation to your Academic Advisor.

If you have been involved in a severe accident, fire, or some other exceptional crisis, obtain a copy of the police report or be prepared to provide the necessary documentation upon request.

Generally, for deaths within a student's immediate family (parents, guardians, caregivers, siblings, spouses), bereavement leave is granted, upon provision of documentation. For deaths within a student's extended family, academic accommodation is given for one to three days, upon provision of documentation. Students seeking additional bereavement leave should contact their Academic Advisors with valid documentation.

## Religious Accommodation

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

## Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

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

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

## Support Services

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

## SUPPORT SERVICES – LINKS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## FIMS Grading Policy

FIMS Undergraduate programs now have the following class average policy: **First year courses required** for entry into a FIMS module (MIT 1020E; MIT 1025F/G) have an expected course average between 68-72%. **Second year required courses** (MIT 2000, 2025, 2100, 2200, 2500) have an expected course average between 70 and 75%. The **third year required course** (MIT 3100) is expected to have a course average between 72 and 77%. **Elective courses and 4th year seminars have no recommended course averages.**

## Appendix A: Suggested Grade Ranges in MIT, MPI and MTP

### Guidelines to the MIT Grade Range

These guidelines are benchmarks, and are not to be followed as rigid regulations. They will be adjusted as appropriate to take into account the level of the course and any specific instructions given by a professor. As well, competency in English language usage (including spelling and grammar) may be taken into account in the assignment of grades by individual instructors. Note that the 70-79 grade range is broken into two divisions, as this is the grade range into which a large number of students fall.

#### 90-100 (Outstanding, A+)

The report shows sparkling originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic. Sophisticated synthesis and analysis of the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the topic are demonstrated. Mastery of complex material and ideas is immediately evident. The topic is treated with sensitivity and subtlety of thought. The quality of the writing and background research is exemplary.

#### 80-89 (Excellent, A)

The report shows originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic; it gets to the heart of the matter with comments and/or questions. It is clearly focused and logically organized. The quality of writing makes the report immediately understandable. Mastery of complex material and ideas is demonstrated. The report is of appropriate length, while preserving the priorities and emphasis of the material, so that the result is meaningful, not simplistic.

#### 75-79 (Very Good, B+)

The report shows above average analysis, critical thinking and independent thought. Claims are supported by ample evidence and the components of the topic are well-researched and presented. The topic is addressed in reasonable depth and/or breadth and covers material appropriate to the course. The analysis is organized around focal points and the argument is easily followed. The report demonstrates an above average ability to write in an intelligible style and to condense material meaningfully and with a concern for priorities of that material.

#### 70-74 (Good, B)

The report shows an attempt at analysis and critical thinking. Claims are supported by reasonable evidence. The topic is addressed in some depth and/or breadth, with references to the appropriate literature and course material. The analysis is organized around focal points. The report is generally well written and well argued.

#### 60-69 (Competent, C)

The report demonstrates adequate comprehension of the topic. The report is on topic and is a reasonable summary of material covered in the course, but goes no further. Facts are stated accurately; the quality of writing is sufficiently intelligible with enough elaboration and enough connections made between ideas to permit a reader to understand the point of the report.

#### 50-59 (Marginal, D)

The report shows less than adequate comprehension of the topic and of the material covered by the course. The report is a less than adequate summary of sources and/or is considerably off-topic. Facts are stated inaccurately or ambiguously; the writing style is difficult to follow; there is insufficient elaboration to permit reader's comprehension of relations among ideas; little judgment is shown in selecting detail for inclusion in the report.

#### Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)

The report demonstrates a failure to comprehend the topic. The material is disorganized and unintelligible. The report clearly does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment.

## Appendix B: Guidelines of Academic Appeals for FIMS Students

### Grounds for Appeal:

The Faculty of Information and Media Studies does not view the appeals process as an opportunity for students to solicit a second opinion on a grade assigned to a particular piece of work. Appeals must pertain to the final grade in a course, and will only be entertained if sufficient grounds for appeal can be met, including: medical or compassionate circumstances, a defect in the evaluation process, bias, inaccuracy or unfairness.

### Stages in the Appeals Process:

**The first stage of the process is a discussion of the disputed grade with the appropriate Teaching Assistant (if applicable), and subsequently, the course Instructor.** For grades assigned to individual assignments, essays, lab reports, projects and tests completed throughout the term, the student first must appeal to the Teaching Assistant or Instructor of the course, within three weeks of the date on which the Instructor or Teaching Assistant returned the assignments to the class. The Appeals Committee will not hear any further appeals about the final grade in any course unless this first step has been taken.

**If completion of the first stage has not resolved the matter, the student may appeal the final grade in the course to the FIMS Appeals Committee.** Appeals of final grades must be **within the time frame indicated in the Undergraduate Calendar.** It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the appeal is submitted within the deadline. The student shall submit a formal letter to the FIMS Appeals Committee outlining the grounds for the appeal, the remedy sought and relevant materials including the information about when and with whom (Teaching Assistant and/or Instructor) the student met, as described in Stage 1. If the appeal involves a request for work to be regraded, the original marked work and a clean copy (if possible) must be included. If the appeal is commenced once the deadline has passed, it will not be considered either by the Appeals Committee or by the Associate Dean.

### **The FIMS Appeals Committee has the discretion to determine whether the grounds for appeal have been met.**

If the Committee deems that the reasons for the appeal are not legitimate, the Associate Dean will be informed. The appeal will be terminated and the student will be informed.

### **If the Committee decides that the grounds for appeal have been met, the following steps will be taken:**

1. the course Instructor will be shown the appeal letter and offered an opportunity to make a written response;
2. if work is to be regraded, a reader will be appointed who is competent in the area in question and was not involved in the assignment of the original mark. The reader will consider the work in question and will arrive at an independent evaluation. If there is a large discrepancy between the original mark and the regraded mark, a second reader may be appointed by the Committee. **If the appointed reader(s) arrive at a grade within five marks of the original, the original grade will stand.**

### **The FIMS Appeals Committee will review the evidence and will make a recommendation on the case to the Associate Dean Undergraduate.**

The Associate Dean Undergraduate will consider the recommendation from the Appeals Committee, and will make a decision. The student and the instructor will be notified promptly and in writing by the Associate Dean of the decision and of the change in grade, if any. Within the Faculty of Information and Media Studies, the Associate Dean's decision on the matter is final.

Further appeals are possible under certain circumstances to the Senate Review Board Academic (for Undergraduate students) or to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (for Graduate students) but the student should carefully consult the guidelines regarding such Appeals.