INFM 600 Information Environments
Fall 2012

Instructor: Jessica Vitak
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Office: Hornbake 2117G
Office hours: Tuesdays 4-5pm or by appointment
Phone: (301) 405-8617
Class location: HBK 2119
Class dates & times: Tuesdays 6 – 8:45 pm (September 4 – December 11)

Please note: This syllabus may be subject to minor alteration, as needs arise, before or during the Fall term.

Course Description
INFM 600 Information Environments will explore various models and methodologies used to capture and deploy internal and external information and knowledge in a number of settings. Students will analyze organizations in terms of information creation, flow, sharing, conservation, and application to problem solving. The course will take into account both internal and external influences on the management of information and knowledge. We will also examine how information flows, and is managed, in online settings, and examine a number of examples of successful and unsuccessful online information management.

Course assignments will give students the opportunity to review the interaction between information flows, organizational structures, and social relations, as well encourage discussion regarding how to improve existing information policies and operating procedures.

Course/Learning Objectives
By the conclusion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Understand major concepts and theories of information environments;
2. Define the general and specific features of information environments;
3. Characterize data, information, and knowledge, and understand how they are created and used in organizations;
4. Create and use information management models;
5. Develop and implement information policies;
6. Apply technology appropriately to information environments;
7. Conduct a case study of an information environment; and
8. Evaluate career options for information professionals.

Course Materials
There is no required textbook for this course.

On Blackboard (https://elms.umd.edu/), you will find the course syllabus and schedule, presentation materials, announcements, assignment details, and additional readings about the topics covered in the class.

It is important for you to visit Blackboard regularly for announcements and course materials. Reminders about specific assignments and due dates will be posted on Blackboard during the semester.

Make sure your email address in Testudo and the University directory is accurate. Information and instructions for assignments will be posted to Blackboard, and students will be expected to upload all assignments by the due date through Blackboard (as a Word document).

Prerequisites
There are no prerequisites for this course.

Instructional Methods
In addition to information gleaned from required and recommended readings, students will gain insights about information environments from instructor and guest lectures, individual reports, and class and group discussions.

Course Assessment
Detailed instructions regarding each assignment will be provided. Assessment of all assignments is directly related to attention to the instructions, clarity of expression and presentation, and evidence of critical thinking.

Participation (10%): Participation is an essential component of this class. Students are expected to not only attend each class in full but also actively engage in and contribute to each and all of the class discussions. Class participation will be evaluated on the basis of not only the quantity but also quality of contributions to class discussions and break-out project. To acknowledge that some students may have a hard time speaking up during class discussions, there is also an online component to participation, the “In the News” Discussion Board on Blackboard, which was agreed upon by the class during the first session. Students may contribute news articles related to class or contribute to the ongoing conversations about articles as an alternative method of participation.
Information Environment Problem Analysis (15%) – Students will be given a list of problems an organization may face in respect to changes within or to its information environment. In a 4-5 page (double-spaced, 1” margins on all sides, 12 point) paper, they will discuss the problem based on their understanding of how the problem impacts various aspects of the information environment and what considerations the organization should make when tackling the problem.

Blackboard Discussions (30%) – Throughout the semester, I will post three “big picture” discussion topics to Blackboard that relate to the main course objectives. Students will be expected to contribute to the conversation and will be graded on the quality of their contributions. Students may wish to post multiple times (e.g., in response to classmates’ comments or as the conversation develops), but their grade will not be based solely on the quantity of posts, but rather on the quality of the posts. Posts should reflect an understanding and synthesis of topics discussed in class and, when relevant, should bring in related sources of information and/or links to other literature. Students will be notified in advance of a discussion topic being posted and the topics will remain open for one week.

Information Environment Case Study (45%) – Students will form three-person teams and collectively select an organization and study the information environment of the organization using tools and techniques discussed in class. The case study will serve as a practical learning experience in applying concepts, theories and models to study a specific information environment. This assignment includes the group proposal, report, poster, and presentation. See Appendix for details on what should be included in each of the components of the case study.

- Proposal: 5%
- Progress Report: 5%
- Report: 15%
- Poster: 10%
- Presentation: 10%

Tentative Schedule for Case Study Group Project

| Week 4 (September 25) | Proposal Due |
| Week 9 (October 30) | Progress Report Due |
| Weeks 10 & 11 (November 6—13) | Meet with Professor to Go Over Progress |
| Weeks 14 & 15 (Dec. 4 & 11) | Presentations; Posters & Reports Due |

Please note: Late assignments will be penalized by one grade per day. For example an A- paper that is two days late would result in the grade of B. Any assignments over 5 days late will result in a failing grade.

