

Introduction to Information Studies

Dr. Blaha
Unique Number 27800 and 27801
Spring 2017

Syllabus

The syllabus for 304W includes goals for the course, the grading policy, an overview of assignments, and a list of writing tips and resources you may find helpful. If, at any time throughout the semester, you have questions about the syllabus, please contact your instructor for clarification.

Contact

Instructor: Craig Blaha
Office Hours: by appointment
Office: UTA 5.456
Email: (please contact me using Canvas) craig.blaha at utexas.edu
TA: TBA

Course Goal

This course will introduce students to the field of information studies. Students will explore the foundations of the field, professions in the field, and issues within those professions. Only one of the following may be counted: INF 304D, 304W, 318D.

Prerequisite: lower-division standing.

Course Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of major topics in information studies, identify key issues, and discuss important terms
- Examine numerous perspectives related to professions and issues in information studies and formulate independent arguments based on these perspectives
- Relate perspectives and issues in information studies to their lives, both personally and professionally
- Fulfill the requirements of a substantial writing component course by writing between 16 and 20 pages in at least four essays

Course Materials

INF 304 does not have a textbook or course packet. Instead, all readings will be available through the course Web site, Canvas, UT's Library, or through the World Wide Web.

This course is a web-based course, so students will need regular access to the following materials:

- **Internet** – If you do not have access to a personal computer, you may use the iSchool lab ([UTA 1.210](#)) while enrolled in this course. You do not need to sign up for an iSchool account. The iSchool lab has both Macs and PCs, as well as lots of great software. I encourage you to check out the lab!

- **Email** – You can open an email account through UT, Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo, etc. if you do not already have one. Make sure you register your official email account with the university. All correspondence for this course will use your official UT email, and "I didn't get the email" is not accepted as an excuse for missing an assignment!
- **Microsoft Word** – You will submit essays as Microsoft Word documents. The Campus Computer Store sells software, including Microsoft Office, to UT students and faculty at a discount. Since your written work will receive considerable feedback, only Microsoft Word documents will be accepted. I love open source software, but in order to provide feedback in a timely manner I need everyone to use Word.
- **Adobe Acrobat Reader** – Several articles we will read are in .pdf format. You can download Adobe Acrobat Reader (plus lots of other great software) through Bevoware.
- **UT Box** – UT offers you 25GB of space to store your files and make them available to you anywhere. All you need is an Internet connection and a Web browser. Set up UT Box synch and keep your local files backed up to the cloud automatically! As a student, you have already paid for this service. Use it! Set up an account with your UTEID.

Course Format

This course is Web-based, so there will be no class meetings. The course is self-paced. You do the work whenever you want throughout the week as long as you submit everything no later than the designated date and time for each assignment. I recommend setting up a couple of 3-hour time blocks that will help you keep up with the class.

The course is divided into three sections:

1. Basic writing skills
2. The foundation of information studies
3. Information studies professions and issues in information studies

Each week I will release a new module (or two) that will focus on one topic within these sections. Each module will be composed of the following activities:

- **Online lecture** - Each module begins with an online "lecture." Read each lecture before proceeding to the assigned readings. While reading, take notes on questions, interesting points, concerns, etc.
- **Readings** – There are citations provided at the end of each module, and all readings are available through the course Web site, Canvas, UT Library Online, or through the World Wide Web. See the "Course Materials" section for more information.
- **Discussion** – Students will engage in, and sometimes lead, virtual discussions about the lecture, readings, and/or related topics each week using the discussion board section set up by the instructor. The first discussion will take place in the "Discussion Board" section of Canvas. You will find more information on discussions in the "Assignments" section of this syllabus.

In addition, students will write four essays, described below.

Grading Policy

I304 uses a 100-point grading scale. The first 89 points are broken down as follows:

1. 24 points for discussion participation
 - a. 2 points for each of 12 discussions
2. 17 points for the quiz
3. 48 points total for four essays

- a. 12 points for each essay
 - i. 2 points for the preparation step
 - ii. 2 points for the first draft
 - iii. 4 points for the peer review
 - iv. 4 points for the final draft

The last 11 points out of the 100 points for the semester are only available to students who complete all four steps for each essay on time. If you have completed all four steps of each essay on time, I will send you a note toward the end of the semester and invite you to revise up to two of your previous essays. The first essay revised will be worth 5 points, the second will be worth 6.

