

# INF 380E: PERSPECTIVES ON INFORMATION SYLLABUS

Unique number: 27123  
University of Texas at Austin  
Fall 2020  
Dr. Amelia Acker

**\*\*\*DUE TO THE UNIVERSITY'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19  
THIS SYLLABUS WILL BE UPDATED PERIODICALLY\*\*\***

***Students will be notified of major updates and changes via Canvas messaging.***

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# Course Information

Class day and time: Wednesdays, 12:00 pm – 3 pm

Class location UTA 3.404\*

\*Due to COVID-19 this is a HYBRID COURSE. Please consult the [Schedule at a Glance](#) for our meeting modalities.

## Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Amelia Acker

Email: [aacker@ischool.utexas.edu](mailto:aacker@ischool.utexas.edu)

Telephone: 512-471-8487

Office hours: Book a 30 minute appointment with me:

[https://calendly.com/amelia\\_acker/student-office-hour](https://calendly.com/amelia_acker/student-office-hour)

Office hours will be held through Zoom at: <https://utexas.zoom.us/my/aacker>

## Teaching Assistants Information

Teaching Assistant: Yalin Sun

Email: [clairesun05@utexas.edu](mailto:clairesun05@utexas.edu)

Appointment via email.

Teaching Assistant: Nathan Davis

Email: [nathandavis@utexas.edu](mailto:nathandavis@utexas.edu)

Appointment via email.

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# Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the iSchool sits on indigenous land. We would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on Indigenous land. Moreover, we 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.

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# I. University Catalog 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. Class assignments and activities are designed to introduce or reinforce the professional skills students will need to become leaders in a variety of rapidly changing information-centric careers.*

*Effective Fall 2014, MSIS students must earn a grade of B or better in the MSIS core courses (below) in order for the courses to apply to the master's degree. A grade of B- does NOT satisfy this requirement.*

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# II. Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The course provides a foundation for understanding the theories, assumptions and perspectives on the nature of information as it appears in information studies and a variety of cognate fields. Upon successful completion of this course, students will have accomplished or be able to:

- Identify the role of information studies, broadly construed, and its role in particular environments and contexts.
- Explore how disciplines such as our own and others have looked at information as a primary and foundational concept.
- Discuss our field's identity, whether called information studies, library and information studies, library and information science, information science, or any other number of names.
- Discuss the primary ways in which groups, organizations, and institutions employ information; delineating relationships and distinctions among forms of information work, professions, and institutions.
- Draw upon a vocabulary and expertise for thinking critically about the challenges inherent in defining, organizing and accessing information.
- Engage in the reflective, critical inquiry essential to graduate level oral and written work.

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### III. Course format and procedures

This is a discussion-style course based on interactive flipped classroom pedagogical models, 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.

During one hour of each class meeting (weeks 1-14), we will discuss the readings. Prior to each class, I will select discussion questions submitted by participants 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 1-14), we will hold group activities revolving around an ongoing debate about the societal role of information related to the topic of the week. During the first few weeks (weeks 2-7), we will focus on small group activities focused on your group final project.

Our semester is divided into three modules on 1.) the epistemology of information conceptual frameworks, 2.) information's role in human activity, and 3.) information institutions and the nature of information work.

#### ***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 independent research to locate additional readings to prepare and write your final Wiki article assignment.

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### IV. Course Requirements

## **Assignment overview\*\***

1. Hybrid Class Attendance and Participation (15%), every class
2. 5 Critical reading responses (10%), across weeks 3-14
3. Discussion questions or artifacts (20%), weeks 3-15  
(randomly assigned)
4. Small group letter to an author (10%), varies across weeks week 3-8  
(sign up by end of week 2)
5. Wiki article (40%)\*  
(sing up for topic preferences by end of week 2)  
Due dates throughout the term, updates TBD.  
Final article due 11/18  
Final video due 11/25

*Note: each unexcused absence will result in a 5% deduction from final grade; missing the final viewing class day will result in a 10% deduction.*

## **Schedule at a Glance**

For a broad overview of the course please refer to the course [SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE](#) document. Please consult this document for the latest updates on our hybrid course meeting modalities.

## **Hybrid Class Attendance and Participation (15%), every class**

Because the vast majority of the learning in this class will occur within the classroom or synchronous Zoom discussion sections, 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.

