INF 380E: PERSPECTIVES ON INFORMATION
Unique number: 28130
University of Texas at Austin
Spring 2022
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.

Course Information
Class day and time: Thursdays, 3:30 pm – 6:30 pm
Class location UTA 1.208

Instructor Information
Instructor: Dr. Amelia Acker
Email: aacker@ischool.utexas.edu
Telephone: 512-471-8487
Office hours: By appointment (email me with three 30 minutes slots you can meet)
Office location: 5.434

Teaching Assistant Information
Teaching Assistant: Siqi Yi
Email: siqiyi@austin.utexas.edu

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.

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.
II. Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes
This course examines the role that the concept of information as well as information professionals play in contemporary society and culture, focusing on ongoing debates of broad societal relevance. Specifically, these debates revolve around cultural heritage, privacy, digital technologies, platforms, and serving communities. 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 be able to:

- employ a common language and conceptual framework for connecting the diverse areas of specialization within the information field;
- critically examine the role of information in human activities as framed by social and cultural contexts;
- discuss the primary ways in which groups, organizations, and institutions employ information at micro and macro levels;
- delineate relationships among forms of information work;
- engage in the reflective, critical inquiry essential to graduate level oral and written work;
- take a stand on ongoing debates about information in social and cultural context;
- develop your skills in interpersonal communication and public speaking.

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.

IV. Course Requirements
Assignment overview
1. 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 Research article (40%)* (Sign up for topic preferences by end of week 2)
   Due dates throughout the term, updates TBD.
   Final article due 4/21
   Final video due 4/28

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.

Class Attendance and Participation (15%), every class
- 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.

**How attendance is documented:**
At the beginning of each class I’ll hand out blank index cards. During the class make brief notes regarding 3-4 of your major participation actions; print your name and date on each card. At the end of each class drop off the card to me. *We’ll come up with an alternative way of document attendance during online courses.

**Discussion questions or artifacts (20%)**
Each week, you will post a discussion question or artifact that addresses a theme that spans all three readings for the week (Weeks 2-15 randomly assigned). 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 or artifacts are due by Monday at 11:59, peer reviews are due by Wednesday at noon before class.** Be prepared to share your insights with the class.

Practically anything in digital format that pertains to the readings can serve as an artifact. It can be funny or provocative, but be sure to establish a clear link to the readings so that people can react, analyze, and interrogate the object and its context. Showing and explaining the artifact should take about 10 minutes. Possibilities include the following:
- a current event in the news
- a listserv email chain
- a podcast episode
• a YouTube video
• a meme
• a Facebook event
• a professional or social meet-up
• a photograph
• an app
We’ll address discussion questions and artifacts, submitting them and voting on them in small groups in week 2.*

**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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Meets major requirement</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>≥93.00</td>
<td>90.00-92.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>87.00-89.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>83.00-86.99</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80.00-82.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>77.00-79.99</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>73.00-76.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Does not meet requirement</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>77.00-79.99</td>
<td>70.00-72.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>73.00-76.99</td>
<td>67.00-69.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>70.00-72.99</td>
<td>63.00-66.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>67.00-69.99</td>
<td>60.00-62.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>63.00-66.99</td>
<td>&lt;60.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 385T.” 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.*

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.

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.

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 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. 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](http://www.utexas.edu/its/help/utmail/1564)

**Documented Disability Statement:** You will need to provide documentation to the Dean of Student’s 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/](http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/)

**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/](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/](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](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/concernsemergencies.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

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 website at [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/](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 the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.

**IX. Abridged reading and assignment schedule for the first unit**

Full reading schedule will be posted on the course website by the end of week 2, this will be the first month’s topics, assignments, and readings.

**Unit 1: Epistemology of information**

**Week 1: Introduction and Welcome to the Course**

Covering: course structure, conceptual overview, canvas, participation & reading response expectations.

Readings:

  
  PDF available on course website, labeled “Buckland 1”.

- Buckland letter to the editor and rejoinder.
  
  PDF available on course website, labeled “Buckland 2”.

**Week 2: Understanding Information**

Topics: Understanding information, information literacy, group project expectations

Readings:

  
  Chapter 4: The concept of information, pp. 40-64.

  
  Chapter 6: Related concepts, pp. 80-113.
  
  PDFs available on course website, labeled “Case 4”, “Case 6”.

Assignments due: Critical reading response (bring to class to learn how to post to canvas); Participation card (due at the end of class)

**Week 3: Information Models**

Readings:

  
  Chapter 7: Models of Information Behavior, pp. 133-162.
  
  PDF available on course website, labeled “Case 7”.

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*PDF available on course website.*

Assignments due: Critical Reading Response and Discussion artifact (post to Canvas by Monday 11:59 pm); Participation card (due at the end of class)