

Course Syllabus – Organizing Information INF384C

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Office Hours

Professor offices remotely, thus office hours are scheduled by request. All office hours are provided by phone or skype.

Course Meeting Times

Online. Spring 2020

Course Description

The course catalog description of this class is as follows:

Introduction to general principles and features of organizing and providing access to information, including varieties and numbers of information-bearing objects, different traditions of practice, user concerns, metadata and metadata formats, document representation and description, subject access, and information system features and evaluation.

This course provides a general introduction to the organization of information, concentrating on the core operations of describing, grouping, arranging, and relating objects. While the course will focus most heavily on the organization of documents, or bibliographic information, the objects most commonly organized in libraries and archives, we will not be unduly concerned with particular implementations for any specific institution. In other words, you will not learn traditional library cataloging or archival description in this class. You will, however, learn the principles that form the basis for all such systems. Accordingly, the assignments for the course emphasize the application of organization principles in designing mechanisms for organizing information.

Note, however, that the course concentrates on conceptual aspects of design, not technical ones; you will not learn implementation encodings (such as MARC for cataloging or RDF/XML for the Semantic Web) in this class.

Books

Required – None. However, a list of required readings/articles are found within the course.

Assignments / Grading

Designing a metadata schema (30 pts)

Students will define a set of entities, articulate a motivating purpose for describing them, and then outline a structure of attributes and associated values to systematically represent the entities as metadata. The defined attribute set will then be used to create metadata for five varied instances of entities. (This assignment is multipart: a proposal – 5 pts and the complete product – 25 pts.)

Designing a subject classification (30 pts)

After selecting and researching a subject area as their focus, students will define, label, and relate a set of 30-40 concepts which would serve to organizing documents. The classifications should encompass the conceptual landscape for the specified single subject area. (This assignment is multipart: a proposal – 5 pts and the complete product – 25 pts.)

Conducting a subject analysis (20 pts)

Two articles will be provided for review (each worth 10 points). Students will initially conduct their own analysis, originating their own taxonomy. Then they will attempt to use a controlled vocabulary to allow comparison with their fellow classmates.

Generating and analyzing a set of aggregated metadata records (30 pts)

As a class collaborative effort, we will create a "database" of metadata records using a modified version of the complex video game schema devised by Lee and colleagues to tackle tabletop games. Unlike a traditional group project, each student will be given the same conceptual structure and create their own set of records. These will be merged into an aggregated set. We will then examine, assess, and interpret this aggregate collection to determine both the extent of semantic diversity across the records and the function of this diversity. (This assignment is multi-phased. Each phase is dependent on all students' participation in a timely fashion. Significant penalties will be assessed for late submissions of phase 1 and 2.)

Module discussions (10pts each)

Each module has a discussion topic associated with it. They are meant to extend thinking through focused study and peer interactivity. Students will respond to the prompt in the discussion area and also provide a substantive response to 2 other students to receive full credit. Minimum word counts for original post are enumerated in the discussion's instructions.

Grading Scale

- 96% or above (A: superior)
- 90-95% (A-: distinguished)
- 87-89% (B+: good)
- 84-86% (B: satisfactory)
- 80-83% (B-: barely satisfactory)
- 77-79% (C+), 74-76% (C), 70-73% (C-) - unsatisfactory

HOMEWORK

All assignments and project deliverable due dates are on the course schedule and in Canvas (under Assignments and Calendar). If any dates change, they will be announced through Canvas. Make sure you check the Announcements section regularly. Please ask when in doubt.

Late penalties of 1 point each will be assessed for all assignments later than 1 week, with the exception of the Aggregation assignment which will be assessed for each day late.

Submitting written homework and assignments

You must prepare your assignments using a word processor and submit it by uploading to Canvas by the due date/time. Please always use appropriate three- or four-letter file extensions in submitted filename (e.g., .docx for Word files, .pdf for Adobe portable document format. Please avoid submitting zip files). Assignments usually may not be submitted via email to the professor.

Important: All documents that you are submitting should include on the front page of your submission your name, course number/name, instructor's name, semester and the date of submission. For group work, if applicable, please also always include on the front page all group member names, your project group number, and your project short name (or title). **Warning:** If you do not follow these requirements, your submission may be returned without a grade and without a possibility to re-submit it.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Class participation includes active participation in discussion boards.

