Information in Social and Cultural Context  
INF 380C  
27625  
Fall 2018  
UTA 1.208  
Mondays, noon-2:45 pm  

Instructor: Dr. Kenneth R. Fleischmann  
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UTA 5.534  
Office Hours: Mondays 2:45-3:15 pm, Wednesdays 2:45-3:15 pm, by appointment, or via e-mail  

I. Official Course Description  
Examines the role of information in human activities, particularly in relation to particular social and cultural contexts. Examines how individuals, groups, organizations, institutions, and society at large create, find, use, understand, share, transform, and curate information.  

II. Course Aims and Objectives:  
Aims  
This course examines the role that information as well as information professionals play in contemporary society and culture, focusing on ongoing debates of broad societal relevance. The debates for this semester will revolve around cultural heritage, privacy, automation, and censorship.  

Specific Learning Objectives  
- Explore how information shapes and is shaped by its social and cultural context.  
- Gain familiarity with ongoing debates about information.  
- Identify and engage questions related to information in social and cultural context.  
- Take a stand on ongoing debates about information in social and cultural context.  
- Develop your skills in interpersonal communication and public speaking.  

III. Format and Procedures:  
Class Sessions  
This is a seminar-style course, so attendance and participation in class are critical to individual success in this course and to the success of the course as a whole. You need to come to class prepared to participate in small group and full class discussions as well as to participate in debates, to complete all required readings prior to class, and to submit assignments on time. We will also have a career development workshop, featuring Director of Career Development Kim Wood, including a homework assignment: Find a real job within the information field (suggest searching on iCareers or Indeed). Choose a position that genuinely interests you that you would consider applying for after graduating. Draft a one-page resume and one-page cover letter for this position. Bring a hardcopy of the job description, resume, and cover letter to class. During the first half of all other class meetings (weeks 2-9 and 11-14), we will discuss the readings. Prior to each class, I will select discussion questions for us to discuss. First, the authors of the selected questions will read their discussion questions to the class. Next, you will work in small groups to discuss each question (working with a different small group each week). Finally, we will share insights from group discussions with the class. During the second half of each class meeting (weeks 2-9 and 11-14), we will hold debates revolving around an ongoing debate about the societal role of information related to the topic of the week. During the first three weeks (weeks 2-4), debates will be informal small group activities modeled on moderator-run debates. For the rest of the semester (weeks 5-9 and 11-14), debates will be full-class activities modeled on town-hall debates, and you will alternate among taking one side or the other on the debate, serving as a moderator, or serving as an active member of the audience.
**Course Readings/Materials**

- All course readings are available on the course Canvas site.
- Please make sure to complete all readings before coming to class each week.
- You will need to do additional readings to prepare for each of your three assigned debates.
- You will need to follow the directions for the homework for week 10 and bring a hardcopy to class.
- Course YouTube playlist available here: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3VmbdCce2HCkXxJtMdZ5ATfylIsczrOt

### IV. Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic and Debate Question</th>
<th>Readings – to be completed before class</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td><strong>Course Introduction</strong></td>
<td>• N/A (no readings before first class)</td>
<td>Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/10</td>
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### Unit III: Privacy

| Week 5 10/8 | **Privacy and Libraries**  
| Week 6 10/15 | **Privacy and Terrorism**  
“She should IT companies be required to hack their own encryption schemes to help law enforcement?” | • Etzioni, A. (In press). Apple: Good business, poor citizen? *Journal of Business Ethics*.  
| Week 7 10/22 | **Privacy and Law**  

