

## Official course Outline

### Media and Information Technology Policy

MIT 3500F Course Outline – Fall 2021



Thursday, Thurs. 9:30-12:30, in-person, FNB 2240.

Instructor: Prof. [Tom Streeter](#), Faculty of Information & Media Studies, FNB 4091, Western University

Phone: 519-661-2111x84347; email: [tstreet2@uwo.ca](mailto:tstreet2@uwo.ca)

*Students will be expected to wear triple layer non-medical masks at all times in the classroom as per university policy and public health directives. Students who are unable to wear a mask for medical reasons should seek accommodation through [Accessible Education](#). Students are expected not to eat or drink while in class to ensure masks stay in place. Students will be able to eat and drink outside of the classroom during scheduled breaks.*

Office hours: Thursday 1:00-2:00, Friday 12:30-1:30, or by appointment. Please make an appointment in any case: you can sign up here: <https://tstreete.youcanbook.me/>). Location will depend on conditions: perhaps in an open space in or near FNB, perhaps in my office if it's looking safe enough, or if there's no alternative, perhaps on zoom.

Requisites: restricted to years 3 and 4 FIMS modules. Not open to MIT minor module. [\[1\]](#)



**What is media policy?** Have you ever wondered what those cryptic symbols and numbers on the back your smartphone or your TV are about? They may seem unimportant, and they are certainly not alluring, but they are small glimpses into the very large world of media and information technology policy.

Media policy is as important to the media as microchips or rock and roll. The media devices that shape our world would not work without elaborate and constantly changing national and international frameworks of laws, regulations, technical standards, and systems of governance. In other words, without policy, your smartphone would be just a pricey paperweight.

Those frameworks are also a matter of great debate worldwide. From banning Donald Trump from Twitter to Canadian Content regulations regarding Netflix to 5G mobile phone standards, controversies rage, sometimes in the headlines.

This course provides an introduction to those frameworks, to media and information technology policies and the controversies about them, primarily in Canada and the U.S. It will show you an important piece of how the world works, and teach you skills – e.g. how to read and understand legal documents – that will likely come in handy in your future

careers. Much of the material may seem dry and arcane at first, but you will be learning about why the media are the way they are, and providing you some tools for exercising power and influence in the media and beyond.

**What will it be like to take this course?** The hope is that we will be able to hold this class on campus, with students masked, and to the extent possible, distanced. If we have to go online at some point, it will be held on zoom. In either case, the goal will be to create a community of active learners, who go beyond memorizing the material to actively engaging, as a group, the controversies and problems of media policies today. It will take some patience, effort, flexibility, and mutual respect for us to achieve that. To make it work, some mutual care and respect for each other will be essential.

*In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence 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.*

Requirements will include a research paper, a midterm and a final exam, with some other small assignments. The exams will be short answer. Class participation is expected (and participating generally makes it easier to master the material.)

Because of the importance of creating a learning community, it will be important for everyone to put in a serious effort to participate. Unexcused absences of more than two classes will reduce your participation grade by five points per absence. Lecture slides will be uploaded for everyone to consult a few days after each class.

## Learning Outcomes

Like most college courses, this one is designed to help you learn to think critically, read complicated material, analyze it, and write about it with clarity and sophistication. More specifically, this course is designed to help you:

- Understand the major themes, issues, and controversies that shape media policy in Canada and the U.S.;
- Make sense of and critically analyze complex media policy documents;
- Construct a coherent policy argument rooted in an understanding of current policies; and,
- Understand how policy shapes media in general.

