Introduction to Informatics

Dr. Blaha
Unique Number 78055
Summer 2021

Syllabus

The syllabus for i301 includes goals for the course, the grading policy, and an overview of the assignments and expectations for the course. If, at any time throughout the semester, you have questions about the syllabus, please contact your instructor for clarification.

Contact

Instructor: Craig Blaha
Office Hours: by appointment, Thursdays 10 – 11 AM*
Office: Zoom or phone call
Email: (please contact me using Canvas) craig.blaha at utexas.edu
TA: TBD
    *I am mostly teaching online, so my schedule is pretty flexible. Send me some times and we can meet, I'm here to help you succeed!

Course Goal

This course will introduce students to informatics and the Informatics major at the UT Austin School of Information. Students will explore the foundations of the field, professions in the field, and challenges within those professions.

Prerequisite: none.

Course Objectives

Through this course students will:
- Be introduced to and explore the foundational theories, concepts, and challenges in Cultural Heritage Informatics, Health Informatics, Human-Centered Data Science, Social Informatics, Social Justice Informatics, and User Experience Design.
- Cultivate an appreciation for the importance of working in diverse and inclusive teams, serving diverse audiences, and working toward social justice and equity.
- Use the iSchool's core values as an ethical framework to analyze current events related to Informatics and formulate independent arguments.
- Understand the perspectives of users and other stakeholders in informatics, including their needs, values, and preferences.
- Develop basic technical proficiency in Informatics related technology including the history and technical underpinnings of the internet, basic coding, and information security.
- Demonstrate written and oral communication and collaboration skills by working effectively as a part of a team while also having individual accountability.

Course Materials

i301 does not have a textbook or course packet. Instead, all readings will be available through 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, and connect that email to Canvas. This part is really important, since ALL communication will be through Canvas. I suggest you make sure Canvas announcements get forwarded to an account you check regularly since this is how I will communicate with you throughout the semester . All correspondence for this course will use Canvas, 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).

Course Format

This course is Web-based, so there are no required synchronous class meetings. The course is divided into modules in order to help us build community and learn from each other as we work our way through the semester. Each week after the start of the semester I will release a new module. We will all work together through each module, with the discussions and quizzes focused on the module due that week.

*A Note About Summer Courses:

Please keep in mind a nine-week summer course is the equivalent of a full semester, fifteen-week course, but condensed into nine weeks. This means you should expect almost twice the normal workload for a class during the semester, so it is a good idea to plan accordingly.

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 each week that will help you keep up with the class. Since each undergraduate course at UT is expected to have 3 hours of homework for each hour of class meeting time, you should expect to put in about 15 hours per week on this course. While each student is unique in terms of the amount of time they need to spend on the work to succeed, and some weeks will take more time, some less, I offer these general time requirements to help you plan and manage the time this class takes.

Each module will focus on one or two topics within informatics and will be composed of the following activities:

- **Online lecture** - Each module begins with an online "lecture" that may include a recorded power point style presentation and/or a combination of both written material, links to articles outside of canvas, and videos. Complete each lecture

(including the external articles linked within the article) before proceeding to the assigned readings. While reading, take notes on questions you might have, interesting points made by the author, or concerns you may have related to the topic.

- **Readings** –All readings are available through 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, the semester is divided into three themes; foundations of informatics, concentrations in informatics, and core values. Students will develop two short essays (1 – 2 pages) to reflect on what we have learned in the class. The first essay will be due around the middle of the summer, the second by the last day of class. More details on this assignment can be found below.

Grading Policy

301 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 four different assignment groups: discussions, quizzes, final exam, and the short reflection 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:

Reflection Essays: 40%
Discussions: 30%
Quizzes: 20%
Final Exam   10%

Each of the reflection essays must be turned in to pass the class.

Grades for essays, quizzes, participation, and weekly discussions will be posted in Canvas. I usually have each assignment that was submitted by the deadline graded within a week, and videos graded within two weeks, so you should be able to keep up with your

grade 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. Because I am using a trauma informed pedagogy approach this semester, you have the ability to turn in two assignments late without penalty. I know things are, at the very least, unpredictable, so I aim to be supportive and flexible to work with you to succeed in the class. If you are having trouble or fall behind, send me a note. You can't overestimate how important your mental health, well-being, and academic success are to me!

If you are struggling to keep up with any aspect of the course, please let me know asap. I will work with you to come up with a plan.

For more on Trauma Informed Pedagogy, start here:

https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2020/06/03/seven-recommendations-helping-students-thrive-times-trauma

The Chilean poet Pablo Neruda reminds us that "All paths lead to the same goal: to convey to others what we are. And we must pass through solitude and difficulty, isolation and silence in order to reach forth to the enchanted place where we can dance our clumsy dance and sing our sorrowful song -- but in this dance or in this song there are fulfilled the most ancient rites of our conscience in the awareness of being human and of believing in a common destiny." (Imad, M. 2020)

Assignments

Discussions

This semester will include a discussion for each module as well as an occasional discussion for different topics, depending on what the class might be struggling with and/or current events. For some 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 300 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 of their peers. These responses should be at least three 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. The best responses return to the course material and reflect on that material to demonstrate your understanding of the material while empathizing and complicating the original post of your peer. Asking a question is often a great indicator that you are "moving the conversation forward".

