INF 380W: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES AND THE INFORMATION PROFESSIONS
School of Information
The University of Texas at Austin
Summer 2005
Unique Number: 81360

All information in this syllabus is preliminary and subject to change.

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Please use my mobile number only for emergencies!

Class URL: http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~i380kdcp/SU05/

Class time: None.

Blackboard: Class work will be submitted in Blackboard 6 (http://courses.utexas.edu). We have the option in Blackboard of using an internal messaging feature that will replace all email in the class. Except in emergencies, email should not be sent to the instructor’s personal email. I will check my Blackboard messages folder several times a day, so you should not worry that I won’t see your message.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to Information Technologies and the Information Professions! This course will provide an overview of the history of information technology, broadly conceived. We will look specifically at the ways in which information professionals, and people generally, have produced and shared information, identifying changes and transitions in the mode and medium of such production, from orality to literacy, from script to print, and from analog to digital.

We will also investigate the role of the information professional in identifying, initiating, anticipating, and reacting to such changes. As future leaders in your profession, you will be expected to implement and evaluate applications, develop highly technical skills, and create strategic technology plans. This course will help to prepare you for that role through various individual and group assignments.

This is not a skills class. Although we will discuss and use specific technologies, such as HTML and its variants, the focus of the course will be on the role of these technologies in the information professions, not on the skills themselves. Other venues, such as informal workshops taught by the School of Information IT Lab staff, the General Libraries, and ACITS are more appropriate if you feel that you would benefit from skills instruction.
## EXTREMELY PRELIMINARY Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **I: A Brief History of Technology** (broadly conceived) | *Required Readings:*  
  - Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (Ch. 1-6)  
  - Stephenson, *In the Beginning...* (all)  
  - Bush, “As We May Think”  
  - Lessig, “The Laws of Cyberspace”  

  *Additional Readings:*  
  - John Perry Barlow, “A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace”  
  - Birkel, “The command line in 2004”  
  - Raymond, “The Cathedral and the Bazaar”  
  - CERT Coordination Ctr., "Home Computer Security" |  
  - “Personal Information”  
  - Blog Posts 1-6  
  - “New Potentials for Information Technologies” (paper) |
| **II: Information Literacy** | *Required Readings:*  
  - Kuhlthau, “Inside the Search Process”  
  - Bruce, “Credibility of the Web”  
  - Marcum, “Rethinking Information Literacy”  
  - Feldman, “This is What I Asked For? The Searching Quagmire”  
  - Liddy, Elizabeth D. “How a search engine works”  

  *Additional Readings:*  
  - AASL, “Information Power”  
  - ACRL, “Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education”  
  - “How Much Information?” Project  
  - Eisenberg & Berkowitz, “The Big6: Information Literacy for the Information Age”  
  - Gelernter, “At the limits of Google”  
  - Notess, “Search Engine Showdown” |  
  - Blog Posts 7-12, plus one additional post  
  - New Potentials for Information Technologies (presentation) |
| **III: Information Ethics** | *Required Readings:*  
  - Vaidhyanathan, “The state of copyright activism”  
  - EPIC, “Surfer Aware: Personal Privacy and the Internet”  

  *Additional Readings:*  
  - “Codes of Ethics Online” (read “Introduction” and “Using Codes of Ethics”)  
  - Harper, “Crash Course on Copyright” |  
  - Blog Posts 12-17, plus two additional posts  
  - Technology Plan (draft) |
IV: Into the Future  

**Required Readings:**

- Cringely, “Take My Job, Please: How to Predict the Future and Become an Industry Pundit”
- Pohl, “Thinking About the Future”
- Shneiderman, “Human Values and the Future of Technology”
- Tennant, “Strategies for Keeping Current”

- Blog Posts 18-22, plus two additional posts
- Technology Plan

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**STANDARDS FOR WRITTEN WORK**

**Style manual:** There is no single assigned style manual for this class. Students will be expected to observe the conventions of the style manual appropriate for their area of interest.

**Title pages:** Students should include with all printed assignments, including assignments submitted as PDFs, a title page with a descriptive title, the student’s name, the instructor’s name, the course number and title, and the date the assignment is due.

**Format:** Papers should be computer-produced using a program such as Microsoft Word or OpenOffice.org, and papers should be submitted in PDF format, using the “Assignments” feature in Blackboard 6. Papers submitted in PDF format should be double-spaced, with 1 inch margins on all sides, and should use Times 12 pt. font or similar. Web sites should use Arial 10 pt. font or similar.

