

INF 335C - Information in Cyberspace

Unique Number: 27117

Fall 2019

Contact

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Overview

Information in Cyberspace (INF335) is a course designed for undergraduate students that provides an overview of the history and social impact of Internet and Web technology. INF335 emphasizes technology self-sufficiency and information literacy.

The purpose of this course is to prepare students to think about information technology in a critical, thoughtful manner. The goal of this course is to pull back the curtain on some of the inner workings of information technology, in particular the discipline of user experience (UX). Ultimately, students should be able to critically evaluate technological systems through a UX lens and be empowered to navigate confidently through information spaces in networked environments. While it may be safe to assume the Internet will continue to exist for the foreseeable future, we can count on our description of cyberspace changing over time. This course aims to give students the tools to think critically about networked information communication technologies and their role as information consumers, producers, and leaders in the evolution of cyberspace.

Objectives

In this course students will learn:

- About user experience research and design;
- about technical applications that make the Internet possible;
- about political, financial, and social implications of creating content on the Internet;
- how to find, evaluate, and cite Information resources on the Internet;
- how to protect content and resources from malicious attacks;

Students will enact the following learning techniques:

- completing hands-on projects to practice assessing systems and creating UX deliverables and artifacts;
- reading about history and current news related to information technology;
- discussing history and current news related to information technology;
- completing hands-on projects to practice presenting and assessing information in a variety of contexts.

Prerequisites

While there are no prerequisite classes for INF335, you should know the following before taking this course:

1. You need to contact your instructors and TAs to ask questions or get help at the first sign of trouble.
2. You need to pay very close attention to the course home page to keep up with what's going on.
3. You need to organize your time effectively so you can spend at least 6 hours a week working on this class.
4. Students who are unable to motivate and organize themselves, and especially those who don't communicate with their instructors or TAs, tend to be unsuccessful in a virtual classroom environment.

5. Although it is not necessary to be a computer expert to complete this course successfully, you do need to know the basics of operating a personal computer and navigating the Internet. You are expected to know how to...
 - a. create folders and view the contents of a disk;
 - b. open an application or program;
 - c. send and receive e-mail;
 - d. search the Internet.
6. submit work that meets college-level writing standards.

If you don't know how to do these things, let your instructor or TA know during the first week of class. We will be happy to sit down and show you how to do it.

Schedule

This course consists of a number of instructional modules. All modules must be completed in order to pass the class. The first four modules after the introductory module focus specifically on user experience. The modules following the UX modules present a survey on different cyberspace topics.

A group of two modules will be opened every two weeks. So, for example, on August 28th modules one and two will open up. The first module serves as an orientation to this course; and the last module is reserved for students to complete their final project. Below is a list of all the modules and their schedules.

| Module | Week |
|---|---------------|
| Week 1 – Introduction to the Course | 08/28 - 09/15 |
| Week 2 – Introduction to User Experience | 09/08 - 09/15 |
| Week 3 – Introduction to UX Research | 09/15 - 09/22 |
| Week 4 – Introduction to UX Design | 09/22 - 09/29 |
| Week 5 – Accessibility | 09/29 - 10/06 |
| Week 6 – Cyberspace, the Internet, and the World Wide Web | 10/06 - 10/13 |
| Week 7 – HTML Basics | 10/13 - 10/20 |
| Week 8 – Information Control in Cyberspace | 10/20 - 10/27 |
| Week 9 – Information Search | 10/27 - 11/03 |
| Week 10 – Cybersecurity | 11/03 - 11/10 |
| Week 11 – Copyright | 11/10 - 11/17 |
| Week 12 – Open Source | 11/17 - 11/24 |
| Thanksgiving Break - NO CLASS | 11/24 - 12/01 |
| Week 13 – Virtual Reality | 12/01 - 12/08 |
| Week 14 – Video Games | 12/08 - 12/13 |

Assignments and Grading

This course has three types of assignments: weekly discussions, weekly quizzes and final project.

Points by assignments

| Assignments | Due date | Total Points |
|--------------------|---|--------------|
| Weekly discussions | Every Friday 11:59pm for posting your discussion; following Sunday 11:59pm for responding to others' posts | 56 |
| Weekly quizzes | Every Sunday 11:59pm | 56 |
| Final projects | Various due dates, see below | 89 |
| Total | | 200 |

Grading Scale

| | |
|-----|--|
| A | 185 - 200 |
| A - | 180 – 184 |
| B + | 173 – 179 |
| B | 165 – 172 |
| B - | 160 – 164 |
| C + | 153 – 159 |
| C | 145 – 152 |
| C - | 140 – 144 |
| D+ | 133 – 139 |
| D | 125 – 132 |
| D- | 120 – 124 (minimum for pass/fail students to pass) |
| F | Below 120 |

- **Weekly discussions**

Every week, you will contribute to the online discussion forum as part of the class participation assignment. Think of these online discussions as your chance to share what you know, ask questions, and challenge the readings just as you would in small group discussions in class. In addition to submitting your discussion post, you are also required to respond to two of your classmates' discussion posts with your thoughts, reactions, or contributions to the discussion.