Remember that these word limits are articulated in order to help you understand the minimum amount of effort required to avoid failing. They don't represent the minimum effort required to get an A! Maximum effort!

Discussions have two different due dates; your original submission is due first, your responses to two of your peers is due by the following week. This is awkward in Canvas

because Canvas will show the due date for the assignment, which is when you are supposed to submit the original submission, but your two responses will be due the following week. You will get used to it after a few weeks; I'll send reminders and be pretty flexible as we figure out the schedule. You will essentially be creating a new post and reviewing last week's materials by responding to a post from last week, which is a great way to reflect back on what we were talking about and start to think about how all of these topics are related!

I structure the discussions this way because in previous semesters some students would wait until the deadline to post their original discussion, which led to most of the class being required to log in at 11:30 PM on Sunday in order to have enough discussion posts to respond to! This class is designed to be flexible and work with your schedule, and having one night where every student had to be online undermined that flexibility. If you miss the response deadline, send me a note asap and respond as soon as you can. If it happens more than once or twice, late submissions won't earn any points.

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. It usually takes students less than an hour to complete the quiz, so if you need time accommodation please be assured that you will have plenty of time to complete the quiz. If you need more time or another chance at a quiz, send me a note and I will work with you. As with most deadlines and expectations, I will work with you on a problem once or twice, but if you have a habit of missing deadlines or are demonstrating that this course isn't a priority, the deadlines will be strictly enforced.

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 you to improve your knowledge of informatics and its challenges than working with you to create a negative mark on your permanent academic record. Avoid plagiarism and we will both enjoy the class more!

Final Exam

The final exam for this class will be an online quiz that includes questions from throughout the semester. Like the other quizzes, this one is open book. I will literally pull the questions for the final exam from the quizzes throughout the semester, so do well on the quizzes and you should do well on the final!

Critical Reflections

Students will write two critical reflections this semester, one as a mid-term review and one at the end of the semester, due before the last day of class. Your critical reflection should be between 350 and 500 words double spaced; about 1.5 to 2 pages. You should choose at least two of the topics we have covered during class up to that point and use any of the discussions or materials from the class (properly cited, of course), and reflect on how these topics relate to each other, your previous experience, and/or your future plans. You can definitely include additional resources if you would like, but I do not expect you to do additional research if you aren't inclined to. The idea is for you to take some time to reflect

on what we discussed and find connections among the course materials, your personal life, and your professional plans. The discussion questions and quizzes have been designed to support this assignment.

Schedule

Date	Topic	Due
Week 1: 6/6	1. Introduction	• Introduce yourself discussion • Course Introduction quiz
Foundations		
Week 2: 6/13	2. History of Informatics	• History of informatics discussion and quiz
Week 3: 6/20	3. What is information	• What is information discussion and quiz
Concentrations		
Week 4: 6/27	4. Cultural Heritage Informatics 5. Social Informatics	• Cultural Heritage and Social Informatics discussion and quiz • Critical Reflection #1 Due
Week 5: 7/4	6. User Experience Design 7. Human-Centered Data Science	• User Experience Design & Human-Centered Data Science discussion and quiz
Week 6: 7/11	8. Health Informatics 9. Social Justice Informatics	• Health Informatics & Social Justice Informatics discussion and quiz
Core Values		
Week 7: 7/18	10. Information Serves Humanity 11. A People-First Perspective	• Information Serves Humanity & A People-First Perspective discussion and quiz • Final Exam Open
Week 8: 7/25	12. Technology for Social Good 13. An Interdisciplinary Approach	• Technology for Social Good & An Interdisciplinary Approach discussion and quiz
Week 9: 7/27	14. Last class day for 9 week classes	• Critical Reflection #2 Due • Final Exam Due

Plagiarism

I have already discussed plagiarism and we will cover it more closely during the semester, but I thought it was important to include this text from Undergraduate Studies:

Using someone else's work in your own writing without giving proper credit is considered plagiarism, a serious form of academic dishonesty that can result in severe penalties. Copying someone else's work, buying a paper and submitting it as your own, copying and pasting text (even with changes), or borrowing images from an online source, are some examples of plagiarism. Even if you plagiarize accidentally, you can be held responsible and penalized.

Learning to cite sources appropriately is an important part of becoming a professional. When you are unsure about citation, you are encouraged to **ask your instructor** (who is already an expert in the discipline) what is appropriate in the context of your assignment.

Consultants at The University Writing Center can also help you determine whether you are citing sources correctly—and they have helpful guides online for using direct quotations and paraphrasing. Reviewing those skills will help you feel confident that you are handling sources professionally in your writing.

