

the basics

DATE: Winter 2023, 3-hour seminar course, Monday 12:30-3:30 p.m., FNB 1220

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Tim Blackmore, generally found in FNB 4019 (hang two rights off the elevator)

OFFICE HOURS THIS TERM: Tuesday 2:30-4:30 p.m., Wednesday 12:30-1:30 p.m.

PHONE: 519-661-2111 x. 88513 but please do email (and here THAT is)

EMAIL: tblackmo@uwo.ca

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. THOREAU

You know roads. A bend comes and you take it, thoughtlessly, moving on. DILLARD

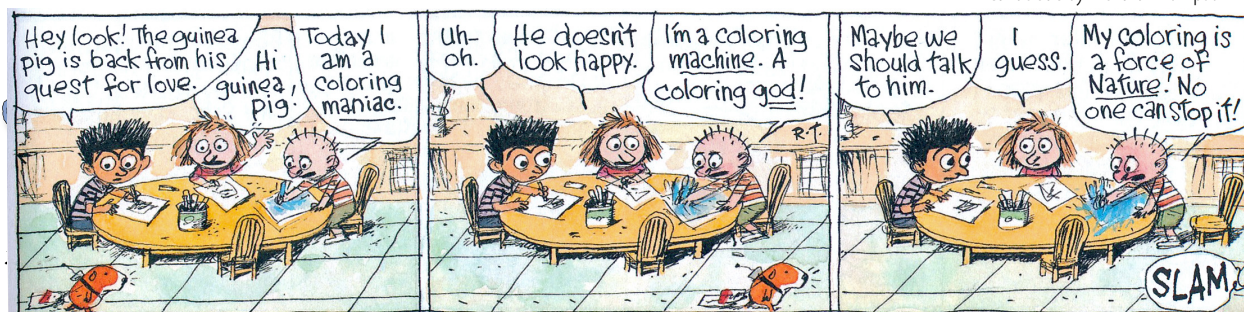
the course

REBEL KNOWLEDGE is about facing down the nightmares we're told are out there. Apparently it's all bad news. Bosh! This course is a place to rethink MIT, is a passage through both good and bad habits of our past to other ways of knowing and doing. It doesn't have to be all anxiety, terror over the future and the conviction that we won't survive whatever crisis is on our screens today. We're going to re-view, quite literally, old versions of things, examining the heaps of ideas and practices, and figure out what we want to take away from it all. It's about deciding what you, because only you can choose this, want to put in your head. There are a thousand thousand things we can do to improve our lives—this course focuses on a few and encourages the dreaming of others. Mostly the course is an extended argument for determining what we think is worthwhile—we as a group and also as individuals. It is also about hope. Fear is real, sure, but it doesn't have to run the show. When we connect with each other and ask each other for help, consider some of the many ways people see the world, we can start again. When we were five we were given crayons and we colored with them, threw some around, ate others. (Some colors look too good not to eat!) We didn't stop coloring, even though we weren't "artists." **Everyone got crayons, everyone colored.** This course is an argument for generalists, for different situated knowledges, epistemologies. It's for you because it's about you.

official course description

THIS COURSE considers factors crucial to successful functioning of human communities. It reviews problems identified during earlier study in order to propose solutions, whether ideals, dreams, or probabilities supported by information, ecological, technological, and media theories, applying landmark texts to the worlds of present and future.

Cul de Sac by Richard Thompson



keeping up with the news

CUSTOM COURSE KIT: the whole course is in this, so you must have it.

COURSE PACK: Almost all the readings are in this—**please bring it to each class.**

ACTUAL BOOKS:

Cathy Malkasian. *Eartha*. Seattle, WA: Fantagraphics Books, 2017.

Henry David Thoreau. *Walden, and "Civil Disobedience."* NY: Signet Classics, 2012.

(please use this edition of Thoreau—I HAVE MY REASONS!)

FILM: any format or edition of these films is fine—SEE CRITERION-ON-DEMAND AT WESTERN LIBRARIES

Lone Star. Dir. John Sayles. Warner, 2005.

Princess Mononoke. Dir. Hayao Miyazaki. Alliance 1997.

The Shape of Water. Dir. Guillermo del Toro. Fox Searchlight, 2017.



Art by Ernest Shepard

methods of evaluation

ASSIGNMENTS:

FIVE WEEKLY LOGS, 500 (OR MORE) WORDS: 35% (single logs have no value [7% for instance], only whole sets will be graded).

THESEUS'S SHIP SAILS ON (1000 WORDS): 20% the subtle flows of nearly indeterminate alterations to our worlds.