The only way to earn an A in this class is to turn in all of the steps for each of the four essays on time.

Each student who turns in all of their assignments on time will the opportunity to rewrite up to two of their essays for up to eleven additional points. The only way to earn an A- or above in this class is to turn in all major essay assignment components by the deadline, and each submission must demonstrate effort and attention to detail. Work hard, turn everything in on time, and you will have the opportunity to revise two of your essays and raise your grade above a B+!

For example; at the end of the semester, student A has turned in all of her essay related work on time. She missed two discussions so her grade is an 85, but all of the essay related work was on time and represented a good effort. Student A will receive an email from me toward the end of the semester, inviting her to revise up to two of her essays. She chooses to revise essay 1 and essay 3. She makes substantial revisions to these essays (I use word to compare the original and revised document to see what changes were made), and receives an additional 8 points, improving her grade to a 93.

As another example, student B missed two discussions and did not turn in his essay 1 peer review on time. His grade is an 81, but since he did not turn in his peer review on time, he does not have the opportunity to revise his essays so his grade will stay an 81.

My goal with this grading system is to encourage students to write and revise their writing often, which is the only way to improve as a writer. It is really important to me that your writing improves as a result of taking this class, and the only way for you to improve is to develop a writing habit.

The final draft and peer review of each essay must be turned in to pass the class. If you do not turn in a final draft or a peer review, you will receive an F in the class, regardless of the number of points you have earned, so you might as well turn them in on time and earn some points! You can turn in the final draft or peer review late in order to pass the class, but you will not receive points for that submission.

One last example; student C did not turn in their peer review portion for essay 2 but turned in all of their other work on time. His grade is an 85. Student C may fail the course if he does not turn in his peer review! Student C turns in his peer review for essay 2 before the last due date, so he does not fail, but his grade is still an 85.

Each discussion post and essay will accumulate points; the total number of points will determine the final course grade.

A	93 - 100 points
A -	90 - 92
B +	86 - 89
B	83 - 86
B -	80 - 82

C +	77 - 79
C	73 - 76
C -	70 - 72
D+	67 - 69
D	63 - 66
D-	60 - 62 (minimum for pass/fail students to pass)
F	Below 119 points

Students must complete all peer review and final draft assignments to pass the class. Grades for essays, outlines, and weekly discussions will be posted in Canvas. You will need your UT EID and password to log in. For more information on specific assignments, see the next section. Canvas will show you a variety of percentage totals in the grading screen. I can't turn this off but I don't want you to be fooled by it; just look at the last column for your point total. I usually have everything that was submitted on time graded within a week, so you should be able to keep up with your score on a weekly basis.

Late Grading:

All work is due before midnight on the due date. Late discussions will not be graded. No exceptions.

Canvas records the exact time you upload, so make sure you give yourself plenty of time for the document to upload before midnight. I will use Canvas' recorded time as the official submission time. If Canvas lists 12:00 AM as the time you uploaded your assignment and marks it late, then yes, you will not receive credit.

No essays will be accepted after 11:59 PM except in the case of a verifiable medical emergency. A computer virus, a computer crash, athletic events, and thunderstorms are not verifiable medical emergencies.

There is no final exam for this class.

Assignments

Discussions

The semester will include 12 discussions. For most discussions, Canvas will divide the class into a number of randomly assigned discussion groups. Discussions will be graded on a 2-point scale; one point for your original submission and one point for your responses to two other students. You either receive credit for your submission, or you do not. You must complete all three parts of the submission (original post and two responses) and meet the minimum requirements to receive credit. If you submit a great original post and only respond to one peer, you only earn one point.

1 Point: Original discussion submissions should be at least 200 words long and make it clear to the instructor or TA that you have read the assigned reading for that week.

2 Points: In addition, students must respond to two the submissions of two other students. These responses should be at least two sentences long and should move the conversation forward. Responses of "I agree. This happened to me once." Or similar short responses will not receive credit.

