

## Introduction to Information Studies

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Dr. Blaha  
Unique Number 27120  
Spring 2018

### Syllabus

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The syllabus for 304D 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

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**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

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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.

This course has a writing flag and therefore requires a substantial written component throughout the semester.

**Prerequisite:** lower-division standing.

### Course Objectives

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Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of major topics, identify key issues, and discuss important terms in information studies
- 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 both their personal and professional lives
- Fulfill the requirements of a substantial writing component course by writing and editing at least three, 5-page essays

### Course Materials

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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 so you will need Adobe Acrobat Reader (you most likely already have it).
- **UT Box** – UT offers you unlimited storage for 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

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This course is Web-based, so there are 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 few 3-hour time blocks that will help you keep up with the class.

Each week I will release a new module (or two) that will focus on one topic within information studies. 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 beginning 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 discussions about the lecture, readings, and/or related topics each week using the discussion board section set up by the instructor. You will find more information on discussions in the "Assignments" section of this syllabus.
- **Quiz** – an open book review of what we covered that week.

In addition, students will write three essays which are described in the "Assignments" section below.

### Grading Policy

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304 uses the traditional UT Austin undergraduate grading scale:

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 60

The course grade is divided into five different assignment groups: participation, quizzes, the first draft of your essays, peer reviews, and the final draft of your essays. The weight of each of these groups is described below, and the groups will be described in more detail in the “Assignments” section below:

Participation: 15%  
 Quizzes: 15%  
 First Draft Essays: 10%  
 Peer Review: 20%  
 Final Draft Essays: 40%

Each essay must be turned in to pass the class. If you do not turn in one of the essays, you will receive an F in the class, regardless of the grade Canvas displays, so you might as well turn them in on time and earn some points! You can turn in an essay late in order to pass the class, but you will not receive points for late submissions.

Grades for essays, quizzes, participation, and weekly discussions will be posted in Canvas. You will need your UT EID and password to log in. I usually have each assignment that was submitted on time graded within a week, so you should be able to keep up with your score on a weekly basis. If you have any questions about your grades at any point, definitely let me know!

### Late Grading:

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All work is due before the deadline listed on the due date. Late discussions will not be graded. No exceptions. (Turning in a late discussion is like walking into the classroom after class is over and sharing your thoughts – too late!)

Canvas records the exact time you upload, so make sure you give yourself plenty of time for the document to upload before the deadline. I will use Canvas' recorded time as the official submission time. If the deadline is noon and Canvas lists 12:01 PM as the time you uploaded your assignment and marks it late, then yes, you will not receive credit.

No essays will be accepted for a grade after the deadline 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

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#### Discussions

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This semester will include a discussion for each module as well as an occasional discussion for different essays, depending on what the class might be struggling with. For most discussions, Canvas will divide the class into a number of randomly assigned

discussion groups. Discussions will be graded on a 3-point scale; two points for your original submission and one point for your responses to two other students. 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 can only earn two points.

**2 Points:** For most original discussions, your submission 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. Detailed instructions are listed on each discussion assignment.

**1 Points:** In addition, students must respond to 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.

## Quizzes

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Each module also includes a quiz to help you review what we discussed in that module and in the assigned reading. Quizzes are open book, so consider them more of a review than a "test of knowledge". Quizzes time out after 3 hours, so set aside an appropriate amount of time to work through the 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!

## Essays

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Students will complete three essays throughout the semester. The final draft of each essay will be evaluated using the traditional undergraduate letter grade scale listed above (A – F). Writing your essay at the last minute usually results in a poor grade. Your essays will be graded on the following criteria:

1. Grammar and spelling
2. The clarity of thought demonstrated in your essay
3. Your use of resources (including citation)
4. The structure of the essay and how well you followed writing conventions
5. The overall quality of the essay

In addition, some essays may have specific grading criteria that will be described in that assignment.

## General Essay Topics

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**Essay 1:** 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 as part of a discussion. 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 2:** An examination of current topics in information studies. These topics are “ripped from the headlines” and are subject to change each semester. This semester it looks like we may discuss either net neutrality or web browsing privacy, but the actual topics might change.

**Essay 3:** Your choice. For this essay, I ask you to choose a topic related to your major, professional or personal interest and relate it back to topics we have covered in class.