**Grading:** Please see the memorandum from former Dean Brooke Sheldon dated August 13, 1991 (attached) and my “Grading Standards for Graduate Writing” (attached) for an explanation of the grades used in this course. The University of Texas does not use the +/- grading system that we do at the School of Information; UT accepts only full letter grades. Therefore, for example, a B- and B+ final grade at the School of Information both translate to a final grade of B at the University level.

Students should also consult the School of Information Web site (http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/programs/index.html) and the Graduate School Catalogue (e.g., http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/grad01-03/ch1/ch1a.html#nature and http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/grad01-03/ch1/ch1b.html#student) for more on standards of work and the responsibilities of students enrolled in a graduate degree program.

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**TEXTS**

**Required Texts:**


A selection of readings, available via the UT Library’s E-Res system.
LIST OF ASSIGNMENTS

There will be two written assignments plus two online assignments. Assignments will be submitted using the “Assignments” feature of Blackboard, with the exception of the Web-based Presentation and a few of the online exercises. Email attachments of assignments is not permitted except in unusual circumstances and must be approved in advance. Assignments are due by midnight on the date indicated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Date Due</th>
<th>Percent of Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Information</td>
<td>06/06</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will verify their personal information, including email, in Blackboard and UT Direct; construct a basic homepage for themselves on Blackboard; complete a short skills questionnaire; and upload a personal Webpage to either their iSchool or UT WebSpace account.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling through Blogs</td>
<td>06/13 (I)</td>
<td>25 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students will complete a series of 20 questions plus additional postings in pseudo-blog format, using Blackboard. The questions themselves will be motivated by the course readings and may require online research and/or tutorials to complete.</td>
<td>06/20 (II)</td>
<td>25 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Potentials for Information Technology (5-7 pages)</td>
<td>06/27 (III)</td>
<td>25 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will research an emerging technology of information that promises to make a fundamental change in information use</td>
<td>07/04 (IV)</td>
<td>25 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web-based Presentation of Research</td>
<td>06/20</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will revise and post their papers in HTML. Students who are unfamiliar with HTML should familiarize themselves with it; converting files via Microsoft Word or FrontPage will not be acceptable. Students will then evaluate their own performance.</td>
<td>07/01 (eval)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Plan (10-12 pages)</td>
<td>06/17 (RFP)</td>
<td>20 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will create a technology plan based on a real or invented scenario they will provide.</td>
<td>06/24 (draft)</td>
<td>20 pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Potentials for Information Technology (5-7 pages)</td>
<td>07/08 (final)</td>
<td>60 pts.</td>
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All work must be completed by July 8 in order to receive a grade for the course. I reserve the right to issue a course grade of F if any assignment is not completed; incompletes will only be given in EXCEPTIONAL circumstances.

All of your assignments should adhere to the standards for written work; should be clear, succinct, and specific; and should be explicitly grounded in the readings, class discussions, and other sources as appropriate. Your goal is to write papers that will be useful to you in your future career, perhaps serving as the basis for professional publications or writing samples when you begin looking for a job. Plan your time accordingly.
EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS’ PERFORMANCE

I expect all students to be involved, creative, and vigorous participants in class discussions and in the overall conduct of the class. In addition, students should expect to:

- Read all assigned material. Your online assignments will require you to demonstrate command of the assigned readings.
- Spend approximately 15 hours a week on readings, papers, and online assignments. I know that that seems like a lot, but please remember that this is an online-only class and you will not have to attend class meetings!
- Educate yourself and your peers. You are encouraged to bring in examples from your own experience and readings outside class to enrich your discussions.
- Hand in all assignments fully and on time. Late assignments will not be accepted except in unusual circumstances.
- Ask for any explanation and help from the instructor or the Teaching Assistant(s), either through email, during office hours, on the telephone, or in any other appropriate way.
- Read all directions completely before you ask for clarification and attempt to resolve any problems on your own before asking for assistance.
- Accept responsibility for academic success. While I will attempt to do everything in my power to make this both an enjoyable and useful course, ultimately you are responsible for your own success in this course and at The University of Texas at Austin.