Total Points for Discussion Postings: 24

Quiz

The first module will discuss the writing conventions and process I expect from you in this course. Not all of the information in this section will be new to everyone, but I hope that each of you will get something out of this section. This module will also discuss plagiarism. I know you are each already familiar with how to avoid plagiarism, but please be extra cautious in this class. Every semester I have had students fail the class, receive zeros, and get referred to SJS for including content from other sources without proper citation. The process of finding, documenting, and referring students who plagiarize takes a TON of my time, and I would rather spend that time working with students to improve their writing than working with you to create a black mark on your permanent academic record. Avoid plagiarism and we will both enjoy the class more!

Quiz: 17 Points

Essays

Students will complete 4 essays throughout the semester. Each essay will be worth 12 points. The points are broken down into four sections:

1. Essay preparation – each essay will include different preparation steps, such as conducting research, taking notes, or collaborating with your peers.
(2 points)
2. Essay first draft – submitted on time and of sufficient quality to be considered a finished essay
(2 points)
3. Peer Review – each essay will include at least one peer review session where you will be asked to read and substantially comment on the work of your peers.
(4 points)
4. Essay second draft – revise your first draft, responding to each comment made by your peer reviewer and the instructor.
(4 points)

General Essay Topics

Essay 1: A cover letter for an opportunity in your field. Students will find some opportunity that is interesting to them. This could be an internship, a job opportunity, an application to graduate school. Students will use the competitive intelligence skills they learn in the class to research the people and institution offering the opportunity. Years ago, workers would stay in one job for decades. You can count on the fact that your future will be full of opportunity as long as you know how to work hard at the job in front of you, but keep one eye open (a good set of professional references, an updated cv, and a great cover letter) for your next step.

Essay 2: An examination of Information Studies literature. Students will be assigned a group of articles from the information studies literature to examine and explain to a small group of your peers. You will then collaborate with your peers on understanding each other's articles. This collaboration and research will be the foundation of your own essay. You will be asked to compare and contrast the different articles and offer your opinion on the topic. Short of conducting actual research (surveys and experiments), this is the most common academic writing activity.

Essay 3: A persuasive essay on a current topic related to Information Studies. Students will have a chance to persuade their peers on a topic of the instructors choosing. Persuading others through writing is a key leadership skill.

Essay 4: A memo about a current policy or technology issue related to Information Studies. The memo will be a one page, concise discussion of a complex issue, with four or more pages of support information and research. This is probably the most common type of professional writing.

The order of these essays may vary, and you will be required to work on more than one essay at one time.

Essay Drafts

Remember to include a title page and bibliography for each essay. Title pages should include your name, the date, the number and title of your essay, and the class number and section. Your essay must be submitted to Canvas as a word doc, and the file name needs to start with your last name. For example, my persuasive essay would be Blahapersuasive.doc. Without this title page and these naming convention, your essay will not be graded! I typically download all of the essays and run them through the plagiarism checker, so an essay titled "essay2.doc" will make this process frustrating for me.

You must cite **all** sources within the essay and provide complete citation information in a bibliography page, including any module readings or the online lecture. Students caught plagiarizing will suffer strict academic consequences. All citations should use APA format. For more information on APA, please see the Purdue University OWL guide: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

All essays will be submitted to Canvas and may be passed through the Turnitin plagiarism check software. The results of this software analysis are not the only method I will use to determine whether something is plagiarized. As I said earlier, plagiarism is my least favorite thing to deal with in this course. Avoid it!

The essay requirements are described in more detail as we progress through the course.

Essays: 48 Points

Essay Submission

Submit all assignments using Canvas. Assignments submitted via email will not be counted (I lose track of them – I get hundreds of emails a day, so I ask that you use Canvas both for communicating with me and submitting your assignments so we both have a record).

A tutorial for submitting documents is located here: <http://edutech.ctl.utexas.edu/submitting-assignments/>

All essays must be in Microsoft word format, saved as .doc or .docx. I personally prefer open source software, but Canvas and Turnitin work best with Microsoft.

Peer Review

You will be editing another student's rough drafts for each essay. I will use Canvas to pair you with another student. I expect you to provide your classmate with thorough corrections and suggestions using the peer review feature of Canvas. This process is important because not only does it help your classmate improve his writing, but it also helps you improve your critical thinking and writing skills. More details on the specific expectations for each peer review will be included in each assignment.

