

## **INF 380E: PERSPECTIVES ON INFORMATION SYLLABUS**

University of Texas at Austin

Spring 2024

Dr. R. David Lankes

***DRAFT Revised December 28, 2023***

### **Course Information**

Class day and time: Asynchronous Online

Class location: Canvas

#### **Instructor Information**

Instructor: Dr. R. David Lankes

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#### **Teaching Assistants Information**

Teaching Assistant: Kaodili Okwuaka <kokwuaka@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.

### **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.

# 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.

## A Note on the Syllabus

Some see the syllabus as a sort of contract between instructor and student. It is not – that's the catalog description. Instead, this is a resource to help you plan, succeed in class, and plan. That said, it is a vital document and one that I take seriously. I may make minor adjustments to the syllabus in the first week or two of the semester. This is mostly edits and clarifications. I will not change due dates, assignments, or grading information....unless with the unanimous consent of the class.

One last note. If you find a discrepancy between this syllabus and what is listing in Canvas, follow Canvas. Also, please let the instructor know to make the change in the syllabus.

## Class Format

This class is offered online asynchronously. That's just a fancy way to say there are no scheduled real-time meetings. Instead, the class is divided into weekly modules. You are expected to watch lectures, do readings, and assignments within the week scheduled. Does that mean on Mondays? That's up to you. Just sometime within a week, you need to finish the module.

Also, this is a special section offered once to accommodate student graduation requirements. As such, it will vary from the in-person sections that are offered in the fall. The lectures and readings are the same, but the in-class group activities have been modified to be individual activities.

## Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic
1	Jan 16 <sup>1</sup>	Syllabus and Course Introduction to Information
2	Jan 22	Common Carriers/ Knowledge Infrastructure
3	Jan 29	Encryption/The Monetized Self
4	Feb 5	Massive Scale Computing
5	Feb 12	The Internet and World Wide Web
6	Feb 19	Dataism and Data Science
7	Feb 26	Propaganda and Misinformation
8	Mar 4	Media Consolidation and Intellectual Property
Mar 11		Spring Break
9	Mar 18	Memory Organizations and Community Knowledge
10	Mar 25	Trust and Credibility
11	Apr 1	Knowledge Infrastructure: People and Diversity
12	Apr 8	Knowledge Infrastructure: Technology
13	Apr 15	Knowledge Infrastructure: Sources
14	Apr 22	Knowledge Infrastructure: Policy

<sup>1</sup> Since the first day of classes is the 16th the first week will be one day shorter. This doesn't really impact this asynchronous class.

# Grading

Assignment	Date Due	% of Grade
Discussion Questions & Reflection	Weekly	36
Critical reflections (2 x 10 points)	Week 3, 6	20
Outline and resource list	Week 8	10
First Draft	Week 11	9
Peer Review	Week 12	5
Final Draft	Week 14	20

## Grading Scale

The standard grading scale will be used to evaluate student work:

- A 95-100
- A- 90-94
- B+ 87-89
- B 83-86
- B- 80-82
- C+ 77-79
- C 73-76
- C- 70-72
- D+ 67-69
- D 63-66
- D- 60-62
- F 0-59

A grade of B (not B-) is required for this course to fulfill the core course requirement.

## Assignments

All assignments are handed in via the Canvas course site.

Late assignments will lose 2 points for each day not turned in. This includes weekly reflections which each count for 3 points...so don't skip those.

### Critical Reflections

Students will write two critical reflections this semester. Your critical reflection should be about 500 words double spaced; about two pages but no more than three. You can choose at least one of the topics we have covered during that section and use any of the discussions or materials from the class during that topic (properly cited, of course), and reflect on how these topics relate to your previous experience or your future plans. You can definitely include additional resources if you would like, but I do not expect you to do additional research if you aren't inclined to. The idea is for you to take some time to reflect on what we discussed and find connections with your personal life and professional plans.

The two critical reflections can build on one another. In fact, you should use these as early smaller drafts for the final essay. I say “should” and “can” because you may find a new topic of great interest introduced in later lectures.