Grading Information and Criteria
Please keep in mind that assignments are the main way I can tell whether you comprehend the
material covered. Use these as platforms to show me what you have learned. Please be sure to use references and appropriate citations in all assignments submitted for grading. This shows me how you used the material covered and any outside readings to support your position.

In general, grading will include graduate writing skills, understanding of course concepts, the linking of course material to practical situations, focus on the assigned questions, and scholarly support using appropriately cited references.

An "A" represents excellence. In order to earn an "A", you must consistently demonstrate a superior understanding of the subject matter. This doesn't mean perfection. It means doing more than is expected for an assignment. To increase the chances of getting an "A", please pay close attention to the quality of your writing. Superior writing skills certainly can help you to earn a better grade. The degree to which you provide authoritative support in your discussion can also improve your chances of earning an "A".

When I provide feedback on your assignment, I will not comment line by line. I won't correct your typing, your spelling, or your grammar. If you make more than a couple of mistakes I will usually make a comment about how you need to edit your work more carefully. I expect your assignments to be free from these mistakes. Your participation gives you the opportunity to share your perspective on the subject matter with your classmates as well as to learn from them.

If you have any questions about a grade you received, please let me know. I try very hard to evaluate each assignment fairly, but I can only evaluate what you submit. I don't have the benefit of knowing all of the time and effort you have put into an assignment. Therefore, you need to make that effort stand out. Sometimes I can misinterpret what you have written, which is why I am always willing to clarify how I graded your assignment. I want to treat each of you fairly, and I will do everything I can to see that your grade truly reflects the scholarship of your work. I will be looking for how much responsibility and initiative you take for your learning.

The grading scale (including corresponding GPA) for the final grade is as follows:

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<td>A+/A</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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**Students with disabilities**

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact me and Disability Support Services (314-7682), as early as possible in the term, but not later than the second week of class. Disability Support Services will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.
Academic Integrity
The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized 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.shc.umd.edu.

To further exhibit your commitment to academic integrity, you are asked to write and sign the Honor Pledge on all assignments: "I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment."

INFM 600 Class Calendar – Fall 2012

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<th>Part I: Introduction to Information Environments</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 1—Sept 4</td>
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<td>Introduction to Information Environments</td>
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<td>Week 2—Sept 11</td>
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<td>Overview of Information and Knowledge</td>
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<td>Management</td>
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<td>Week 3—Sept 18</td>
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<td>Information Ecology</td>
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<td>Guest Lecture by Brian Butler</td>
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<th>Part II: Managing the Information Environment</th>
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<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
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<td>Information Strategy</td>
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| Week 5—Oct 2  | Economics of Information | • The Value of Information  
• Information Consumption  
• Attention Deficit in the Information Age | Carsten (2001)  
Coiera, 2000)  
Womack (2002)  
Menon & Pfeffer (2003) | Blackboard Discussion Topic #1 CLOSES. |
| Week 6—Oct 9  | Information Politics | • Organizational and Information Politics  
• Information Control  
• The Role of Information Staff | Davenport et al. (1992)  
Markus (1983)  
Casciaro & Lobo (2005)  
Cross et al. (2005) |  |
| Week 7—Oct 16 | Information Behavior and Culture | • Information Sharing and Overload  
• Organizational Cultures  
• Information Cultures | Charan (2006)  
Catmull (2008)  
Nohria et al. (2008) | Blackboard Discussion Topic #2 OPENS. |
| Part III: Shaping the Information Environment |  |  |  |  |
| Week 8—Oct 23 | Information / Knowledge Processes | • The Information Management Process  
• The Knowledge Lifecycle  
• Organizational Learning | McInerney, 2002)  
Birkenshaw & Sheehan (2002)  
Darling, Parry, & Moore (2005)  
Frishammar & Horte (2005) | Blackboard Discussion Topic #2 CLOSES. |
| Week 9—Oct 30 | Information Architecture  
*Guest Speaker: Lee Rainie, Pew Internet Project* | • What is Information Architecture  
• Technical Aspects of Information Architecture  
• Information Mapping, Engineering and Application | Hibberd & Evatt, 2004)  
Potente & Salvini (2009)  
Evernden & Evernden Anderson & Rainie (2010)—pp. 3-5; 29-39 |  |
| Week 10—Nov 6 | Learning Organizations | • Information as a Subset of the Organizational Environment  
• Factors that Affect the Information Environment  
Southon, Todd, & Seneque, 2002)  
| Week 11—Nov 13 | Social Media as an Information Environment  
*Guest Speaker from IBM* | • Affordances of Social Media  
• Business applications (e.g., IBM’s Social Blue, FedEx)  
• Data aggregation / third-party data selling  
• Network effects | Treem & Leonardi (2012)  
DiMicco et al. (2008) | Blackboard Discussion Topic #3 OPENS. |
| Week 12—Nov 20 | Privacy & Security  
*Guest Speaker, Brandon Whalen, Tresys Technology* | • Intellectual Property  
• Controlled vs. Open Systems | Herath & Rao (2009)  
Catteddu & Hogben (2010)—selected sections | Blackboard Discussion Topic #3 CLOSES. |
|  |  |  | Additional Readings TBD |  |
|---------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| **Week 13—Nov 27** | Information Ethics               | Information Ethics |                         |              |                         |
|               | *Guest Lecture by Katie Shilton* |                    |                         |              |                         |
| **Week 14—Dec 4** | Student Presentations: Week 1    |                    | Group 1: Presentation Day. Poster Due. |              |                         |
| **Week 15—Dec 11** | Student Presentations: Week 2    |                    | Group 2: Presentation Day; Poster Due. All Groups: PAPERS DUE. |              |                         |
APPENDIX