Unless otherwise specified, each review will require you to follow the three steps (annotation, comment, rubric) outlined in the Canvas documentation on peer reviews:

<https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-3138>

Your annotations should be substantial; your peer should be able to use your comments to create a significantly improved essay. Your comment should be a ten-item list of ways the author can improve his or her work. I will also leave comments, annotations, and fill out the rubric. The extent of my comments will vary and depends in part on the quality of your writing and the quality of the review your peer has provided.

The way Canvas handles peer-review does not allow for the reviewer to receive points for their effort (madness!). I will include a separate assignment called “Peer Review Points” (or something very similar) that does not allow you to submit anything. Please understand this is just for me to keep track of your peer review efforts in a transparent way – I want you to be able to see that you have earned these points, and to be able to contact me if you have any questions about your grade.

Rewrites

Students are expected to rewrite each essay, responding to each of the items in the ten item list your peer left as a comment. You should also review the annotations your peer left on your actual submission. Your rewrite will include the revised essay that incorporates the feedback of your peer reviewer AND a cover page that includes your responses to each of these suggestions.

You are not obligated to change everything your editor suggests, but you do need to justify why you didn’t make that change. Ignoring a suggestion means you did not complete your revision, so you won’t receive credit.

You are expected to make revisions beyond what your peer and instructor recommend. You will find better ways to say something or to structure your argument and should act on your own ideas in addition to our suggestions. This is especially true for the final revision of up to two essays if you qualify for this opportunity. I will compare the original submitted word document to the revised document. Typically essays that receive full credit have a change in almost every line of the essay, and many are completely restructured to improve the clarity of ideas and quality of communication. If I run a compare in Word and the new document is hard to read because it includes so many changes, and these changes make the essay better, you are more likely to earn a higher point total.

End of Semester Revision

If you have turned in all four parts of each of your essays on time (the preparation work, the original draft, your peer review, and your revised draft), you will have the opportunity to submit revised versions of up to two of your essays. These revised versions will be worth up to a combined 11 points, depending on how much effort you put into them. This is the only way to earn above a B+ in this class. If you revise one essay, you will earn up to five points, if you revise 2 essays, you can earn up to the full 11 points.

Resources

Style Manuals

Students will need to cite all sources for their essays in APA format. Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL) offers a great overview on how to do this. <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl> Style manuals are located under Research and Citation.

U.T. Writing Resources

You are fortunate to attend the University of Texas, where you have access to one of the largest research libraries in the world! Take advantage of all the wonderful resources available through the U.T. system.

- Undergraduate Writing Center – located in FAC 211
- UT Library Online's (UT LOL) homepage – You can find library information, resources, and receive virtual assistance from a reference librarian!
- Full text articles and essays – Databases offering a plethora of articles and essays, available in both in HTML and .pdf format and from many disciplines
- Social Sciences Citation Index – An outstanding resource for finding articles and information on citation rates for many articles
- Databases arranged by subject – You can locate articles within specific disciplines.

Other Writing Resources

- The Citation Machine – A free Web site that can translate citation information into proper format for both APA and MLA style. A helpful and time-saving resource.
- Online Writing Lab – Purdue University provides an excellent online writing lab, including information about avoiding plagiarism, citing resources, and avoiding grammatical errors.

University Policies

Academic Integrity

Please abide by the University's policy on academic integrity. All work you submit must be your own. "Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating and plagiarism... Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. University policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced." From: The University of Texas: General Information, Appendix C.

Special Needs

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. To determine if you qualify, please contact the Dean of Students at 471-6259; 471-4641 TTY. If they certify your needs, we will work with you to make appropriate arrangements.

Religious or Holy Day Observance

"A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence."

(<http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/gi04-05/ch4/ch4g.html>)

Email

“Electronic mail (e-mail), like postal mail, is a mechanism for official University communication to students. The University will exercise the right to send e-mail communications to all students, and the University will expect that e-mail communications will be received and read in a timely manner.”

(<http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/gi04-05/app/appn.html>). Both the instructor and the TA will reply to student emails within 24 hours on weekdays and 48 hours on weekends barring a rare and extenuating circumstance.

I look forward to working with you all this semester. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, do not hesitate to email me!