## Weekly Discussion Questions and Reflections

Students are expected to bring one thoughtful idea, resource, or question related to the reading assignment and lectures for the week. These are to be posted on the discussion board in each module. Once again, these are weekly (starting in Week2) and are based on the content in the current module. These will be graded as participation versus a review of the content.

## Essay

The final assignment for this semester is a 5-9 page essay reviewing the material from the semester and connecting it to your own personal life or career goals. Select an issue discussed in class (including the readings), define it, give examples, give a sense of how the issue impacts society, and then what will you do about it? This last part, your impact, is crucial. This may be to learn more about it. It may be adopting an explicit set of principles. It may be simply a personal mission that will drive your work. But to be clear, this essay must explicitly state your anticipated impact in the field.

The majority of this essay will be your opinion (feel free to use first person voice, imagine you are having a conversation with me), but if you use or refer to the ideas of other authors, you must use APA formatted citations to support those ideas. You should refer to at least five publications that can include readings from class.

The essay includes four steps:

1. **Step 1 - Outline and resource list:** Make a list of the sources you might use for your essay in APA format. This can be used directly as your bibliography in your essay (copy and paste). Write a two-page outline that organizes the ideas you plan to explore in your essay. You can submit these both in one word document.
2. **Step 2 - Draft:** Write a rough draft of your essay. This should be about five pages long. I recommend you do the best you can so that your peer can give you excellent feedback and help you earn that A!
3. **Step 3 - Peer Review:** Using the Canvas tools, you will review your peer’s essay.
4. **Step 4 - Final Version:** Review the feedback from your peer and revise your essay to submit as a final version! 5-9 pages, APA format, 12-point font, double spaced. Cover page and bibliography do not count toward page numbers.

## The AI Elephant in the Room

Feel free to use generative AI in your assignments – just let me know what you wrote, and what the machine wrote. Generative AI (as we’ll talk about in class) has exploded, and no one is sure about how it will shape fields, jobs, and disciplines. In fact, it will be you, more than most, that will determine this. It is my belief that AI will be an assistive technology to the librarian and information scientist. Might as well play with it now.

However, look again at the assignments. This is about how YOU connect ideas from the field to your future activities. ChatGPT is not going to know your experience or share your insight. When we're grading assignments, we have only three primary criteria. Did you communicate in written form effectively? Did you demonstrate personal reflection? Did you cite external resources properly? No word counts, or memorization. You'll do plenty of all of that in your graduate career. In this class, it is about finding your footing for that later work.

## Resources

### Style Manuals

Students will need to cite all sources for their essays in APA format. Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL) offers a great overview on how to do this <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl> Style manuals are located under Research and Citation. The preference is to use APA version 7.

### Plagiarism

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

Learning to cite sources appropriately is an important part of becoming a professional. When you are unsure about citation, you are encouraged to ask your instructor what is appropriate in the context of your assignment. Consultants at The [University Writing Center](#) can also help you determine whether you are citing sources correctly—and they have helpful guides online for using [direct quotations](#) and [paraphrasing](#). Reviewing those skills will help you feel confident that you are handling sources professionally in your writing.

## Important University and School Information.

### Title IX reminder

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). 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.

Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited:

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

#### Class Recordings:

Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

## Readings

### **Is there a textbook?**

Not really. However, the lectures and topics are explored in a book I wrote called *Forged in War: How a Century of Conflict Created Today's Information Society* published by Rowman & Littlefield. The book is **not** required, but may be of use to students who wish to review the content of lecture in written form, or explore topics raised in more depth. The book has been put on reserve in digital and physical copy with the university library.

Digital reserve is at

[https://search.lib.utexas.edu/permalink/01UTAU\\_INST/be14ds/alma991058231942106011](https://search.lib.utexas.edu/permalink/01UTAU_INST/be14ds/alma991058231942106011)

### **Required Readings**

The final reading list is found in Canvas. There is also a chance that readings will be changed during the semester to bring in current events and issues. I will provide you with links or access the full text of readings in the class.