### Unit IV: Automation

| Week 8 10/29 | **Automation and Safety**  
“She should driverless cars replace human driving?” | • Richardson, N., Doubek, F., Kuhn, K., & Stumpf, A. (2016). Assessing truck drivers’ and fleet managers’ opinions towards highly automated driving. In N.A. Stanton et al. (Eds.), *Advances in Human Aspects of Transportation* (pp. 473-484), *Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing 484*, Switzerland: Springer.  
• Victor, T., Rothoff, M., Coelingh, E., Ödblo, A., & Burgdorff, K. (2016). When autonomous vehicles are introduced on a larger scale in the road transport system: The Drive Me Project. In D. Watzenig, M. Horn (Eds.), *Automated Driving* (pp. 541-546), Switzerland: Springer.  
| Week 10 | Working in the Information Field  | Guest: Kim Wood, Director of Career Development | • Homework assignment: Find a real job within the information field (suggest searching on iCareers or Indeed). Choose a position that genuinely interests you that you would consider applying for after graduating. Draft a one-page resume and one-page cover letter for this position. Bring a hardcopy of the job description, resume, and cover letter to class. | Participation Homework |
| **Unit V: Censorship** |  |  |  |
Week 14  
12/10  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Censorship and News</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation Disc Quest Debate Prep Debate</td>
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V. Course Requirements  
**Class Attendance and Participation (20%)**

- Because the vast majority of the learning in this class will occur within the classroom, you are required to attend class regularly. Attendance will be taken during each class period. Absences will only be excused in situations following university policy (illness, religious holy days, participation in University activities at the request of university authorities, and compelling absences beyond your control) with proper documentation and timely notification (prior to class for non-emergencies). By UT Austin policy, you must notify me 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, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence. Excessive tardiness may be considered as an unexcused absence except in situations following university policy.

- Class participation is a critical element of this course. The effectiveness of the course will be significantly impacted by the quality of your participation. Class participation is not merely attendance, but rather factors in your overall contributions to the collaborative learning environment, based on both the quantity and quality of your interactions in all aspects of the course. Discussion of class participation with the instructor is encouraged in order to ensure that you are making the most of the classroom experience and the accompanying opportunities for learning. You are expected to participate in all aspects of class discussion. You should come to class prepared to discuss the required readings, as well as your perspectives on these readings. You should strive for balance in your contributions, and your participation will not be based on who speaks the loudest or the longest, but on consistent participation of significant quantity and, most importantly, quality.

- Your attendance and class participation grade will be calculated by multiplying the numerical assessment of your class participation by the percentage of classes that you attend (with exceptions made for documented, university-recognized absences as noted above). Regular attendance and active participation in each class session are critical for receiving a good grade in this course. For example, if you actively participate in each class meeting, you will receive a full letter grade higher than if you were to skip half of the classes or to be half-awake for all of the classes.

**Discussion Questions (20%)**

Each week, you will post a discussion question that addresses a theme that spans all three readings for the week. To receive full credit, you must explicitly refer to and synthesize all three readings for the given week. Connecting with earlier weeks is strongly encouraged when appropriate, however please do make sure to still discuss each of the readings for the current week as well. Prior to coming to class, you should examine your colleagues’ questions and be prepared to discuss them in class. You will be graded on your ability to refer to and synthesize all three readings and to provide an insightful perspective on the three readings through your intellectual curiosity. **Discussion questions are due by Monday at 9 AM.**

**Debates (30%)**

One of the important skills of an information professional is to understand the societal impact of information, by considering how information fits into its social and cultural context. As an information professional, you need to be able to see all sides of an issue, and you may need to take a stand to defend a particular perspective on the role of information in society. You will be assigned three different debate topics, spread across the last three units of the class. One of
these weeks, you will argue the pro position. One of these weeks, you will argue the con position. Finally, one of these weeks, you will serve as a moderator. During the remaining weeks, you will still play an active role as a member of the audience in the town hall-style debate, and your debate participation will be part of your overall participation grade (as in the case of the second unit, where participation in any role in practice debates will count toward your overall participation grade). Debates will be broken into segments. First, both sides will deliver opening statements (up to 1 minute per side). Next, moderators will ask questions of either or both sides. After that, audience members will have opportunities to ask questions of either or both sides (answers are limited to up to 1 minute per side). Then, both sides will deliver closing statements (up to 1 minute per side). Finally, we will step out of character to discuss what we learned from the debate. Each member of the assigned debating teams and moderators must actively participate in a speaking role.

Debate Preparations (30%)

Effective debating requires significant preparation, and as an information professional, you will need to be able to bring yourself up to speed on important ongoing issues relating to information in its social and cultural context. As a practice exercise, prior to serving as a debater or moderator during the assigned weeks, you will need to submit a debate preparation with at least one page of research completed as part of your preparation for the debate, including at least three outside references beyond the class syllabus. You have a great deal of flexibility in the format of this page, which could take the form of a one-page report, a set of points and counterpoints based on the readings, or any written preparation that will assist you in participating in the debate, provided you make sure to cite three outside readings. However, moderators’ preparations must include at least three questions (one for pro, one for con, and one for both).