SEMINAR PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE: 15%

PROJECT PROPOSAL & THING ITSELF: 100-150 word proposal (you **must have** my okay on this or you will **fail**): 30%

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 7, 2024. Students can find details about this academic policy here: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/evaluation_undergrad.pdf. Please note, students are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of the grades they have received in their courses.

about the logs as a grade issue

- The logs are a crucial part of 3405, which is why they're worth 35% of the total mark. **THEY MUST COME IN EACH WEEK THAT THEY'RE DUE.**
- **YOU CAN ONLY HAND IN ONE LOG AT A TIME.**
- In them you can pursue topics that may be germane to you alone, explore the texts in a variety of ways, but most of all, develop a sense of voice and style that is relaxed and powerful.
- **OUTSIDE SOURCES:** PLEASE, NO GOOGLING HAHA OR chatGTP—JUST YOU AND YOUR MIND AND THE TEXTS, OKAY?
- The logs are a crucial part of 3405, which is why they're worth 35% of the total mark. **THEY MUST COME IN EACH WEEK THAT THEY'RE DUE. YOU CAN ONLY HAND IN ONE LOG AT A TIME. PLEASE DO NOT EMAIL THEM. PRINT THEM AND BRING THEM IN.**

that final project...is what?

The final project will start with a very open prompt from me (past prompts have been things like "Little Magics," and "Over the Line"). You will connect the prompt to an issue (or issues) from the course that intrigue YOU. You will brainstorm your various ideas and narrow in on a discussion of something that fascinates (in a good or bad way) you. Then you can **write** about it, or **create something**—a little film, piece of art, script, story, animation, piece of music, multimedia, that represents where you are at this moment.

Running things day-to-day

3405 CONTRACT: PROBLEMS, LATE POLICIES, WORRIES. Some guidelines for all of us.

- Please **DON'T** email me a paper unless we have an express agreement that you can do so—if it's emailed to me, assume I won't read it and you'll get zero on the assignment.
- Please **PRINT** and **STAPLE** all assignments—plan for it.
- Please do let me know if you're going to miss a class or need some extra time for some reason. This is a seminar course as well as a lecture—we all make it run. We need you; I need you! Don't let someone else speak for you or carry your voice away.
- **PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE:** (I'm repeating myself, I know)
 - F:** I don't know who you are.
 - 30-40%:** I might have an idea of who you are or have seen you in class but I haven't heard from you.
 - 50%:** You made one or two comments, probably, but I'm still vague about your identity.
 - 60%:** You've made six-eight comments per term but I probably have to call your name when I hand back your logs.
 - 70%:** I know you, and you've made good steady comments, have been a solid class citizen.
 - 80%:** You're tuned in and care, have good comments and share intriguing ideas—I for sure know you.
 - 90-100%:** If I weren't teaching this course, you could be.
- Please **don't** hand in late papers unless you have arranged an extension with me beforehand, **so ask!** All other late papers: 5% penalty per day, including weekends. Unless otherwise noted, papers are due at the beginning of class.
- Please **do** use a spelling checker. Even in informal writing (email, logs) let your document be error free. For the papers, **but not the logs**, each typo or spelling mistake you make **WILL DROP YOUR GRADE 1%**.
- Please **also** keep an eye on your grammar. Again, informal writing for this course should be grammatically sound (although style is a different issue).

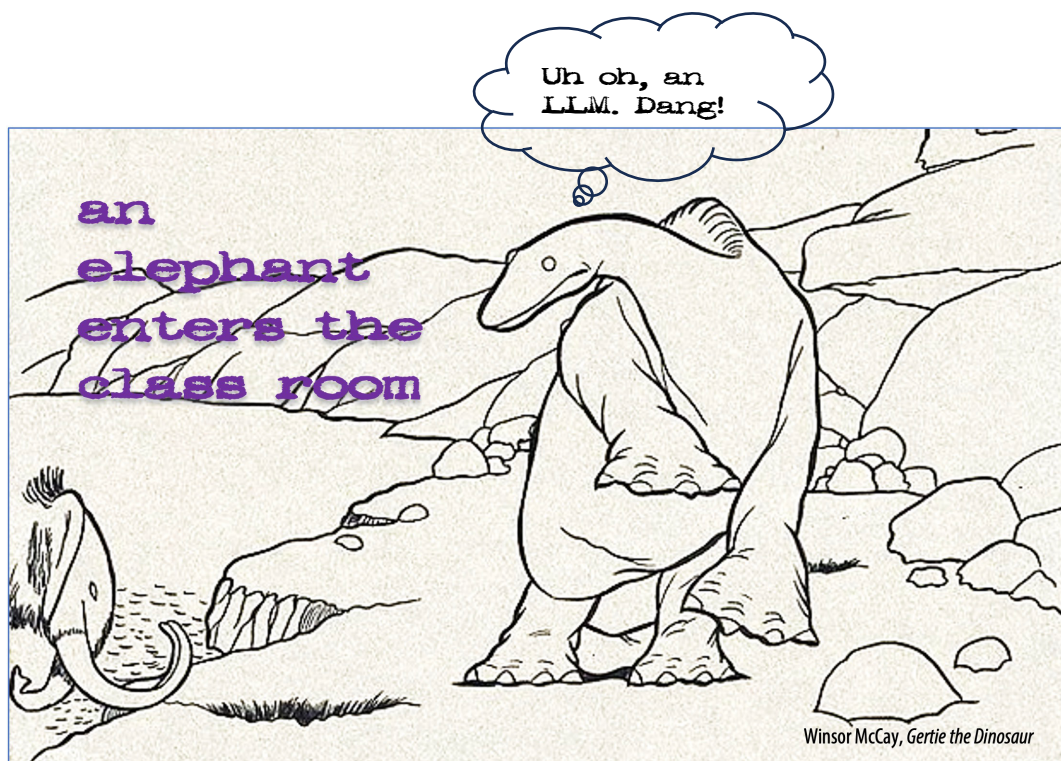
can we help in some way?