CLASS POLICIES

Due dates and times for handing in homework and project assignments

Unless otherwise indicated, all homework and project assignments must be turned in by the due date listed in Canvas by 11:59PM Central Time. You should think of all due dates for assignments, especially project assignments, as firm. The tight schedule of deliverables throughout the whole semester makes it nearly impossible to slip or extend due dates. Any assignment that you do not hand in on time may be penalized in grading. If you are not able to complete an assignment by the due date, it would be best for you to hand in as much of it as you have done. You must prepare your assignments using a word processor and submit it by uploading to Canvas by the due date/time. Please do **not** submit links to Google Docs. Assignments usually may not be submitted via email to the professor.

Attendance

You will not be graded directly on attendance. However, it is easy to get behind in an online course. Please make sure to communicate any challenges you are experiencing that may impact your ability to complete work on time. If you have to miss class for an extended period due to a protracted illness or similar reason, we will treat your needs as a special case and I will do everything I can to help you survive.

Plagiarism & Academic Honor Code

Plagiarism, as defined in the 1995 Random House Compact Unabridged Dictionary, is the "use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work." (as cited in Plagiarism (2017). Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plagiarism>). If you use words or ideas that are not your own you must cite your sources. Otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism. Here's a resource designed to help you avoid plagiarism: www.lib.utexas.edu/plagiarism

You are encouraged to discuss assignments with classmates, but anything submitted must reflect your own, original work. If in doubt, ask the instructor. Plagiarism (as described above) and similar conduct represents a serious violation of UT's Honor Code and standards of conduct:

- http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis_plagiarism.php
- <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/conduct.php>
- http://bit.ly/UT_plagiarism_Matt – resource from Dr. Matt Lease (4pgs)

It is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY as a student to avoid honor code violations. Neither ignorance nor accidents excuse violations. If in doubt, ask the instructor and/or err on the side of caution by quoting borrowed text and citing sources of borrowed ideas and text.

Students who violate University rules on academic dishonesty are subject to severe disciplinary penalties, such as automatically failing the course and potentially being dismissed from the University. **PLEASE do not take the risk.** We are REQUIRED to automatically report any suspected case to central administration for investigation and disciplinary hearings. Honor code violations ultimately harm yourself as well as other students, and the integrity of the University, academic honesty is strictly enforced. For more information, see the Student Judicial Services site: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs>.

Notice about students with disabilities

The University of Texas at Austin provides appropriate accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. To determine if you qualify, please contact the Dean of Students at 512-471-6529 or UT Services for Students with Disabilities. If they certify your needs, we will work with you to make appropriate arrangements. UT SSD Website:

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

Coping with stress and personal hardships

The Counseling and Mental Health Center offers a variety of services for students, including both individual counselling and groups and classes, to provide support and assistance for anyone coping with difficult issues in their personal lives. As mentioned above, life brings unexpected surprises to all of us. If you are facing any personal difficulties in coping with challenges facing you, definitely consider the various services offered and do not be shy to take advantage of them if they might help. These services exist to be used.

Electronic-mail Notification Policy

In this course CANVAS e-mail will be used as a means of communication with students. You will be responsible for **checking CANVAS regularly** for class work and announcements. If you are an employee of the University, your e-mail address in Canvas is your employee address.

I will make every effort to answer your email in a timely fashion. However, you should not necessarily always expect to get an immediate reply. In particular, don't expect to get answers to questions about a homework or project assignment within the last few hours before that assignment is due. Please put **INF384C** as part of the subject line of your email; that will help us identify your emails more quickly.

The University has an official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. Read the policy: <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html>. You can find and change your official email address of record at https://utdirect.utexas.edu/apps/utd/all_my_addresses

Tentative Schedule

(Canvas holds the assignment dates. Please see Canvas for instructions and assignment deadlines.)

Module Dates	Topics	Assignment Due
Module 1: January 21 – February 18, 2020	What is information organization and what systems are used?	
	Entities (objects and resources)	Descriptive Schema Proposal
	Attributes and values	Metadata Generation
Module 2: February 18 – March 3, 2020	Controlled vocabulary and authority control	Descriptive Schema
	Interoperability and standards	Subject Classification Proposal
Module 3: March 3 – April 7, 2020	Subjects and subject analysis	Subject Analysis 1
	Subject languages	Subject Analysis 2
	Classification structures	
	Faceted classification	Metadata Records for Aggregation
Module 4: April 7 – May 5, 2020	Metadata in practice	Subject Classification
	Metadata in the wild	Metadata Generation and Aggregation