Debate preparations are due at the end of each of your debates.

VI. Grading Procedures

Grade Breakdown

• Class Attendance and Participation (20%)
• Discussion Questions (20%)
• Debates (30%)
• Debate Preparations (30%)

Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>77-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>59-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>0-59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VII. University Policies

Religious Holy Days

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 to receive an accommodation.

Student Rights & Responsibilities

• You have a right to a learning environment that supports mental and physical wellness.
• You have a right to respect.
• You have a right to be assessed and graded fairly.
• You have a right to freedom of opinion and expression.
• You have a right to privacy and confidentiality.
• You have a right to meaningful and equal participation, to self-organize groups to improve your learning environment.
• You have a right to learn in an environment that is welcoming to all people. No student shall be isolated, excluded or diminished in any way.
With these rights come responsibilities:

- You are responsible for taking care of yourself, managing your time, and communicating with the teaching team and with others if things start to feel out of control or overwhelming.
- You are responsible for acting in a way that is worthy of respect and always respectful of others.
- Your experience with this course is directly related to the quality of the energy that you bring to it, and your energy shapes the quality of your peers’ experiences.
- You are responsible for creating an inclusive environment and for speaking up when someone is excluded.
- You are responsible for holding yourself accountable to these standards, holding each other to these standards, and holding the teaching team accountable as well.

**Personal Pronoun Preference**

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student’s legal name. I will gladly do my best to honor your request to address you by a name different than what appears on the roster, and by the gender pronouns you use. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records, preferably both verbally and via e-mail.

**Academic Integrity**

Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code: “As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.” Plagiarism is taken very seriously at UT. Therefore, if you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must cite your sources. Otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. You are responsible for understanding UT’s Academic Honesty and the University Honor Code which can be found at the following web address: [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php)

**University Resources for Students**

Your success in this class is important to me. We will all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we’ll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. There are also a range of resources on campus:

**Services for Students with Disabilities**

This class respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make our learning environment and activities difficult, if you have medical information that you need to share with me, or if you need specific arrangements in case the building needs to be evacuated, please let me know. I am committed to creating an effective learning environment for all students, but I can only do so if you discuss your needs with me as early as possible. I promise to maintain the confidentiality of these discussions. If appropriate, also contact Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). [http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/about/](http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/about/)

**Counseling and Mental Health Center**

Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is often helpful. If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. [http://www.cmhc.utexas.edu/individualcounseling.html](http://www.cmhc.utexas.edu/individualcounseling.html)
The Sanger Learning Center
Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center’s classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

University Writing Center: http://uwcenter.utexas.edu/
Libraries: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/
ITS: http://www.utexas.edu/its/
Student Emergency Services: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/

Important Safety Information:
If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, call BCAL (the Behavior Concerns Advice Line): 512-232-5050. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn’t feel right – it probably isn’t. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

Title IX Reporting
Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual misconduct, dating/domestic violence and stalking at federally funded educational institutions. UT Austin is committed to fostering a learning and working environment free from discrimination in all its forms. When sexual misconduct occurs in our community, the university can:

1. Intervene to prevent harmful behavior from continuing or escalating.
2. Provide support and remedies to students and employees who have experienced harm or have become involved in a Title IX investigation.
3. Investigate and discipline violations of the university’s relevant policies.

Faculty members and certain staff members are considered “Responsible Employees” or “Mandatory Reporters,” which means that they are required to report violations of Title IX to the Title IX Coordinator. **I am a Responsible Employee and must report any Title IX related incidents** that are disclosed in writing, discussion, or one-on-one. Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee. If you want to speak with someone for support or remedies without making an official report to the university, email advocate@austin.utexas.edu For more information about reporting options and resources, visit titleix.utexas.edu or contact the Title IX Office at titleix@austin.utexas.edu.

The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, http://www.utexas.edu/safety/

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: www.utexas.edu/emergency