Students who have ongoing medical or psychological conditions, or who have been diagnosed with a learning disability, and who may be entitled to some form of academic accommodation are assessed and managed through [Accessible Education](#). The recommendations for accommodation are shared with instructors via the Extranet and require instructors to acknowledge these through the Extranet.

Students who miss work because of an illness or compassionate grounds can access relief through the Academic Counselling office in their faculty of registration, by providing appropriate documentation (Student Medical Certificate or other valid documentation). Students in FIMS can access FIMS Undergraduate Student Services (UGSS) by emailing fims@uwo.ca. Recommendations for Academic Consideration from counselling units are managed through the Extranet.

Our FIMS Academic Counsellors are wonderful people who have a lot of experience helping all of us get through difficult things. **For longer term issues, please visit a counsellor, okay?**

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 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.** More on this below.



chatGPT and other money-machines provided by our overlords¹

We'll talk about what I'm asking for here and figure this out together. Last year we were able to scrape by without Large Language Meteoroids streaking across the class's sky.

1. I work from the belief that you are adults and have the right to pursue your education that way you wish.
2. We all know that should you choose to use chatGPT, other LLMs, or image-generating prompt-bots like DALL-E, I probably won't catch you, or figure out if you're a machine or not.
3. (I hope you're not a machine.)
4. We could spend time feeding these bots with things from your head, but I think you'll be getting plenty of that.
5. Most of all, it's not what I'm here to do in this time we have.
6. I'd like us to talk together without being mediated (excessively) by machines.
7. I'd like us to think together, most of all.
8. I'm asking you, kindly and with understanding that many of you feel the world is a hostile place in which you must have every advantage possible, to be you.
9. Please don't be a chatbot *plus* you. Please do not use a chatbot to help you brainstorm, think, write, draw or be.
10. For a very short while in your life here at university, and in this class, you won't need bots.
11. In fact they will, to paraphrase the immortal (well, we'll see) Rick Astley, give you up, hold you down, tell a lie and hurt you.
12. Please choose to step out of the brain race, if only for the few hours a week this course asks of you.
13. If you DO use some version of ai to help you, please cite every instance in your writing, and add a line or two about why you decided to go this route. Could we have had the same conversation together in class?
14. (If you want to get ahead in the brain race, figuring out how and why you think as you do is a good start.)

¹ Sam Altman, co-founder of chatGPT is worth roughly \$100 million USD. He's probably not worried about being replaced. Bought out, maybe.

About these points chatGPT had this to say:

It seems like you've provided a set of statements that reflect your perspective on the use of AI, particularly in an educational context. It appears that you're addressing students and encouraging them not to rely on AI, such as chatbots and language models, for certain aspects of their education and learning process. Instead, you're suggesting that you'd like to engage with students in a more direct and authentic way. It seems like you value personal engagement, critical thinking, and independent learning.²

Since that time I went back to chatblawt and asked it some further questions. It altered its original message and added:

"Your emphasis on genuine human interaction and critical thinking is commendable."³

I feel much better overall to have chatGPT's support for our endeavors. (/s)

Learning Outcomes

Upon Successful Completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Closely read complex texts and come away having formed their own understandings of the concepts those texts contain;
- Be able to discuss, articulately, ideas that have been present in some cases for millennia in western culture, critique them, as well as have a better understanding of how racist, misogynist, classist, colonialist narratives continue to inform our lives and decisions today;
- Be confident about writing easily and fluidly out of the authority of the person's own voice;
- Connect some of the very first ideas discussed in FIMS courses with those in a later, or more senior, year.

