INF 380E Perspectives on Information

Course Information:

Unique: 27640
Location: UTA 1.208
Tuesdays, 3 – 6 PM

Instructor Information

email: craig.blaha_at_utexas.edu
office: UTA 5.456
office hours: Thursdays 10 AM – 11:30 AM and by appointment

Course description

A multi-disciplinary and historical examination of information as a primary and foundational concept. Contrasts key literature from information studies with perspectives from other fields.

Course Objectives

- Provide a foundation for understanding the theories, assumptions and perspectives on the nature of information as it appears in a variety of fields.
- Identify the role of information studies, broadly construed, and its role in particular environments and contexts.
- Develop a vocabulary and expertise for thinking critically about the challenges inherent in defining, organizing and accessing information.
- To introduce students to some important "classic" papers, thinkers, concepts, and research fronts in the field
- Participate in discussions regarding current and evolving information forms, tools and technologies, institutions, and policies.
- Envision future directions for information studies and the information professions.

Required Texts

Blair, A. (2010). *Too much to know: managing scholarly information before the modern age*. New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press.

Floridi, L. (2010). *Information: a very short introduction*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.

Gleick, J. (2011). *The information: a history, a theory, a flood* (1st ed). New York: Pantheon Books.

Lanier, J. (2010). *You are not a gadget: a manifesto* (1st ed). New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Assignments and Expectations

Participation

Students are expected to attend each class, show up on time and ready to actively engage with the in class discussions and activities, having thoroughly read the assigned materials and thought not only about each reading, but how the readings relate to each other, topics we have previously discussed in class, and how they relate to current events.

It is also important that students work hard to demonstrate respect for the opinions of others, both by listening first to understand, and by carefully and thoughtfully explaining your own ideas.

Discussion Questions

Students will submit to Canvas two discussions questions about the assigned reading by Tuesday morning at 6 AM. Late discussion questions will not be accepted. Discussion questions should be at least one paragraph long for each reading and should make it clear that you have both read and thought about the assigned material.

I will prioritize the discussion questions for class. We may not have time to discuss a submission from each student during each class. Discussion questions are an opportunity for you to bring your own particular point of view and interests to the material we cover in class, and students are encouraged to connect the material to current events.

In-Class Presentations

Students will make a 30 – 40 minute presentation about either a sub-discipline of information studies (e.g.: usability) or an information related concept (e.g.: metadata). Presentations will be followed by a brief question and answer period. There are twelve different topics, so each presentation group will include a maximum of 3 – 4 students, depending on the enrollment in the course.

This is intended to be a substantial assignment. Students are expected to seek out appropriate literature or experts to inform themselves, come to a familiarity with the overall topic, tease out the nature of information as related to this topic, present the material in an effective way to the class, and answer questions from the instructor and classmates on this topic. These presentations have a few goals:

a. For you to familiarize yourself with an area of information studies that you believe will be relevant to your future
b. To educate and inform your colleagues about the selected topic
c. To practice your presentation skills and refine your vocabulary related to that topic

Presentation topics will be discussed and assigned/selected on the first day of class. The available topics include:

1. Information Retrieval
2. Archival Studies
3. Information Architecture

4. Information Management
5. Physical Libraries
6. Digital Libraries
7. Knowledge Representation and Reasoning (including Semantic Network)
8. Knowledge Management and Competitive Intelligence
9. Information Behavior (Information Seeking, Everyday Information Behavior, Information Avoidance, etc.)
10. Computer-Supported Cooperative Work and Other Kinds of Information Work
11. Privacy and Security
12. Health Informatics

Presentation assignments will be selected the first week of class. Students will be given some time during class to touch base with their presentation group and write up a progress report over the course of the semester.

Essay

Students will submit a five-page essay on a topic of their choice related to the class. This assignment should achieve the following goals:

1. Act as a summative assessment; a culminating project that synthesizes knowledge over the course of the semester.
2. An opportunity to familiarize yourself with the literature in information studies; a substantial component of this essay should be a literature review of published, peer-reviewed journal articles that are relevant to your topic.
3. An opportunity to improve your writing skills.