Academic or scholastic dishonesty, such as plagiarism, cheating, or academic fraud, will not be tolerated and will incur the most severe penalties, including failure for the course. If you have any concern about behavior that may be academically dishonest, please consult the instructor. Students are also encouraged to refer to the UT General Information Bulletin, Appendix C, Sections 11-304 and 11-802 and the brochure Texas is the Best . . . HONESTLY! (1988) by the Cabinet of College Councils and the Office of the Dean of Students.

EXPECTATIONS OF INSTRUCTOR’S PERFORMANCE

Students in this course have the right to expect that they will be treated as information professionals and that I as the instructor will do everything possible to make it possible for them to succeed. In addition, students have the right to expect:

- That all questions will be answered as promptly as possible. I will respond to emails, including internal Blackboard emails, and phone messages within 24 hours on weekdays and within 48 hours on weekends. In some cases, I may reply to the entire class instead of to a single individual.
- That all assignments will be graded and returned promptly. Generally, this means within one week, depending on the number of students enrolled. Assignments will be returned electronically whenever possible. Students who need to make other arrangements to have their assignments returned should do so when the assignment is turned in.
- That student critiques and comments will be respected and will be used to improve the course for future classes.

Students who feel that the instructor has not or will not respect these expectations should feel free to discuss their concerns with the instructor and with Mary Lynn Rice-Lively, Associate Dean of the School of Information. She can be reached at marylynn@ischool.utexas.edu or by telephone at (512) 471-2371.
Grading Standards for Graduate Writing
(Danielle Cunniff Plumer)

A Superior work. Demonstrates a high degree of mastery of the course content.
— Is developed well, convincingly and thoroughly, with effective support that is specific, interesting, and appropriate
— Possesses sentence variety
— Exhibits sophisticated, appropriate use of transitions
— Has few, if any, mechanical, grammatical, spelling, or diction errors
— Demonstrates command of mature and unpretentious diction

B Good Work. This grade represents solid and acceptable performance, work that is consistent with academic expectations of students in a graduate program. A “B” paper shares most characteristics of an “A” paper, but
— Has some minor lapses in development of the central idea
— Has some minor lapses in organization
— Has an occasional ineffective transition
— Contains a few sentences that are awkward or ineffective
— Has less varied sentence structures
— Is less sophisticated in its handling of the topic

C Unsatisfactory Work. In graduate school, the grade of “C” is considered unsatisfactory. Students receiving this grade should consult with the instructor in order to improve their future work. A “C” paper is generally competent, but compared to a “B” paper, it
— Has a weaker or formulaic thesis and less effective development
— Contains some lapses in organization
— Has poor or awkward transitions
— Has more mechanical, grammatical, and diction problems
— Is effective but unsophisticated in its handling of the topic

D Unacceptable Work
Unlike a C paper, a “D” paper most likely demonstrates one or more of the following qualities:
— Presents a thesis too vague or too obvious to be developed effectively
— Displays major organizational problems
— Lacks adequate support for its thesis
— Has confusing transitions or lacks transitions
— Contains major problems with diction, grammar, mechanics, or spelling
— Is ineffective in its handling of the topic

F Failing Work
An “F” paper is seriously flawed. It demonstrates one or more of the following qualities:
— Has no clear thesis or central topic
— Displays random organization
— Lacks adequate support or specific development
— Includes irrelevant details
— Fails to fulfill assignment or is unduly brief
— Contains errors in diction, grammar, mechanics, or spelling which impede understanding
— Is academically dishonest or plagiarized

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GRADING POLICY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

The faculty of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science use the following guidelines in their grading:

A+ Extraordinarily high achievement in the course. This grade, rarely given, recognizes an exceptionally high degree of mastery of course content.

A Superior. High degree of mastery of the course content.

A- Excellent. Distinguished work.

B+ Good. Above average level of achievement.

B Satisfactory. This grade represents solid and acceptable performance, work which is consistent with academic expectations of students in a graduate program.

B- Barely satisfactory, borderline work.

C+, C, C- These grades represent unsatisfactory work, and may indicate the instructor’s reservations as to the student’s ability to meet course requirements.

D Unacceptable work. Ordinarily indicates the instructor’s strong reservation as to the student’s ability to meet course requirements leading to a graduate degree.

F Unacceptable and failing.

THE SYMBOLS CREDIT (CR) AND NO-CREDIT (NC)

If you are working toward the MLIS degree, you may not take, on a Credit-No Credit basis, any course that is to be listed on your Application for Degree Candidacy. If you are working toward the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Library and Information Science, no more than 20 percent of the hours to be applied toward your degree may be taken on a Credit-No Credit basis.