You can read the University's definition of plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty in Sec. 11–402 of the Student Conduct Code. For more information, visit the Dean of Students' site.

Anti-Oppression

I have worked hard over the past year to completely revamp this course to be more anti-racist and anti-sexist. It is a work in progress. Among other resources, I have focused and relied heavily on this collection I have put together: https://utexas.app.box.com/folder/115692784945?s=uzohfuct8dpze5gojkkp4e4fffse51k2

This effort builds on the work I started in graduate school in 1995, where I completed a Master's in Education at Claremont Graduate School (now Claremont Graduate University) with a focus on what was called at the time "multiculturalism". I am excited to take what I consider to be an important step forward in this thinking; not just focusing on "inclusivity", but on actively fighting against racism and sexism in my personal and professional life. I share this to let you know that the class will not be perfect; I ask for your patience, generosity, and thoughtful feedback throughout the semester. In return, I will strive to show the same patience, generosity, and thoughtfulness toward the class and each individual student.

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

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.

Personal Pronouns

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, unless they have added a "preferred name" with the Gender and Sexuality Center (http://diversity.utexas.edu/genderandsexuality/publications-and-resources/). I will gladly honor your request to address you by a name that is different from what appears on the official roster, and by the gender pronouns you use (she/he/they/ze, etc). Please advise me of any changes early in the semester so that I may make appropriate updates to my records. For instructions on how to add your pronouns to Canvas, visit https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/profile-pronouns.

University Resources for Students

Services for Students with Disabilities

The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Please refer to SSD's website for contact and more information: http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/. If you are already registered with SSD, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

Counseling and Mental Health Center

The Counseling and Mental Health Center serves UT's diverse campus community by providing high quality, innovative and culturally informed mental health programs and services that enhance and support students' well-being, academic and life goals. To learn more about your counseling and mental health options, call CMHC at (512) 471-3515.
If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, call the CMHC Crisis Line 24/7 at (512) 471-2255.

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).

Other Resources

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

BeVocal

BeVocal is a university-wide initiative to promote the idea that individual Longhorns have the power to prevent high-risk behavior and harm. At UT Austin all Longhorns have the power to intervene and reduce harm. To learn more about BeVocal and how you can help to build a culture of care on campus, go to: *https://wellnessnetwork.utexas.edu/BeVocal*.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

As the flagship institution in our state university system, it is important that The University of Texas at Austin demonstrate respect for the historic and contemporary presence of Indigenous Peoples in Texas and, particularly, in the greater Austin area. To that end, it is incumbent upon The University of Texas at Austin to recognize that our campus resides on what were historically the traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples who were dispossessed of their homelands. Land Acknowledgements are an expression of gratitude and appreciation to the Indigenous Peoples, the traditional caretakers of the land, for the use of their lands on which we work, study, and learn.

Land Acknowledgment

I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on Indigenous land. Moreover, I would like to acknowledge and pay our respects to the Carrizo & Comecrudo, Coahuiltecan, Caddo, Tonkawa, Comanche, Lipan Apache, Alabama-Coushatta, Kickapoo, Tigua Pueblo, and all the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories in Texas, here on Turtle Island.

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.

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

Title IX Reporting

Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, unprofessional or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature, 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 unprofessional or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature 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.

Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Senate Bill 212 requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, report any information to the Title IX Office regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, writing assignments, class discussions, or one-on-one conversations) must be reported. **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 would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email advocate@austin.utexas.edu. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit http://www.titleix.utexas.edu/, contact the Title IX Office via email at titleix@austin.utexas.edu, or call 512-471-0419.

Although graduate teaching and research assistants are not subject to Texas Senate Bill 212, they are still mandatory reporters under Federal Title IX laws and are required to report a wide range of behaviors we refer to as unprofessional or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature, including the types of conduct covered under Texas Senate Bill 212. The Title IX office has developed supportive ways to respond to a survivor and compiled campus resources to support survivors.

University Policies

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:
https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/standardsofconduct.php

Q Drop Policy

If you want to drop a class after the 12th class day, you'll need to execute a Q drop before the Q-drop deadline, which typically occurs near the middle of the semester. Under Texas law, you are only allowed six Q drops while you are in college at any public Texas institution. For more information, see:
http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csacc/academic/adddrop/qdrop

COVID-19 Updates: Fall 2020 Semester

COVID-19 Update: While I will post information related to the contemporary situation on campus, you are encouraged to stay up-to-date on the latest news as related to the student experience. https://coronavirus.utexas.edu/students

"Keep Learning" Resources

This course may be offered in a format to which you are unaccustomed. If you are looking for ideas and strategies to help you feel more comfortable participating in our class, please explore the resources available here: *https://onestop.utexas.edu/keep-learning/*

Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited:

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.

Class Recordings:

Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and

are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.