Original discussion submissions should be at least 150 words long written or 1 minute long as video/audio recording (unless the discussion topic specifically states a different length) and should make it clear to the instructor or TA that you have read the assigned reading for that week.

Your responses to others should be at least 3 sentences long written or 30 seconds long as a video/audio recording. In either case, it *must* move the conversation forward. Responses of "I agree. This happened to me once." Or similar short responses will not receive credit.

Please note: to make sure everyone has enough time to respond to each other's posts, you are encouraged to submit your discussion post as early as you could. Each weekly discussion is due on every Friday 11:59pm, and you will need to submit your responses to others by the following Sunday at 11:59pm!

Grading: 2 point for initial post; 1 points for each response; total of 4 points for each discussion.

- **Weekly quizzes**

To test your comprehension of weekly module, there will be a short quiz each week. All quizzes are open book, and the aim is not to test what you have memorized, but to apply what you have learned and to review the material. For some questions, answers are in the module readings. If you study the readings carefully, you are sure to know (or be able to find) the answers. For other questions, you may need to consult external resources to be able to answer the question. The weekly quiz is due every Sunday at 11:59pm.

Grading: total of 4 points for each quiz.

- **Final project**

For the final project, you will choose to pick a system and evaluate it through a UX lens. Ideally, you will have a portfolio piece by the end of the course that you can show to employers. However, your work will only be as good as the effort you put in, so I highly encourage you to take advantage of the time during the semester to create something you would be proud to show during an interview.

The final project (FP) is broken down into 6 separate assignments (FP0 - FP5) that you will need to complete at different times throughout the semester. FP0 is to select your final project topic. FP1 through FP3 involves directly

creating UX artifacts surrounding the system you chose, while the ultimate deliverable, FP4, consists of compiling your previous projects into a report and creating a video presentation on it. FP5 will serve as a reflection on your journey leaning about UX and cyberspace so you will be able to articulate your thoughts on the subject if asked.

Note: You are also required to complete FP Test in order to unlock FP4. FP test ensures you are adequately prepared to use Panopto to create your video presentation. It also ensures that you will be capable of using Canvas' built in Panopto feature to record replies in video/audio form if you so choose – which I encourage, as it will help put faces to names and foster classroom interaction.

Each final project assignment is due at 11:59pm on the assigned due date.

Please note that you have to complete the final project in order to pass this course. If you fail to submit the final project, you will fail the course regardless of the number of points you have accumulated.

Here is a breakdown of the final project.

| | Assignment | Due Date | Points |
|---------|-------------------------------------|--------------|--------|
| FP0 | Project preparation | 09/15 | 8 |
| FP Test | Final Project Test Submission | 09/22 | 1 |
| FP 1 | Heuristic Analysis | 09/29 | 14 |
| FP2 | Competitive Analysis | 10/20 | 14 |
| FP3 | Redesign | 11/03 | 14 |
| FP4 | Compile Report and Present Findings | 11/24 | 24 |
| FP5 | Reflection | 12/13 | 14 |
| | | Total points | 88 |

You can read the details about the final project in Canvas.

Late Assignments

It is important to complete your work on time, both so you can stay on track and so you can collaborate and interact with your fellow students. Late assignments will not be accepted. You will receive a zero if you do not submit your assignment on time. I use the Canvas upload time as the official time of the submission, so if you submit your assignment 5 seconds after the deadline, Canvas will mark your assignment late and you will receive a zero for that assignment.

Please make sure you submit your assignments well in advance; computer problems, network outages, and other “technical” issues will not be considered a valid excuse for submitting an assignment late, so make sure you submit your work early.

Plan ahead. This is an online course and you have a full week to ensure you complete everything on time. As there is no scheduled class time, you must be responsible for getting work done in a timely manner. The course allows for a lot of flexibility for you to schedule your work, so I will be very strict about excused late work.

Required Readings

All required readings for this course are available through the course modules in Canvas. Reading materials include articles and online videos.

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.

If I find blatant plagiarism (copy and paste from Wikipedia, for example) you will be referred to Student Judicial Services and you will fail the class. Plagiarism is my least favorite thing to deal with in this course. Avoid it!

- **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 circumstances.

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