To earn a mark of “credit,” a graduate student must have completed the course work at a level equivalent to the grade of C or better.

THE SYMBOL OF INCOMPLETE (X)

The symbol X may be reported in case you have not completed all the assignments in a course before its conclusion. You must complete the work within the following long semester (Spring or Fall) in order for the filing of the symbol X, the instructor may (with approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies) convert the symbol X into a letter grade. This updated policy became effective Fall 1997.

An incomplete is given sparingly at the instructor’s discretion. It is intended to be used only if you have been unable, for a legitimate reason, to complete some portion of the course, such as a term paper or special project. It may not be given to allow a student to do extra-credit work to raise a grade.

For more information on standards of work, please consult the GSLIS Announcement and The Graduate School Catalog.
Written Assignment 1:  
NEW POTENTIALS FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Introduction: This assignment asks you to research an emerging technology of information that promises to make a fundamental change in information use. You should choose a technology that is particularly important to your field of study and future professional career. You will ultimately present your findings online, using your personal Web site at the School of Information or UT’s WebSpace.

Weight:  
15% (paper),  
10% (revised Web-based presentation)

Due dates:  
June 10 (paper)  
June 20 (Web-based presentation)  
July 01 (self-evaluation)

Goals:

The goals of this assignment are:

- To research and describe an emerging technology of information.
- To identify and use online and print reference sources available for research.
- To participate in professional discourse.
- To develop a Web presence and present findings online.

Tasks:

1. Develop a 5-7 page description of the technology of information you have identified.
   a. This is a research paper, and my hope is that you will find it to be a basis for future professional publication. Because it is so short, you will need to focus on an extremely narrow issue. Sample topics:
      - Use of OpenURL and similar protocols in library cataloging
      - 3-D imaging techniques for digitization of non-paper artifacts
      - Website development using content management systems
   b. The first stage in your research is to identify a potential professional journal or publication in which you might someday wish to publish. You will fill out a form (available on Blackboard) detailing the title of the publication, the nature of their audience, as you understand it, their guidelines for submission, and their style manual. You will use this style manual for your references. Note: if the journal says only "Chicago," you must check actual articles to determine which variant of Chicago to use!
   c. You must use reference sources whether or not they are typical for the publication you have selected; a total of 5-10 sources is normal for a paper of this length and should include a mix of peer-reviewed articles or books, current news sources, and other online and in-print items.

2. Submit the paper in PDF format using the "Assignments" feature of Blackboard no later than 11:59 p.m. on June 10. I will return the paper with suggestions for revision as soon as possible.
3. For your Web presentation, you may use either raw HTML or a WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) editor such as Macromedia Dreamweaver or Netscape/Mozilla Composer. If you do use a WYSIWYG editor, you should at least take a look at the code view or source code to make sure that the editor has not added tags or formatting that you do not want. For best results when copying and pasting, you might want to save the paper to text format first, using the “Save As” option in your work processor, then open it in Notepad or a similar text editor and copy from there to your HTML editor. You may not use Microsoft FrontPage or the “Save As HTML” function of Microsoft Word or OpenOffice to create your page (Yes, I can tell -- it’s pretty easy if you look at the source code!).

For your convenience, I have created a basic HTML document that you can use to develop your presentation. It is available in the “Documents” area of Blackboard. Be sure to look at it in Notepad or in “Code view” to read the comments. I will also schedule a “Tech Tips” presentation on creating HTML documents in the IT Lab annex, and the IT Lab staff may present additional workshops you might find useful. Good luck!

4. You will generate Dublin Core metadata for your Web presentation, using the Dublin Core Metadata Template provided by the Nordic Metadata Project. Students unfamiliar with Dublin Core may want to read about the project or about using Dublin Core metadata first.

   a. You should enter the requested information for as many elements as you can (you do not need an LC subject heading or Dewey/LC classification number!). Explore the drop-down boxes to see what options are available, and use the hyperlinks for each DC element if you want to learn more about it.

   b. When you have filled out the form, you should click on the "Return Metadata" button, with "for inclusion in HTML-4 document" in the drop-down box.

   c. Using your mouse, select the metadata that appears on your screen, including both the parts in the <meta> and <link> tags. Copy this and paste it into a blank text document or go directly to step 4.

   d. You will have to modify the source code for your Web presentation to include this metadata. If you are using Dreamweaver or a similar WYSIWYG editor, open your document and select "View" > "Code." You will need to paste the metadata from step 3 into the "head" of your HTML document, usually after the <title>.