**How attendance is documented:** Each week students will be expected to attend class (online or in person); students will also be required to watch lectures via Canvas. Please note that Canvas captures your view sessions, so watch the entire lecture.

*\*\*Each of the assignments will have descriptions and evaluation rubrics posted to the course Canvas website in the Assignment section by the beginning of week 3.\*\**

### Grading Scale

This class employs a plus/minus grading system. For more information on this system, please consult the University's *General Information Catalog*. Below is the grade scale the University employs and which will be used in this class:

Meets major requirement		Does not meet requirement	
Grade	Points	Grade	Points
A	≥93.00	C-	70.00-72.99
A-	90.00-92.99	D+	67.00-69.99
B+	87.00-89.99	D	63.00-66.99
B	83.00-86.99	D-	60.00-62.99
B-	80.00-82.99	F	<60.00
C+	77.00-79.99		
C	73.00-76.99		

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## V. Course Policies

*You are responsible for reading and following these course policies.*

**Instructor Communication:** E-mail is the official mode of communication for the university and the most reliable means of contact for me. It is always helpful if your e-mail includes a targeted subject line that begins with “INF 385E.” *Do not use the messaging facilities in Canvas; these messages do not arrive in my e-mail inbox.* Please allow a 24-hour window for email responses and plan accordingly. Please limit emails to 5 sentences or less. If your query about a reading or an assignment for the class takes more than 5 sentences to express, please come see me face to face in office hours. If you do not receive a sufficient answer to a question in more than one follow-up email (that is, a total of 2 personal emails from me) about the same question, please come meet with me. If you cannot make office hours, please email me to arrange an appointment. These policies are based on my belief in the sanctity and value of high-bandwidth communication (that is, face to face conversations).

**Classroom Etiquette:** Please come on time to class prepared, bringing soft or hard copies of readings for reference; bring appropriate tools for writing and note taking. Bring personal machines powered up, or plug them in before class begins, silence phones. *Drinks are welcome but food is not. Please eat before class or during the break period.*

**Zoom Etiquette:** We’ll talk more about specific expectations in the first few weeks of class. Generally, plan to have your video and microphone turned on and ready to use if necessary. Most of our meetings and group discussions will never be recorded. Please be sure to remember that some synchronous lectures will be recorded and that you should feel comfortable with being recorded or engaging with colleagues via video conferencing (face and shoulders, garments, lighting background).

**Copyright Notice:** These materials may be protected by copyright. United States copyright law, 17 USC section 101, et seq., in addition to University policy and procedures, prohibit unauthorized duplication or retransmission of course materials.

**Statement on Classroom Recording:** To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written

permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

**Due to COVID-19 we may record course content.** Class recordings are reserved only for the use of members of this class (students, TAs, and the instructor) and only for educational purposes. Recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

**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.

**On original work:** cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. If an assignment turned in for credit is found to have been plagiarized, you will receive a grade of 0 points and a formal reprimand in your student file. You will be subject to the University's disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course.

**Late assignments:** *I do not accept late assignments.* Students who anticipate difficulties with completing assignments on time should consult with the instructor as soon as possible so that alternate solutions can be discussed. When negotiated in advance, arrangements can often be made.

**Style manual:** Please use the American Psychological Association's style manual. In particular, please be sure to follow its citation formats and rules on language bias.

**Gun policy:** Please ask me about my policy on guns in my office.

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## VI. University Policies

*You are responsible for reading and following these University policies.*

**Religious holy days:** 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.

**Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence:** All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in their 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. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/help/utmail/1564>

**Documented Disability Statement:** You will need to provide documentation to the Dean of Students Office so the most appropriate accommodations can be determined. Specialized services are available on campus through Services for Students with Disabilities (SSB 4.104, 471-6259). Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471- 4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. If you plan to make use of specialized services through SSD please inform me before the second class meeting. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

**Title IX and Texas SB 212 Reporting requirements:** 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. 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](mailto:advocate@austin.utexas.edu).

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 sexual misconduct, including the types of sexual misconduct 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.

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](mailto:titleix@austin.utexas.edu), or call 512-471-0419.

