

Introduction to Information Studies

Dr. Blaha
Unique Number 27265
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Syllabus

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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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.

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

Prerequisite: none.

Course Objectives

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

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

This course is Web-based, so there are no class meetings. The course is divided into modules, and each week a new module will be released. You can 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

304 uses the traditional UT Austin undergraduate grading scale:

A	94 – 100
A -	90 - 93

B +	87 - 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 preparation steps for your essays, peer reviews, and the revised drafts 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:

Discussions:	10%
Quizzes:	10%
Essay Preparation:	15%
Peer Review:	15%
Essays:	50%

Each essay must be turned in to pass the class. If you do not turn in any one of the three essays, you will receive an F in the class, regardless of the grade Canvas displays. 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, and essays graded within two weeks, so you should be able to keep up with your score on a regular basis. If you have any questions about your grades at any point, definitely let me know!

Late Grading:

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 midnight and Canvas lists 12:01 AM as the time you uploaded your assignment and marks it late, then 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

Discussions

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 4-point scale; two points for your original submission and one point for each of 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 three 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.

2 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

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 be referred to Student Judicial Services 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! The first module includes two quizzes – one is part of the plagiarism video, the other is a freestanding quiz. You must earn a perfect score on these two quizzes in order to open up the other modules in the course. You can take each quiz more than one time to earn a perfect score.

Essays

Students will complete three essays throughout the semester. 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

You will write the first essay using whatever process makes sense to you, and I will grade that essay attempt as a final draft. If you prefer to sit down and write everything in one shot and then edit it, great! If you like to start with an outline or build from the citations you plan to include – go for it! This essay will give me the chance to get to know you as a

writer, and give you a chance to get to know how I grade essays. Some students are surprised by the amount of effort required to earn a B or higher on an essay, so do us both a favor and put your best foot forward!

The second and third essay you will write for this class will follow a series of specific steps. These steps are designed to help improve your writing and to break up the writing process to make it more manageable for you, and have shown over time to result in better essays. Each step will be graded and all of the steps are required for each essay. The different steps are:

1. Research
 - a. Compile a list of five or more resources that are relevant to your topic, formatted using APA. Make sure at least two of these resources are from peer reviewed journals!
 - b. Summarize each resource using a short paragraph.
 - c. Copy any quotations you believe will be useful in your paper, including proper APA in-text citation format
2. Outline
 - a. Decide how you will organize your ideas
 - b. Your outline should be at least three pages long following the same formatting guidelines (11 point, double spaced, one inch margins).
 - c. Include the quotations you plan to use in the proper location in your outline, including your properly formatted in-text APA citation
3. Draft
 - a. Write your first draft by following your outline exactly. If you feel you need to vary from your outline, include a note describing the change after your essay.
 - b. Include a cover page and reference list following APA format, and make sure you follow the file naming convention for your word doc (more about this below). If you don't include each of these things you will not receive credit for your submission
 - c. Your draft should be at least five pages long, using Calibri 11 point font and 1 inch margins. If you change these settings and your essay is less than five pages, you will not receive credit for your submission.
4. Peer Review
 - a. Turnitin will assign you a peer's paper to review, and you will use the Turnitin tools to review the student's work.
5. Revision
 - a. Based on your peer's feedback, you will revise your essay and submit it for a final grade and feedback from me.
6. Final Draft
 - a. You will have the option to revise one of the three papers you will write this semester for a higher grade. Your revision will have to take into account the feedback from your peer and your professor as well as any improvements you made on your own. Revisions will be graded based on a combination of your response to the feedback, your own revision ideas, and the quality of the final product. It is possible to make a few changes and end up with the same grade; to improve your grade you will need to make substantial changes to your essay. The Final Draft grade will replace the earlier Revised Essay grade if the Final Draft grade is higher.

This process is a lot of work, and each step will be graded. There is some overlap between essay 2 and essay 3 in order to make sure you do not have any assignments due over spring

break and to allow you enough time to revise your third essay based on my feedback. The assignments will open up early enough to allow you at least two weeks to plan how you will address each module, and in most cases you will have more than two weeks.

Essay Topics

The essay topics are selected to encourage you to synthesize the materials in the modules. My hope is you will reflect on what you learned in each group of modules, and build on those ideas to develop an essay that addresses the prompt. The prompt is designed to get you thinking about the topic, but I hope you will take your own personal experiences, undergraduate major, and future career goals to decide how to take the information in the modules and make it more interesting to you (and me!)