5. In the Discussion Board area of Blackboard, there is a forum for Web Presentations. In that forum, create a new thread; the subject will be the title of your presentation, and the body of the message will include only the link to your presentation. This post (and, of course, the presentation) is due by June 20.

6. You will evaluate your own Web presentation, and in fact you will have the chance to grade yourself, although I will also review your work and offer comments and an alternative grade, if necessary. The self-evaluation will be due July 1.

Notes: The iSchool IT Lab has a number of useful tutorials on this subject and also offers workshops on creating basic Webpages as well as more advanced topics.

Sample paper: Papers from the Spring 2003 classes taught by Philip Doty and myself are linked at http://mail.plumerpack.net/ischool/bin/view/Assignments/StudentPresentations. Because of the changing nature of the Web, I cannot guarantee that any or all of the links will work.
Written Assignment 2:
TECHNOLOGY PLAN

Introduction: This assignment asks you to develop a technology plan for a real or hypothetical information agency based upon a scenario you will provide.

Weight: 25%

Due dates:
- Request for Proposal (RFP): June 17
- Rough draft of technology plan: June 24
- Final draft of technology plan: July 08

Goals:

The goals of this assignment are:

- To learn how to develop strategic goals and measurable objectives.
- To develop practical budgeting and assessment skills.
- To understand the difference between output and outcome measures.

Tasks:

1. Identify a situation for which a technology plan might be useful. The primary requirement is that this be a technological-based situation and one that will require evaluation of software packages, as well as hardware and other concerns. Some examples:
   - Creating a digitization lab in an academic library special collections unit.
   - Developing an infrastructure for wireless Internet access in a public library.
   - Designing an Intranet for a small software development corporation.

Develop a 2-3 page RFP for the situation, including a brief description of the information agency in which it would be found. Think of the RFP as something written by an information agency, asking a vendor or group of potential vendors to submit proposals/bids to implement a solution, introduce a service, or install a product. In contrast, the technology plan is written for the information agency and its leadership, either by an outside vendor in response to an RFP or by someone within the agency, explaining what steps will need to be taken to implement a solution or whatever. However, you should be able to reuse parts of the RFP in the Technology Plan.

You should read Marc Osten and Beth Kanter’s “Put it in Writing: What Do You Need from a Provider?” from techsoup.com for background on writing RFPs (http://www.techsoup.com/howto/articlepage.cfm?ArticleId=454&cg=searchterms&sg=rfp). Nicole Waller has also written an excellent series on writing RFPs that appeared in the Jul/Aug 2003 issue of Library Technology Reports; the first chapter is available in ERs, and the remaining chapters are available through EBSCO’s Academic Search Premier.

Your RFP must include the following elements:

- Organizational background on the information agency
- Project description (general description and goals of the project)
- Project requirements (the things that absolutely must be provided)
• Project scope, timeline, and budget

For our purposes, the timeframe for completion of the technology plan is 6 months to a year (a short-term plan). You will also specify a maximum contract amount for the work to be done. You do not need to write the sections of the RFP that would normally request specific information about consultants you might be considering hiring.

2. You will develop a technology plan based upon your RFP, including at a minimum the following elements (you may rearrange the elements, but you should not omit any):

   • Introduction and overview of the information agency and project. This will be largely a rewriting of your RFP. (2-3 pages)
   • Assessment of existing resources and future needs. (2-3 pages)
   • Strategic plan, including a mission statement, goals, and measurable objectives. You should have, at a minimum, three general goals with at least three but no more than five measurable objectives per goal. You will probably want to provide some narrative explanation for each goal. You may wish to add additional action steps for each objective, explaining exactly how and when the objective will be met, but this is not required. (3-5 pages)
   • Budget for the period of the plan (no more than three years). By necessity, all costs will be estimates. Consider hardware and software costs. Also consider the costs of infrastructure (such as building a new facility or rewiring an existing facility), staff (including both wages and benefits), and miscellaneous costs (such as photocopying, travel and training, etc.). (1-2 pages)
   • Evaluation section, explaining how the program or project will be evaluated to determine whether the plan is working. In this section, you will provide a “Program Outcome Model” chart along with a brief narrative explaining your proposed evaluation tools; this narrative will also serve as your conclusion. (2-3 pages)
     o Be sure to read the United Way's "Introduction to Outcome Measurement" before you begin this section. You may also wish to read Peggy Rudd's "Documenting the Difference: Demonstrating the Value of Libraries Through Outcome Measurement," in Perspectives on Outcome Based Evaluation for Libraries and Museums, and review the other resources listed on the Texas State Library’s site at http://www tsl state tx us/outcomes/resources html .
   • References. While not typically included in a business document, for class purposes please include references for any source materials you use.

