

# **INF 385T - Personal Informatics**

## **Spring 2016 Syllabus**

School of Information  
The University of Texas at Austin

Class Meeting Time: Thursdays 9am-12pm, UTA 1.504

Instructor: Dr. Edison Thomaz  
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### **Course Description**

Personal Informatics is a new area of study that focuses on streams of data that emerge from the individual. It provides the foundation for self-experimentation, self-awareness, and even behavior change. In this class, we will go over many personal informatics topics, including:

- Sources of personal informatics data
- Active and passive methods for data collection
- Concepts, models, and theories around personal data and personal informatics
- Prototyping and evaluation of apps, user interfaces and visualizations around personal data
- Sharing and privacy issues for personal data
- Self-experimentation and self-reflection
- Behavior change with personal data
- Practical challenges of personal informatics

The course will draw upon theories, methods and techniques from HCI, Ubicomp, and Infovis. Ultimately, the goal is to empower students to explore their own data, and build new applications, models, visualizations and interfaces around personal informatics.

### **Requirements**

There are no requirements for taking this class except enthusiasm for the emerging field of personal informatics. Certain skills might come in handy such as data analysis, research methods, programming, and user interface design, but students will be free to explore topics that match their interests and expertise.

### **Class Attendance**

Students are expected to attend all classes and arrive on time. By UT Austin policy, you must notify the instructor of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work

assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

## **Readings**

All reading materials will be provided by the instructor or TA. There is no textbook for the course.

## **Project**

Alongside homework assignments, students will be working on a semester-long project throughout the term. The projects will expose students to the process of self-quantification from the perspective of data collection and also visualization/self-awareness.

Depending on the scope of the proposed project, and upon approval of the instructor, students might work in teams of 2 or 3. Grading for the project will be split three ways: Proposal, Phase I and Phase II. Some class time during the term will be dedicated to discussing and working on the project.

## **Class Participation**

During the semester, students will be asked to lead discussions of papers, provide feedback about concepts and ideas, and more. A class participation grade will be derived from the level of engagement observed in these types of in-class activities.

## **Homework Assignments**

Homework constitute the largest portion of the course's grade. Take it seriously! In this course, there will be 10 homework assignments; many of them involve reading papers and producing a one-pager with a summary and/or critique of the papers. These will be due at the beginning of class. The assignments will be posted one week in advance.

## **Final Exam**

There will be a final exam. It will include topics covered throughout the entire course and test your understanding of the material, not your ability to memorize it.

## **Grading**

Here is a breakdown of how the final grade for each student will be computed:

Class Participation	10%
Homework (10 Assignments)	50%
Project Proposal	5%
Project Phase I: Collecting Data	10%
Project Phase II: Visualization and Insights	15%
Final Exam	10%

## Tentative Schedule

Week 1	January 21st	Introduction to Personal Informatics (PI)
Week 2	January 28th	PI in the Mainstream
Week 3	February 4th	Data Collection: Passive and Active Sensing
Week 4	February 11th	Visualizing PI Data
Week 5	February 18th	Self-Experiments and the Scientific Method
Week 6	February 25th	Behavior Change and Applications
Week 7	March 3rd	PI in Health I
Week 8	March 10th	PI in Health II
	March 17th	<b>Spring Break</b>
Week 9	March 24th	PI App Development: Food Journaling
Week 10	March 31st	PI App Development: Time-Tracking
Week 11	April 7th	Theories and Frameworks
Week 12	April 14th	Disasters and Failures in PI
Week 13	April 21st	Emerging Topics in PI
Week 14	April 28th	Future of PI and Opportunities
Week 15	May 5th	Review

## Course Policies

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259.

<http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

Students are expected to adhere to the University Honor Code.

<http://www.utexas.edu/about-ut/mission-core-purpose-honor-code>

It is ok to have conversations about homework assignments and projects with others, but always make sure to turn in your own original work. Plagiarism is a very serious offense that could cause you to automatically fail the course, not to mention the possibility of being kicked-out of the university. Do the right thing, and when in doubt, ask the instructor or TA. We are here to help.

*Changes in this syllabus are possible, especially with regards to the schedule. As the term progresses, we might cover material more quickly or slowly than anticipated. If the syllabus is modified, all students registered for the course will be notified in class and/or electronically.*