## How the class works

- **Short Assignments** will count for 10% of your grade (and will take into account university policy about absences<sup>[2]</sup>). For example, there may be posting requirements each week, and occasional short in-class or post-class assignments as well. Attendance will be taken. You will be expected to come to class having read the assignments for that week and prepared to talk about them. I will occasionally lecture on the materials, but in-class discussion will be an important tool for learning.
- **Policy media clip** (5% of your grade): you will be asked to find a < 1 minute media clip (from a TV show or movie, for example), and provide a <300 word explanation of how it illustrates a significant aspect of a media policy or law. You will be assigned a due date some time during the semester.
- There will be a **mid-term examination** (20% of your grade) tentatively on Oct. 14 and a **final examination** (25%) at an assigned time during finals week. Both exams will ask you to write short (about three to six sentences) answers to questions about the course materials in your own unique words. There may be some questions on parts of the readings that were not fully covered in class.<sup>[3]</sup>

- Each student will write a **research paper** of at least 2500 words (not including references) on a contemporary media policy issue. The paper should address at least two critical and/or analytical works on the topic, from at least two different policy positions. It should also use at least three original policy documents. It should make an *argument* about the issue in question. A one page proposal for the paper is due no later than before class on **Oct. 21**; it will be ungraded, but it may be turned back for revision before it is approved. A rough draft of the paper (15% of your grade) is due no later than before class on **Nov. 11<sup>th</sup>**, and the final draft (25%) is due no later than **Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>**. During the last class or classes, students will present their papers to the class (required, pass/no pass). Assignments should be delivered via OWL.
- All assignments are due at 11:55 pm EST unless otherwise specified
- Written assignments will be submitted to Turnitin

### Topics and readings

There is one textbook for this course available as an ebook or via the Western bookstore: Sara Bannerman's, [Canadian Communication Policy and Law](#) (Canadian Scholars, 2020). A print version of a book works better for most people, but if you need to purchase the ebook, go here: <https://www.canadianscholars.ca/books/canadian-communication-policy-and-law>.

The rest of the readings can be accessed through the course OWL website, <http://owl.uwo.ca>. In case unforeseen circumstances force some modifications to the course, the website is the final word. If students need assistance, they can seek support on the [OWL Help page](#). Alternatively, they can contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#). They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800. [Google Chrome](#) or [Mozilla Firefox](#) are the preferred browsers to optimally use OWL; update your browsers frequently. Students interested in evaluating their internet speed, please click [here](#).

The readings are sometimes challenging, so you won't be expected to have fully mastered all the readings by the beginning of class on the day they are assigned, but you should have thought about them, flagged the parts you don't understand, and come to class ready to ask questions.

Date	Topic	Canadian Law and Policy	U.S. Policy and beyond	
Week 1 Sept. 9	Introduction: why does policy matter? + About legal and government documents			
Week 2 Sept. 16	The big picture: Why do we need media and technology regulation?	Bannerman Chapter 1: Whom Do Law and Policy Serve? 7;	Pickard, Victor (2016). Toward a People's Internet: The Fight for Positive Freedoms in an Age of Corporate Libertarianism, <i>NORDICOM</i> , 61-68.	
	How does it work?	Bannerman Chapter 2: Introduction to	Introduction to the American legal System: <a href="https://www.lexisnexis.com/en-us/lawschool/pre-">https://www.lexisnexis.com/en-us/lawschool/pre-</a>	