3. A draft of the final plan should be submitted for me to read by June 24. While this does not need to be complete, it should include rough drafts of each of the sections; you will definitely lose points for excluding any section.

4. The final technology plan, consisting of 10-12 double-spaced pages, is due in Blackboard using the "Assignments" function by midnight on July 8.

Sample forms for the needs assessment, budget, and evaluation portions of the technology plan will be available in the “Documents” section of Blackboard. Three or more sample plans will also be available, including one student plan from a previous semester.

Note that there is an extremely useful series of articles on technology planning at techsoup.com: http://www techsoup com/howto/articles cfm?topicid=11&topic=Technology%20Planning
Online Assignment 1:
PERSONAL INFORMATION

Introduction: In an ideal world, we wouldn’t need to have this assignment, but then, in an ideal world, we probably wouldn’t need to have this class! The Personal Information assignment simply asks you to update all your sources of personal information so that we don’t need to waste a lot of time on administrative details in this class.

Weight: 5%

Due date: June 6

Tasks:

1. **E-mail** (1 pt.) You should verify the email account listed for yourself in Blackboard and correct it as needed, using the Personal Information: Address Change section of UT Direct. The instructor will send an email out to all members of the class through Blackboard on June 4; you must reply to this email by midnight on Monday, June 6 to complete the assignment (unless you have made prior arrangements).

2. **Blackboard Home Page** (4 pts.) Blackboard has a feature that allows you to create a home page for yourself. From the “Tools” area of Blackboard, select “Edit Your Homepage.” You are encouraged to be as creative as you like, and to add an image (not necessarily of yourself) if you so desire. This will help me get to know you a little better.

3. **Technology Self-Evaluation** (3 pts.) You will complete the Technology Self-Evaluation Assessment in Blackboard. This is a fairly short, 15-question survey that will help me gauge the general technical abilities of the class.
Online Assignment 2:

JOURNALING THROUGH BLOGS

**Introduction:** The purpose of this assignment is for you to keep a record of your reading and thinking throughout the class. You will respond to a number of questions relating to your reading in each module, and you will also be expected to add to those questions with posts about issues in information technology and the information professions that seem pertinent to you at the time.

Instead of a reading journal, I consider this to be a blogging exercise, and if we had sufficient time to train everyone in blogging software I’d have you set up individual blogs for the class. However, we will be using Blackboard as our main courseware package, and we will be creating “pseudo-blogs” to give you some experience with this form of communication.

**Weight:** 45%

**Due date:** ongoing; all blogs must be complete no later than July 5 at 11:59 p.m.

*What is a Blog?*


In its newer and more commonly used sense, a weblog is a website which contains periodic, reverse chronologically ordered posts on a common webpage. Such a web site would typically be accessible to any Internet user. An alternative term for such a weblog is blog. … Individual posts (which taken together are the blog or weblog) either share a particular theme, or a single or small group of authors.

The totality of weblogs or blog-related webs is usually called the blogosphere [1]. The format of weblogs varies, from simple bullet lists of hyperlinks, to article summaries with user-provided comments and ratings. Individual weblog entries are almost always date and time-stamped, with the newest post at the top of the page.

Blogs aren’t new, of course, and they derive from even older systems of communication, such as diaries and journals, that have been available probably since the development of efficient writing systems, if not longer. However, in the past few years there has been an explosion of blogging, largely due to the greater availability of blogging tools and software, much of it free. Some systems you might want to investigate are Blogger (now owned by Google), Bloxson, and LiveJournal. For more information about these tools, read the full Wikipedia article on Weblogs ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weblog](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weblog)).

*But What Do I Say?*

First, some reassurance. Although this is a graded exercise, you’re primarily going to be graded on whether you complete all of the required questions and the additional postings on information technologies and the information professions. You can also feel somewhat reassured because all this communication is taking place in Blackboard, and is therefore somewhat private. Your classmates can read (and even reply to) your posts, but the outside world won’t be eavesdropping!