1. First Essay Prompt: Why is information and communication technology important now and into the future?
 - a. Use Module 2 – Overview of information studies as a foundation for your answer to this question. You may also use your personal experience, current events, information from your major, and your future career as perspectives to discuss the importance and value of information and communication technology.
 - b. One important goal for this essay is to start with a strong introduction that makes the case for the importance of information and communication technology without using hyperbole or colloquialisms!
 - i. For example – students often talk about the explosion of the internet. What they mean to say is the increase use of the internet over a period of time. The number of users, what they are using the internet for, and the specific period of time should all be articulated and cited.
 - c. Module 1 tells you how to cite the modules both in text and in your reference page, so make sure you review module 1 for that information!
 - d. Remember that Essay 1 will not be peer reviewed; you will submit it to me and I will grade it as is. I want to get to know you as a writer and for you to get to know how I will grade the essays over the course of the semester.
2. Second Essay Prompt: Why is the organization, management, preservation, and access to information important?
 - a. Use the Librarianship, Archives and Preservation, Museums and Conservation, and Records Management modules as the foundation of your essay. You do not need to cite or refer to all of them, but your writing should reflect a synthesis of the ideas in these modules.
 - b. Feel free to use any current events, personal experiences, or other ideas to make this essay your own. The prompt allows you to use a number of different lenses. For example; are the activities listed in the prompt important to a functioning democracy, business success, a professional sports organization, cultural heritage, or fighting oppression? Any one of these topics should give you plenty of material to discuss in five pages, and there are a lot of other possible directions to take this essay.
 - c. Essay two will be peer reviewed and you will have the chance to revise your essay before submitting it for the final grade. However, if I review your essay and decide it doesn't reflect your best effort, you will not receive credit for this step in the process.
3. Third Essay Prompt: Your Choice

- a. For the last essay, choose one (or more) of the remaining modules and examine this topic in depth. I encourage you to focus your investigation on a topic related to your major or to your future career. For example, in the past I have had students who heard about this “blockchain stuff” and used this essay as an opportunity to learn more about it, especially from a security and privacy point of view.
- b. As with essays one and two, use the modules as a foundation for your essay (citing appropriately), but feel free to include current events, information from your major, or anything else you find relevant or interesting.
- c. Essay three will also have a peer review component, and as with essay two, you will have the chance to revise your essay before submitting it for the final grade. However, if I review your essay and decide it doesn’t reflect your best effort, you will not receive credit for this step in the process.

Essay Drafts

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 BlahaEssay1.doc. Without this title page and these naming convention, your essay may not be graded! I typically download all of the essays and run them through the plagiarism checker, so an essay titled “essay2.doc” will get tossed in the virtual circular file.

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 will 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 include a five-page minimum, which means exactly that; if your essay is 4 ³/₄ pages long, you don’t receive credit. If you expand the margins and increase the point size from the word defaults (11 point Cambria) and more than double spaced in order to take up more space, you won’t receive credit. Don’t leave it up to me, write the full amount and make us both happy!

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. 11 point Cambria, double spaced with one inch margins. I personally prefer open source software, but Canvas and Turnitin work best with Microsoft.

Peer Review

I will use the Canvas plugin Turnitin to pair you with another student. Turnitin will have a series of questions for you to answer and offers tools for you to provide annotation directly on your peer's paper. For details, check the turnitin web page for more information:

[https://guides.turnitin.com/01_Manuals_and_Guides/Student_Guides/Turnitin_Classic_\(Deprecated\)/19_PeerMark](https://guides.turnitin.com/01_Manuals_and_Guides/Student_Guides/Turnitin_Classic_(Deprecated)/19_PeerMark)

This process is important because not only does it help your classmate improve their 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:

1. Annotation: Mark up your peer's work. You have probably heard people use the colloquialism "my paper was bleeding" from all of the red ink. This is what I expect to see on your peer's paper. Grammar edits, word choice comments, passive voice highlights; let the author know what you are thinking as you read the essay.
2. Peermark questions: each essay will include a series of questions to help you let your peer know how you think they did.

Your annotations should be substantial; your peer should be able to use your comments to create a significantly improved essay.

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.

Revision

After you receive feedback from your peer, you will have the opportunity to revise your essay before submitting it for a grade. In addition to the grading criteria listed above, part of your grade on this revision will include your response to your peer's suggestions. You should include three or more paragraphs on your cover page describing how you changed your original essay in response to your peer's suggestions. I often compare your original document to the revised document to see what you have done to improve.

Rewrite

Students will have the option to rewrite one essay and respond to the feedback of their peers and the instructor, where applicable. The rewrite will include a cover page on which you should clearly explain which essay you are revising and three to four paragraphs describing the steps you have taken to revise the essay.

You are not obligated to change everything your editor suggests, but you do need to justify why you didn't make a particular 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. For your revised essays, 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. If your revision earns a higher grade, that grade will replace the lower grade of the original submission.

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!