Professionalism and Privacy

- Western students are expected to follow the **Student Code of Conduct**:
<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>

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

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

² Text generated August 30, 2023, OpenAI, <https://chat.openai.com/>

³ Text generated December 29, 2023, OpenAI, <https://chat.openai.com/c/4f75f4d6-cb39-41d9-ad88-9606821815a6>



office hours

- **Hey you, yeah! COME TO THE OFFICE! PLEASE DO!** Yes you, not the person next to you . . . you! (Well, them too, also.)
- **You are MOST WELCOME in the office!**
- I use office hours to meet you and chat, work out course issues, or just come and talk. **Everybody is welcome**, you don't need to be a genius to have good ideas. If you're feeling shy, you can always come and lurk about, listen to other people. I run an open office: come in and talk (or be quiet and lurk) any time! **I'll give you tea and cookies, so there's that.**
- Listen, what are you waiting around for? **You feel shy and inhibited**, afraid you don't have anything important to say? That pretty much **describes ALL of us**, especially internet trolls who flame people but can't leave the house. They're afraid, too.
- **This is your invitation.** Don't wait for courage! Grab a friend, come in and make THEM talk—throw your BFF under the bus, but come in and sit with us, drink tea and have some form of baked good. I won't put you on the spot, I promise. And your fellow office-mates can be incredibly helpful and supportive.

our classroom

I'm concerned that this classroom work for everyone, and I mean everyone. I know people will have different points of view—I hope we do! It's going to be a dull world (talk about unreal) if we don't disagree. Disagreeing, even heatedly, without detesting your opponent is part of figuring out how to be in the world.

At the same time, that doesn't mean anything goes. I'd like us to be aware of each other's ideas, feelings, sensibilities, politics, and more than anything, our hearts. It's hard to be kind when your heart is hammering in indignation over something somebody said. But, kindness first.

In our first class we'll talk about what you feel are good basic guidelines for talking without hiding, and without poking each other in the eye, either. If there are any concerns, you can always, always, bring them to me, in confidence.



Amazing art by Jillian Tamaki

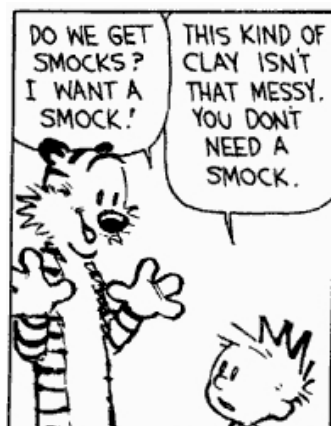
why this? why now?

When I was in third and fourth year I felt a terrible urgency to catch up to all the things I wanted to do, but suddenly there was no time left. All the books I'd planned to read, those difficult, famous texts about which people said "Oh yeah, if you haven't read Don Quixote OR "Proust," "Kapital," "The Wake" [a James Joyce novel so abstruse nobody even mentions its full name because they don't understand it]), you're basically illiterate." Ouch. I felt lost.

This course is a place for you to capture some of those ideas, to look into things that may have passed you by without enough of a chance for you to get at them. This is the place to give those orphan thoughts and dreams some space to run. Its composed as a series of openings you can follow, or not, as you please.

don't knock my smock (a few thoughts about logs)

LOGS ARE ALL ABOUT RELAXATION AND THOUGHT. Each week I will send out thoughts and ideas, places you might start, use them or toss them, think about the text, then just start writing. Let your writing go for about 500 words—take more space if you need it! Your own direction is fine—the log suggestions aren't to be answered or "proven."



A LOG IS NOT AN ESSAY. No formal structure is needed. I don't correct grammar or spelling, although I do want to see relatively clean documents. Get used to rereading the final paper so you've checked it over for spelling and obvious problems. Otherwise, let fly!

THE WHOLE THING ABOUT LOGS is not to conserve time or engage in word or sound bites, but to let time out, let the clock wind down, let the language and thoughts flow, let the connections make connections. People often note "I'm on a tangent now," but as far as I'm concerned, in logs there are no tangents. Everything is on the mainline. Follow the tangents, and then the tangents that spring from them.

SO NOW you're going to be all nervous about trying to give me what you think I want; it's such a game to figure out what the professor wants, eh? How tiresome! Let's see if we can avoid that. Remember that the logs will only ever have two readers: you and me. So you can address me directly, write to me as if you were writing a letter: "Well Tim, I saw *Fleabag* and it made me think of _____ that reminded me of...." Don't get frustrated! Let it all go!