## VII. University Resources for Students

The university has numerous resources for students to provide assistance and support for your learning, use these to help you succeed in your classes

### ***The University Writing Center***

The University Writing Center offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT student, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Consultants help students develop strategies to improve their writing. The assistance we provide is intended to foster students' resourcefulness and self-reliance. <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

### ***Counseling and Mental Health Center***

The Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC) provides counseling, psychiatric, consultation, and prevention services that facilitate students' academic and life goals and enhance their personal growth and well-being. <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/>

**Basic Needs Security:** Any student who faces challenges of affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believe this may affect their performance in the course, is encouraged to contact the Office of the Dean of Students – Student Emergency Services (SES) for support. Please notify the instructor if you are comfortable doing so and I will make efforts to provide any resources that I may possess to help you navigate issues of food insecurity or residential displacement.

- SES Concerns and Emergencies:  
<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/concernsemergencies.php>
- SES Food Pantry:  
<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/pantry.php>
- SES Confidential Advocacy and Support:  
<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/advocacysupport.php>

### ***Student Emergency Services***

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

### ***ITS***

Need help with technology? <http://www.utexas.edu/its/>

### ***Libraries***

Need help searching for information? <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/>

### ***Canvas***

Canvas help is available 24/7 at

<https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/student-tutorials>

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## **VIII. Important Safety Information**

**Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL):** If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the

Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

**Emergency Evacuation Policy:** Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made.

Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions or those of class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless you are given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

**Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty:** 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. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Student Judicial Services web site at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>

**University of Texas Core Values and Honor Code:** The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community. As a student of the University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by  $\pi$  the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.

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## IX. COVID-19 Information for students

### **Safety and Class Participation/Masks:**

We will all need to make some adjustments in order to benefit from in-person classroom interactions in a safe and healthy manner. Our best protections against spreading COVID-19 on campus are masks (defined as cloth face coverings) and staying home if you are showing

symptoms. Therefore, for the benefit of everyone, this means that all students are required to follow two important rules.

**Every student must wear a cloth face covering properly in class and in all campus buildings at all times.** If a student is not wearing a cloth face covering properly in the classroom (or any UT building), that student must leave the classroom (and building). If the student refuses to wear a cloth face covering, class will be dismissed for the remainder of the period, and the student will be subject to disciplinary action as set forth in the university's Institutional Rules/General Conduct 11-404(a)(3). Students who have a condition that precludes the wearing of a cloth face covering must follow the procedures for obtaining an accommodation working with Services for Students with Disabilities.

For the safety of our community, **every student is strongly encouraged to do daily symptom screening**, which is available using the Protect Texas Together app. Once the symptom screening is completed, it will inform students whether they are cleared to come to campus. Students should only come to campus if the symptom screening app clears them to do so. Otherwise, students should isolate and contact a medical professional for further guidance before coming to campus again.

If a student is not wearing a cloth face covering properly in the classroom (or any UT building), that student must leave the classroom (and building). If the student refuses to wear a cloth face covering, class will be dismissed for the remainder of the period, and the student will be subject to disciplinary action as set forth in the university's Institutional Rules/General Conduct 11-404(a)(3). Students who have a condition that precludes the wearing of a cloth face covering must follow the procedures for obtaining an accommodation (<https://orientation.utexas.edu/students-with-disabilities>)

Students in need of assistance are encouraged to contact Student Emergency Services. Students who need computer equipment or reliable internet access for online classes should complete the Student Emergency Fund application, and share specific information about their needs.

The Counseling and Mental Health Center will continue to provide counseling and psychiatric services to support students throughout this time, though our services will be delivered over the phone.

If you have any IT needs (computer hardware, software, cameras, headphones, etc.) that might be necessary for you to attend online classes, please email the iSchool IT Team at [help@ischool.utexas.edu](mailto:help@ischool.utexas.edu).

International Students and Scholars are encouraged to reach out to Texas Global for specific information regarding your status at [hotline@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:hotline@austin.utexas.edu). Make sure to include your EID and name in all communications.

Students interested in learning about Coronavirus-related refunds or reimbursements should go to: <https://coronavirus.utexas.edu/refunds-reimbursements>

Info about Student Health Insurance extension after graduation can be found here: <https://global.utexas.edu/iss/insurance/enroll>.