To simulate the blog format as closely as possible, you will be assigned to an individual forum, and within your individual forum you will create one thread per question or posting. There doesn’t seem to be way to force Blackboard to do a reverse chronological posting, but each post is automatically dated. For
the subject line of each post, you will give the post a short title related to the question. For example, your forum might look like this:

How Will My Blog Be Graded?

There are 20 required questions and a minimum of 5 additional postings (additional posts beyond the 5, plus responses to other students, will count as extra credit). You should plan to work on this assignment throughout the session; procrastination may be normal, but it isn’t healthy when you have an assignment of this size! I want you to answer each required question in approximately 150-300 words (roughly ½ to 1 page), but I won’t count words and I don’t penalize for excessive length. There is no minimum or maximum length for the additional posts.

You should feel absolutely free to write more, to include links to outside resources, and to use HTML to make your posts more visually interesting. Additional posts should always include outside links, as you will be commenting on news and issues that seem relevant to our class not covered in any of our readings. You may not, however, use attachments of any kind, as they violate the rule that everything you have to say should be out in the open.

There are four general areas that I will look at when I grade your blogs:

- **Completion.** Each required post, additional post, and comment will be given 2 pts. (up to a maximum of 50 points).
- **Thoroughness.** Obviously, this mostly pertains to whether or not your post makes it clear that you answered all parts of the assigned topic, including doing the related work, including doing both the required reading and relevant additional reading. This is worth 2 points per required entry (40 points total).
- **Thoughtfulness.** Beyond the simple fact that you completed the assigned posts, I want to see that you actually thought about the topics in this class. Some topics will be more important to you than others, and that's fine, but I hope that you've found some room for reflection in the assignment overall. Blogs are typically introspective, so this is a good place to introduce details from your personal experience. This is worth an additional 1 point per required entry (20 points total).
- **Timeliness.** This is the area that will really distinguish excellent blogs. I'm looking for a sense of connectedness, that you're seeing patterns in how readings and assignments connect together, as well as how they connect to events in the "real world" and your real life. You should go beyond
the minimum effort needed for the post and look for related information in the news and from other classes. This is worth an additional 1 point per required entry (20 points total).

You may notice that the total number of points available is more than 100. The final grades will be calculated using a curve. In previous classes, this has resulted in a more equitable grade distribution.

Blog posts are typically very informal; you do not need to cite your sources as you would in an academic paper, although bloggers do typically cite each other informally and include hyperlinks to other blogs and Internet resources.

Questions

I: 6 questions.

1. **Introduction.** Post a brief introduction of yourself. Please include information about your technological and academic backgrounds, career goals, and concerns about the class. Identify one or more information professions of which you are or hope to become a member, with a brief description of whether and how information technology is important to that profession and a listing of any particular technical skills the information profession requires.

2. **Ong, Orality.** Try to identify some experience in your own life that approximates the oral condition described by Ong. If you can’t think of anything, search online for an information resource that gives you additional appreciation for the oral condition.

3. **Ong, Literacy.** Ong’s book was first published in 1982, just after the development of personal computers but before the Internet or even email had become mainstream and long before the Web allowed easy access to Internet resources. Discuss his concept of “secondary orality.” To what extent do you think events of the past twenty-plus years have supported or refuted Ong’s argument? (You may want to use Stephenson and some of the other course readings as well).

4. **Stephenson, In the Beginning.** Contrast Stephenson's notion of interface culture and the GUI (graphic user interface) with the notion of “affordances” as used in usability and cognitive psychology (if you aren't familiar with this concept, see the article by Mads Moegaard in The Encyclopedia of Interaction-Design at http://www.interaction-design.org/encyclopedia/affordances.html)

5. **Bush and Lessig.** How does Bush’s vision of the future mesh with Lessig’s laws of cyberspace?

6. **Security.** Read through the pamphlet on “Home Computer Security” from the CERT Coordination Center at Carnegie Mellon University (http://www.cert.org/homeusers/HomeComputerSecurity/). Then, briefly describe any changes you need to make to your computing habits or home computer setup to protect yourself online as well as how you might help others protect themselves.

II: 5 questions, plus one additional post on any topic taken from the readings.

7. **Kulthau.** Models are by nature simplifications of reality. Discuss Kulthau’s model of information seeking behavior and identify one behavior that information professionals could use to help users through the process.