IN THE LOGS, IT'S YOU. There's no proving anything here. In the logs, you decide what's right and wrong. It doesn't matter what I think about it, or whether I agree. These aren't my logs, they're yours. Instead, it's about you getting out your voice, getting hold of the way you write, the way you think, and then going as deeply as possible with those thoughts, following them to their underground labyrinths.



Calvin and Hobbes by Bill Watterson

THE HARDEST THING ABOUT LOGS IS THE BACKSPACE KEY. You sit there and start writing, and then look at it, wonder if it's okay, and the deleting begins. But why? Write a couple of pages, be generous! Words are cheap (they say—whoever "they" are). So spend some. Don't look back and don't delete. And if you can't keep your hand off the delete key, then write by hand. Some people love the process of writing with pen on rich paper, the tactility of it. Why not? On the other hand, some folks love to write on their phones—also great! Whatever relaxes you.

THE LOGS AREN'T INDIVIDUALLY WORTH A GRADE. Late in the term I collect all the logs and grade them. **THAT MEANS YOU HAVE TO KEEP THEM BECAUSE I'M GOING TO COLLECT THEM AND MARK THE WHOLE AS A BATCH.**

LECTURE	TOPIC	PLEASE PREPARE	DUE
1: JAN 8	ENLIGHTENMENT I	Descartes, Locke, Pope (on OWL), Roethke "Once More" (P) ⁴	
	ENLIGHTENMENT II	Dickinson "Tell All the Truth" (P)	
2: JAN 15	ROMANTICISM	Rousseau (on OWL), Shelley "Ozymandias" (P)	
	SHIFTING TO TRANSCENDENTALISM	Thoreau: Economy, Frost "Tree at My Window" (P)	
3: JAN 22	TRANSCENDENTALISM	Thoreau: Where I Lived, Reading, Sounds, Solitude, Conclusion. (Sections 2-5, 18)	LOG 1
	TRANSCENDENT MACHINES	Charles, "Where You At?", Whitman "Locomotive" (P)	
4: JAN 29	WORLDVIEWS	Bradbury "1999", Jacobs, Frost "Mending Wall" (P)	
5: FEB 5	MODERNISM & THE PASTORAL	Yeats (P), Dick "Autofac," Ellison "I Have No Mouth," Cummings "pity this busy monster" (P)	LOG 2
	POSTMODERNISM	Le Guin "Sur," Shiva, E. B. White "The Spider" (P)	
6: FEB 12	TRANS- POST- H+ HUMANISM	Braidotti, Rambo "Preferences," <i>Princess Mononoke</i>	THESEUS'S SHIP
	SLACK	Necessary space for useful interruptions and unexpected ideas	
FEB 17-25	<i>Reading Week</i>	<i>Always be Resting!</i>	<i>breathing week</i>
7: FEB 26	NATURE	Dillard "Footprints," Haraway <i>Staying with the Trouble</i> , Le Guin "Road," Williams "This is Just to Say," (P) Christensen (P)	LOG 3
	ECOLOGY	<i>Eartha</i> , Malkasian	
8: MAR 4	EPISTEME/TECHNÉ	Eliade	LOG 4
	TECHNOLOGY & DESIGN I	Schumacher, Toomer "Reapers," (P) Bishop "One Art" (P)	
9: MAR 11	DESIGN II	Papanek, Frost "Apple Picking" (P)	PROPOSAL & LOG 5 + ALL LOGS
	DESIGN III	Winner, Issa "Plume" (P) Adrienne Rich "Diving," (P)	
10: MAR 18	PERCEPTION & ALTERATION	Bradbury "Dark they Were," Jemisin "Cloud Dragon," Okorafor, <i>The Shape of Water</i> , Spinrad "Carcinoma Angels,"	
	ORALITY AND TIME	Haldeman, Dillard Ch. 6 "The Present," Bringhurst (P)	
11: MAR 25	COUNTERNARRATIVE	Lipsitz, Stewart Brand (x2), Dillard "A Writer"	PROJECT
	SPEED	Parkins & Craig, <i>Lone Star</i>	
12: APR 1	ENOUGHNESS	Vanderburg, MacEwen "Letter" (P)	
	ALONENESS	Silverberg, MacEwen "Discovery" (P) Eliot, Roethke "Manifestation" (P)	
13: APR 8	THE FUTURE	Brower, Schroeder "Eminence," <i>You & a Bike & a Road</i> , Davis	

⁴ (P) means you'll find the entry in the Poetry section of the course pack.

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.