		the Canadian Legal System 37	<a href="#">law/intro-to-american-legal-system.page</a> Introduction to administrative law: <a href="https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/administrative_law">https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/administrative_law</a>	
Week 3 Sept. 23	The case of Canon: what, why, how?	Bannerman Chapter 9: Broadcasting Regulation 189; Massey Commission, (Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences. (1951). <i>Report</i> . Ottawa : King's Printer), <a href="#">Ch 18: Broadcasting</a> . <b>Aidan Hailes</b> , "The Surprising Quality of Canadian Comedy: A Primer for Americans," 25YL <a href="https://25yearslatersite.com/2018/08/10/the-surprising-quality-of-canadian-comedy-a-primer-for-americans/">https://25yearslatersite.com/2018/08/10/the-surprising-quality-of-canadian-comedy-a-primer-for-americans/</a> Grant, Peter S., and Chris Wood. "Creative Clusters." In <i>Blockbusters and Trade Wars: Popular Culture in a Globalized World</i> , First Edition, 25–41. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2004.23 Robert Wright, "Gimme Shelter" Chapter 3 in <i>Virtual Sovereignty: Nationalism, Culture, and the Canadian Question</i> . 1 edition. Toronto, Ont: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc., 2004), pp. 79-98.		
Week 4 Sept. 30	Broadcasting and telecommunications Regulation	Bannerman Ch. 8, Telecommunication Regulation	Lessig, "Commons and Layers" from <i>Lessig, Lawrence. The Future of Ideas: The Fate of the Commons in a Connected World</i> . New York, NY: Vintage, 2002, pp. 19-25.	
	Intellectual Property	Bannerman Ch 7, Intellectual Property, 137	Mcleod, " <a href="#">Canada 'caved' on intellectual property issues: critics of trade deal</a> ", <i>Financial Post</i> , Oct. 1, 2018.	
Week 5 Oct 7	Freedom of expression, censorship, and defamation	Bannerman, Chapter 3: Freedom of Expression and Censorship 47; Chapter 4: Defamation 79 ;	Mill, J. (2011). Excerpts from, "OF THE LIBERTY OF THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION," Ch. 2 of <i>On Liberty</i> (Cambridge Library Collection - Philosophy, pp. 31-99). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Wu, Tim. "Is the First Amendment Obsolete?" <i>Michigan Law Review</i> 117, no. 3 (2019 2018): 547–82. Nott, Lata. " <a href="#">A Quick Guide to Libel Law</a>   Freedom Forum Institute". [optional] Drucker, Mitchell. " <a href="#">Canadian v. American Defamation Law: What Can We Learn from Hyperlinks Commentary</a> ." <i>Canada-United States Law Journal</i> 38 (2013): 141–66.	

Week 6 Oct 14	Midterm exam			
Week 7 Oct. 21	Research paper prep	Bannerman Ch. 12, Legal research and writing		
	Competition and anti-trust	Dwayne Winseck, <a href="#">Media Concentration in Canada</a>  Jonathon Lamont, “ <a href="#">Competition Bureau says Canadians could save more if Big Three faced more competition</a> ”, <i>Mobile Syrup</i> , Jul. 16, 2020	Teachout, <i>Zephyr Break 'Em Up: Recovering Our Freedom from Big Ag, Big Tech, and Big Money</i> . New York: All Points Books, 2020. pp. 39-86	
Week 8 Oct. 28	Public Service and Ownership	Nordicity, Inc. “ <a href="#">International Comparison of Public Funding for Public Service Broadcasting</a> , 2016 Final Report” May 25, 2018.  Michael Geist, “ <a href="#">Broadcast Panel Commissioned Report Found Canada Ranks First Among Peer Countries in Spending</a> ”, Feb. 14, 2020.	Aufderheide, Patricia. “Public Service Broadcasting in the United States.” <i>Journal of Media Economics</i> 9, no. 1 (January 1, 1996): 63–76. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327736me0901_6">https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327736me0901_6</a> .	
Nov. 1- 5 Fall reading week				

Week 9 Nov. 11	Privacy and Surveillance	Bannerman, Chapter 5: Privacy 97; Chapter 6: Government Surveillance 123	Zuboff S (2015) Big other: surveillance capitalism and the prospects of an information civilization. <i>Journal of Information Technology</i> 30(1): 75–89. DOI: 10.1057/jit.2015.5.	
Week 10 Nov. 18	Internet Regulation	Bannerman Chapter 10: Internet Regulation	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_governance">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_governance</a> Jonathan Weber and Elizabeth Culliford, “ <a href="#">What is Section 230, the U.S. law protecting social media companies - and can Trump change it?</a> ” <i>National Post</i> , May 29, 2020	
Week 11 Nov. 25	Access to Information	Bannerman Chapter 11: Access to Information	<a href="https://www.foia.gov/about.html">https://www.foia.gov/about.html</a>	
Week 12 Dec. 2	Research Paper Presentations			
Dec. 10	Final draft of term paper due			

## Marking Policies

Grades give you some feedback to help you learn, and the act of reading and evaluating assignments gives me some feedback about how well I am communicating to you. I encourage you to talk to me during office hours about how you did on your assignments; direct discussion is often more helpful to learning than just looking at a grade.

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

The mid-term and final exams will involve short answers to questions; for each question, the possible scores are 0, 1, 2, or 3. 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.