8. **Bruce.** Given Bruce’s arguments, and in light of Feldman’s discussion of the misconceptions held by searchers and search engine provider about each other, find one example of how “the irrelevant far outweights the relevant in any search.” How would dialectical reading help the
searcher identify the relevant items? Alternatively, how could search engine provide use the dialectical model to help design better search engines?

9. Information Literacy. Using Marcum and any one of the Information Literacy standards in the recommended readings, discuss this concept. Search online for examples that support or refute the idea that there is such a thing as “information literacy.”

10. TILT. All students should register themselves in TILT, complete the Introduction and Modules 1-3, including online quizzes (you may mail the results of the quizzes to i380kdep@ischool.utexas.edu, but this is not required). Students are also encouraged to read the supporting documentation and FAQs. Then, briefly evaluate TILT as an information literacy instruction tool. Evaluations should include both critical comments (either good or bad) and suggestions for redesign.

11. Search Engines. Experiment with search engines. Enter the same query into at least three search engines (use SearchEngineWatch.com to identify search engines, if you haven’t used anything except Google). Briefly describe the results of your experiments, and speculate on how the concepts described by Liddy and Feldman might help to explain your results.

III: 5 questions, plus two additional posts on any topic taken from the readings, popular news and issues, or your experiences in this class.

12. Critical Thinking. Explore UTOPIA, UT's “ambitious new initiative providing a digital knowledge gateway into the treasures of libraries, museums, galleries, and laboratories of The University of Texas at Austin.” Using either Bloom's Taxonomy (see http://faculty.washington.edu/krumme/guides/bloom.html) or Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (see http://www.ldpride.net/learningstyles.MI.htm), evaluate one lesson plan available from UTOPIA's Educators page (http://utopia.utexas.edu/educators/index.html or http://utopia.utexas.edu/lesson_plans/). Identify the ways in which the lesson plan does or doesn't address the needs of different types of students.

13. Information Ethics Topics. Choose one of the following topics and locate one or more primary sources that may help us to understand it. A primary source is both contemporary with the issue it discusses and created by someone directly involved in the issue. Laws and case law, results of empirical research, diaries or letters, and original creative works and artifacts are all considered to be primary sources. You may want to start by searching for current news stories, which are predominantly secondary sources, and working back to the primary sources from there.

- Plagiarism and plagiarism-detection tools
- Popups, adware, and spyware as marketing tools
- Privacy vs. security and the USA PATRIOT Act
- RFID for inventory and identification
- Use of biometrics for identification
- Copyright and the public domain
- Peer-to-peer file sharing
- Information security and identity theft
- Anti-circumvention and software piracy (DMCA)

14. Codes of Ethics. Browse through the “Codes of Ethics Online” site (http://ethics.iit.edu/codes/) and identify the code of ethics appropriate to your future profession (if it is not listed, identify the closest possible code or go identify the appropriate code for your future profession from the
appropriate professional organization). Link to the code, and briefly describe the important principles behind it.

15. **Copyright.** Complete the UT System’s “Crash Course on Copyright” ([http://www.utsystem.edu/ogc/intellectualproperty/cprtindx.htm](http://www.utsystem.edu/ogc/intellectualproperty/cprtindx.htm)), designed by Georgia Harper. When you are done, briefly state in your blog what you believe the major issues in copyright in the digital age to be.


**IV:** 4 questions, plus two additional posts on any topic taken from the readings, popular news and issues, or your experiences in this class.

17. **Innovation.** Identify a technological innovation that you have adopted within the past year. Using a classification similar to that of Everett Rogers (see the Wikipedia article at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diffusion_of_innovations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diffusion_of_innovations)), categorize yourself as an innovator, early adopter, early majority, late majority, or laggard with respect to that one innovation. What perceived attributes of the innovation led you to adopt it?

18. **Schneiderman.** What goals do you believe that members of your profession should adopt for the empowerment of users in the next ten years?

19. **Predicting the Future.** Read my discussion of “Predicting the Future of Information Technology.” Then generate at least one prediction for how IT in their professions will change in the next 5, 10, and 25 years, respectively (at least three predictions total), identifying technological or societal trends that you believe will contribute to those changes.

20. **Keeping Current.** Read Tennant’s “Strategies for Keeping Current,” then identify three techniques you plan to use to keep your IT knowledge current over the next five to ten years. Keep the predictions you’ve made in mind!