The essay will be broken up into six steps. Each of these steps will be discussed in more detail in class:

1. Topic selection
2. Resource list
3. Outline
4. Draft
5. Peer review
6. Final draft

Grading

Each of the components listed above will count toward your final grade as follows:

Participation	20%
Discussion Questions	20%
In-class presentation	30%
Essay	30%

Grading Scale

The standard grading scale will be used to evaluate student work:

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
F 0-59

Course Schedule

Topic	Assignments Due:
Week 1: 9/4	
Introduction Discuss essay topics and select presentation assignments A few of my favorite "perspectives"	None
Week 2: 9/11	
The information revolution and the language of information Confirm essay and presentation topics	Floridi (2010) chapters 1 & 2 Zins (2007) Essay Topic Selection
Week 3: 9/18	
Mathematical, semantic, physical, biological, economic info Presentation team meetings – planning Discuss finding resources	Floridi chapters 3 – 7 Loose (1997)
Week 4: 9/25	
Information ethics, physis and techne Check in on essay research Presentation team meetings – check-in and sources Overview of essay outlines	Floridi – Chapter 8 and Epilogue Essay resources due
Week 5: 10/2	
Information Management Presentation team meetings – outline Peer discussion of essay outline progress	Blair – 1 – 117
Week 6: 10/9	
Reference and finding devices, compilers, impact of early reference books Presentation team meetings – first draft	Blair 117 – 265 Essay outline due
Week 7: 10/16	
The Information – Part 1	Gleick Chapter 1 – 5

Essay draft peer progress discussion	Nunberg (2011)
Week 8: 10/23	
The Information – Part 2 Student Presentation 1: Information Retrieval Student Presentation 2: Archival Studies	Gleick Chapter 6 – 11
Week 9: 10/30	
The Information – Part 3 Student Presentation 3: Information Architecture Student Presentation 4: Information Management	Gleick Chapter 12 – Epilogue Essay draft due
Week 10: 11/6	
What is a person? What will money be? Student Presentation 5: Physical Libraries Student Presentation 6: Digital Libraries	Lanier Part 1 and 2
Week 11: 11/13	
The unbearable thinness of flatness, making the best of bits, future humors Student Presentation 7: Knowledge Representation and Reasoning (including Semantic Network) Student Presentation 8: Knowledge Management and Competitive Intelligence	Lanier Part 3, 4 and 5 Essay peer review due
Week 12: 11/20	
Thanksgiving Week – individual meetings to discuss paper and presentations	
Week 13: 11/27	
Student Presentation 9: Information Behavior (Information Seeking, Everyday Information Behavior, Information Avoidance, etc.) Student Presentation 10: Computer-Supported Cooperative Work and Other Kinds of Information Work Peer discussion – final essay	Fricke (2009) Bellinger, G., Castro, D., & Mills, A. (2004). Braganza, A. (2004). Buckland, M. (1991).
Week 14: 12/4	
Student Presentation 11: Privacy and Security	Final Essay Due

Student Presentation 12: Health Informatics Class wrap- up	

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.

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). I 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!

Bibliography

Blair, A. (2010). *Too much to know: managing scholarly information before the modern age*. New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press.

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Braganza, A. (2004). Rethinking the data-information-knowledge hierarchy: Towards a case-based model. *International Journal of Information Management. 24*, pp. 347 – 356.

Buckland, M. (1991). Information as thing. *Journal of the American Society of Information Science 42,* 5. Pp. 351-360.

Floridi, L. (2010). *Information: a very short introduction*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.

Frické, Martin. (2009). The knowledge pyramid: A critique of the DIKW hierarchy. *Journal of Information Science*, *35*(2), 131-142. Also available at http://jis.sagepub.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/content/35/2.toc

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Lessig, L. (2006). *Code: And Other Laws of Cyberspace, Version 2.0* (2nd Revised ed. edition). New York: Basic Books.

Losee, R. (1997). Discipline independent definition of information. *Journal of the American Society for Information and Society*, *48*(3), 254-269. Also available at http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/%28SICI%291097-4571%28199703%2948:3%3C%3E1.0.CO;2-H/issuetoc

Nunberg, G. (2011, March 20). [Review of the book *The Information: A History, A Theory, A Flood*] *New York Times Book Review*, pp. 1, 10-11. Also available at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/20/books/review/book-review-the-information-by-james-gleick.html?_r=1&ref=bookreviews

Shannon, C. (1948). A mathematical theory of communication. *Bell Systems Technical Journal.*

Zins, C. (2007). Conceptual approaches for defining data, information, and knowledge. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science & Technology*, *58*(4), 479-493. Also available at http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/asi.v58:4/issuetoc