Course objectives:

- To analyze and understand government, corporate, and research-based information systems as tools of informed decision-making
- To relate business resources to real-world situations and needs of individuals and institutions
- To develop the perspective and skills to serve as an effective information agent, assisting others to locate and use appropriate and accurate business intelligence

Class schedule:

Ap. 4 AM Introduction
What is business information?

Ap. 4 PM Where does business information come from?

Ap. 11 AM Industries: what they are and why they are important

Ap. 11 PM Economic situation: the business environment

Ap. 18 AM Companies
What is a business?

Ap. 18 PM Investing, finance

Ap. 25 AM Products and services

Ap. 25 PM People: individuals and groups occupations

May 2 AM Technology, patents, regulatory environment

May 2 PM Geographic aspects of business

May 9 AM Users of business information

May 9 PM Wrap-up
Final paper due
Class projects/deliverables:

**Term project** -- 65 percent of grade; due last day of class
Each student will prepare a paper (approximately 25 pages, double spaced) incorporating information about an industry, its companies, products and/or services, and various other aspects that pertain to that industry. (Specific paper requirements below.)

**Short projects/presentations**

Choose one of the following topics. Prepare handout and a 10-minute class presentation. (10 percent)

*International*: Pretend that you are considering the expansion of your company/product/service to a specific location abroad. What would be the opportunities, challenges, or pitfalls you might expect. This requires understanding of the culture/business environment of the area you choose.

*OR*

*Regional*: Imagine that you are considering relocation. Select three areas in the U.S. to which you might consider relocating. Compare the areas as to their suitability for this move. Define a scenario (real or pretend), such as looking to relocate after completing your degree or after retiring, and select comparative indicators that would be appropriate for the scenario you choose.

**Reading business news sources**: At the beginning of each class we will discuss current business news. Each student should come to class each day prepared to discuss something they saw in the news, turning in a 1-2 page summary (see below for content of summary). (10 percent)

Select one source from each of the following:
- Business section of a daily paper (weekday) – e.g., Wash Post, NY Times, USA Today, your hometown paper
- Business section of a daily paper (Sunday)
- Business oriented daily paper – e.g. Wall Street Journal, Investors Business Daily, Financial Times (can focus on just one section, e.g., Front, Money and Investing, Marketplace, or Personal Journal, from WSJ)
- Business oriented weekly – e.g. Barrons, Business Week, Economist
- Monthly or bi-monthly business periodical – e.g. Fortune, Forbes, Harvard Business Review, Money

The 1-2 page summary should include:
- The name of the source, where you located it, other places to find it
- Whether it is print or electronic (if both, which you used and any differences)
- What it is good for generally – e.g. types of coverage, audience, etc.
- Something you found surprising
- Something you found useful for this class or for your project
Class participation (15 percent): Includes coming to class on time, participating enthusiastically in class discussions, providing helpful comments, sharing sources found in the course of your research, and generally being an asset to the class. In addition, when students are asked to come to class prepared to discuss some aspect of that day’s topic, their contribution will contribute to this section.

Preparations for specific classes:

For every class, we will begin by discussing current business news. In addition, on the following days, students should be prepared to:

April 4: Before first class, read first three chapters of textbook. Begin thinking about your choices for an industry for your term paper. Find a newspaper article on a business topic and be prepared to discuss in class.

April 11: Review chapter 3 and read chapter 5 in the text book. Select industry for your term paper. From the list provided in class, select an economic indicator and be prepared to discuss it in class. Indicate who issues the indicator, the frequency of issuance, the extent of revisions, where it can be found, what it is best used for, what are its strengths and weaknesses, and what characteristics affect its use.

April 18: Come prepared to discuss some companies in your industries. Find a stock price for a public company in your industry and look for some other relevant financial information.

April 25: Come prepared to discuss some products/services in your industry. Also, select an occupation and be prepared to discuss the type of work, outlook, earnings potential, skills and education needed, etc. Use the Occupational Outlook Handbook and at least one other source.

May 2: Formal class presentations on either regional or international project.

May 9: Term paper due; informal discussion of findings

Requirements for term paper:
Select an industry that interests you and locate sources that provide:
- Description of the industry
- History and evolution
- NAICS codes/multiple codes if appropriate
- Alternative names
- Geographic concentration/dispersion
- Industry concentration
- Related industries and how they differ
- Industry leaders
- Current and emerging issues (e.g., environmental, regulatory, marketing, technology, etc.)
Select 3-5 companies within your industry
   At least one public company
   At least one private company
   If possible, include one large company and one smaller one
   If possible, include a non-profit company

For the companies, locate information provided by the company (website, annual reports, SEC filings for public companies, etc.) and information provided by others (investment service reviews, articles, books, etc.) Identify key individuals in company. Prepare a modified SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) for one company.

Check stock prices of the public companies when you first identify them and check again before you complete your paper. Note whether companies pay dividends and, if so, when. Check the buy/sell/hold recommendations of at least one service (e.g., Value Line, S & P, etc.). If you can find a mutual fund for your industry, identify it and monitor/review its movement.

Identify one or more products or services of the company/industry
   Are they new, emerging products/services or old line?
   How are they marketed?
   What is the target user (age, gender, geography, etc)?
   If applicable, find a patent, trademark, or copyright
   If appropriate, look at market share

Appendix: List all sources that you consulted and evaluate their usefulness. It will be easiest if you keep a log of all sources as you consult them and consider an appropriate way to organize the sources. Note that using a variety of sources (print, web, free, subscription based, etc. is key to this project)

**Code of Academic Integrity**, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit [http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html](http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html)

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