**Exams will be curved:** to ensure that grading is fair and rigorous, assignments will 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 some 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; And if most students do worse than 75%, then it could result in a grade of 80; if most students do better than 75% correct, that 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

### Class Expectations and Academic Integrity

**Professional Behavior:** The main thing you should try to do in this class is, to the best of your ability, act *professionally*. This does not mean dressing a certain way or acting like someone you've seen in a movie. 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 also 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 me to let me 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 little bit of time to help us all out. Similarly, in class discussions, it is fine if you disagree with something somebody said, but if you do so, do it with respect, with thoughtfulness and taking care to make sure you make an effort to understand the other person's point of view.

**Respect everyone's privacy:** You are probably aware that things that happen online can be easily recorded and distributed in ways that can be confusing or hurtful to others, even when intentions are benign. We all must take extra care not to share *anything* from the class online, even if inadvertently. Everyone must be genuinely secure in knowing that their class participation is just with the class. I will do everything I can on my end, but this will involve a collective effort. Depending on conditions, some class lectures may be recorded and may be made available to individuals or to the class; it will be absolutely forbidden to share those recordings, audio or images, with anyone. (Powerpoint slides from lectures will also be made available.)

**Sharing your notes with other students** in the class during the semester is fine, as long as you do not charge for them. I do not give permission for you to sell notes to other students, online or otherwise, or to upload notes to open 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 please, unless you have a specific reason not to, during class close down your devices, take notes on paper, and turn off your cellphone. You'll be able to focus better.

**Academic Integrity:** UWO has a [Student Code of Conduct](#) and a system of Academic Integrity and a set of strict policies to go with it (see [here](#)). 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 research 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 only 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 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 a term paper 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.

### **Accommodations**

In general, if you are sick or otherwise unable to attend a class due to circumstances beyond your control, I am willing to meet with you later or otherwise work out a way for you to make up the work, especially if you let me know promptly: before class or at least the day of class if at all possible is appreciated. If you are having trouble keeping up with course work, I will be more accommodating the sooner you contact me. If you contact me the day of the mid-term to say you don't think you are prepared, or two days after the rough draft is due to ask for more time, I will be much less flexible than if you come to me a week or two beforehand. (See the statement above about being professional above.) Without prior arrangements, late rough drafts will lose a half-letter-grade per day. (I'm told that Western allows **no flexibility for final papers not turned in by the last day of classes.**)

**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, I will only answer UWO emails. For further information please see:

<http://www.uwo.ca/privacy/links.html>

### **Academic Consideration for Missed Work**



Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a self reported absence form online provided that the absence is 48 hours or less and the other conditions specified in the Senate policy at [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/Academic\\_Consideration\\_for\\_absences.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Consideration_for_absences.pdf) are met.

Students whose absences are expected to last longer than 48 hours, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used two self reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds). The Student Medical Certificate is available online at [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation.

#### **Statement on the Use of Zoom Recording:**

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor.

Remote learning sessions, if they occur for this course, may be recorded. The data captured during these recordings may include your image, voice recordings, chat logs and personal identifiers (name displayed on the screen). The recordings will be used for educational purposes related to this course, including evaluations. The recordings may be disclosed to other individuals under special circumstances. Please contact the instructor if you have any concerns related to session recordings.

#### ***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 local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America).*

---

[1] Please check to make sure you have the proper prerequisites. Unless you have either the prerequisites 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.

[2] In April 2019, the UWO Faculty Senate passed a policy allowing students in undergraduate programs to self-report up to 2 short (48 hours or less) absences for work worth 30% or less of their final grade. If the student has already self-reported absences, or if the duration of an absence is more than 48 hours or the work missed greater than 30%, the student will be required to file appropriate documentation with Academic Counselling in order to receive academic consideration. Students are not allowed to self-report absences during official exam periods. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours following an absence in order to set up a time to discuss next steps for completing the work.

[3] 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 Nov. 9, 2020. Students can find details about this academic policy here: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/exam/evaluation\\_undergrad.pdf](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.

 [Notes -- fall 2021.pdf](#)