### *Essay Process Overview*

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One of the important goals of this course is to help you improve your writing. To this end, I will ask you to write, peer review, and revise essays over the course of the semester. The first essay will include a group project to help you summarize some of the important literature in the field of information studies. Your group summaries will become the foundation of your essay response to this literature. You will review each other’s work as part of the peer review process and have an opportunity to revise your essay in response to your peer. I will then review and grade the final version of this first essay.

The second and third essays will follow the draft and peer review process without receiving a grade, other than credit (2 points) for turning in what I consider an adequate response to the assignment (more on this in a bit). For the second revision, you can choose one of these two essays to revise in response to your peer editor’s comments. I will then edit and grade your revised submission.

An adequate response to the assignment for all draft essays means you have met the minimum page length, used appropriate resources, responded appropriately to the prompt, and used college level writing throughout your essay. Please do not turn in an essay without reviewing and editing it yourself first. If I believe I am the first person to read your writing, I will not give you credit for your submission. Some clues I look for are sentence fragments, redundant words, spelling errors, and poorly thought out arguments. The only way to improve your writing is to turn in your best work at each stage of the writing process. Your draft will be run through plagiarism checking software.

For the last essay, you can choose any of the three essays you have written over the course of the semester and turn that essay into a finished piece that represents your best writing.

A more concise overview of this process:

- 1) Essay 1
  - a) Group work to summarize articles (3 points; participation grade)
  - b) Submit essay draft (2 points; first draft essay grade)
  - c) Peer review (3 points; peer review grade)
  - d) Revise draft
  - e) Instructor review and grade (A-F final draft essay grade)
- 2) Essay 2
  - a) Submit draft (2 points; first draft essay grade)
  - b) Peer review (3 points; peer review grade)
- 3) Essay 3
  - a) Submit draft (2 points; first draft essay grade)

- b) Peer review (3 points; peer review grade)
- 4) Second revision
  - a) Submit EITHER a revised version of essay 2 or essay 3
  - b) Instructor review and grade (A-F final draft essay grade)
- 5) Final Revision
  - a) Choose any of the essays you have written this semester, revise based on feedback and your own ideas
  - b) Instructor review and grade (A-F final draft essay grade)

### *Essay Drafts*

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Remember to include a title page and bibliography for each essay. These pages DO NOT count toward the five-page minimum. 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 Turnitin or another plagiarism check software. The results of this software analysis are not the only method I 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. A five-page minimum is just that, if your essay is four pages long, you don't receive credit. If you expand the margins and increase the point size from the word defaults (11 point Cambria) in order to take up more space, you won't receive credit. If your essay is four pages and two lines, you might not receive credit. Anything less than four and a half pages is up to my discretion based on the quality of your writing. Don't leave it up to me, write the full amount and make us both happy!

### *Essay Submission*

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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.utexas.edu/submitting-assignments/>

All essays must be in Microsoft word format, saved as .doc or .docx. 11 point Cambria with one inch margins. I personally prefer open source software, but Canvas and Turnitin work best with Microsoft.

### *Peer Review*

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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.

For the final draft of the first essay, I will also leave comments, annotations, and fill out the rubric. I want to make sure you have a sense early on of how I will grade your work. The second and third essays will follow the peer review process, after which you will be able to revise your essay before turning it in for a grade. The final revision is an opportunity for you to take any of the three essays and really polish it up to show off what you can do. The extent of my comments on any of these three essays 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.

I will also offer feedback on your writing. Please do not take this feedback personally, each of the comments, suggestions, and “marks” I leave on your paper are intended to help you become a better writer. I have personally received each of the different types of feedback I will offer to you, so if you see a lot of marks on your paper or comments like “awkward”, please know I am not being condescending toward you or your writing. These are common academic editing conventions meant to give you a clear idea of my reaction to your writing. I have had very few students turn in a “perfect” paper, so expect feedback.

I will not mark every issue that you have throughout your essay. If I point out a grammatical error I will expect you to fix not only the one I point out, but look for similar problems throughout the essay and avoid the same error in future essays.

### *Rewrites*

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Students will also rewrite three essays and respond to the feedback of their peers and the instructor, where applicable. Each rewrite will include a cover page on which you should respond 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.

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. Also, it is never a good idea to ignore the professor’s comments. I put a lot of effort into each of your essays, so please spend some time thinking about my comments.

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. I will compare the original submitted word document to the revised document. Typically essay revisions that receive high marks will 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 grade. Rewrites are graded on the same A – F scale listed above.

## Resources

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### Style Manuals

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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

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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

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- 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

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### Academic Integrity

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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

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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

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"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

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"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!