The case study project has a number of goals. Among these are:

1. To be able to synthesize the concepts we cover in class related to information environments in organizational settings and apply those concepts to a working organization.
2. To identify and evaluate information problems within an organization and propose potential solutions to those problems OR identify areas where an organization could improve its existing information environment be able to offer specific suggestions regarding how those improvements could be implemented.
3. To gain experience working in a team setting, which is common in businesses and organizations.
4. To gain experience in data collection, as well as experience working with managers, executives, and other employees at an organization (you hopefully have some interest in).

Students may approach this case study in a number of ways. In all likelihood, upon first contacting and visiting the organization, you will not know if the organization is currently experiencing any information problems. In all likelihood, they are—but even then, it may be difficult given the constraints of the case study for your group to identify and evaluate the problem. Therefore, while this may be a goal of some groups, it is not required that groups identify an information problem.

All groups must evaluate the organization according to the six components described in Davenport’s (1997) ecological model of information management: information strategy, politics, behavior and culture, staff, processes, and architecture, as well as the company’s internal and external environment. See below for criteria Davenport used to judge how well an organization was doing managing each of the components. (Note: these are for your reference only, as a way to help you better understand how Davenport defined each of the components, and they do not need to be included in your data collection efforts.)

All groups should conclude their papers with a general evaluation of the organization. This requires the group to take a step back and evaluate both all of the data they have gathered throughout the semester as well as everything they have learned and critically evaluate how that company is performing as an information environment. If the group identified a problem, propose a series of solutions and justify those solutions using existing evidence. If the company appears to be doing things right, what could be next steps for it as it looks to the future? Did its managers identify any future plans for the organization in terms of its information strategy? How might the organization begin down the path toward achieving that vision? It is important that you show me that you can take all the data and information you have gathered and transform it into knowledge (which requires synthesis, reflection, and wisdom).

See below for details of each component of the project.
CASE STUDY PROPOSAL: DUE WEEK 4 (SEPTEMBER 25)

Each group will submit a project/case study proposal in hardcopy (2-3 pages, double-spaced, 1” margins on all sides, 12 point). The proposal should:

a) Provide a one-paragraph description of the selected organization.

b) Describe how the project will be divided among group members, ensuring equal division of responsibilities. For example, groups may divide the project up by sections of the organization being covered, by data collection method, or by business components being covered (e.g., information culture, information politics, etc.).

b) Explain – and justify – the specific methods (e.g., interviewing, observation, survey, literature survey, analysis of existing print, audio, video, or online materials, etc.) and channels (face-to-face, via the telephone, email, instant messenger, web browsing, etc.) group members are planning to use to collect necessary data.

CASE STUDY PROGRESS REPORT (DUE WEEK 9, OCTOBER 30)

Each group will submit a hardcopy of the progress report (3 pages, double-spaced, 1” margins on all sides, 12 point). The purpose of this report is to update me on your progress to date, including the data you have collected, where you stand in analyzing and writing up results, any challenges you are facing, and any other questions or concerns you have on the project. The progress report should be formatted to include updates on each of the eight sections, so that I know where you stand on each component. If no progress has been made on a given component, simply list that.

You are welcome to submit more than three pages of content if you have already written it up and I am happy to review what you have completed at that point.

Over the course of the following two weeks, each group should set up a time to meet with me (for about 30 minutes) in person to go over their project.

CASE STUDY FINAL REPORT, PRESENTATION, AND POSTER (PRESENTATIONS & POSTERS DUE DURING LAST TWO CLASSES, DECEMBER 4 & 11; REPORTS DUE DECEMBER 11)

During the final two weeks of class, each team will make an oral presentation of findings and submit a hardcopy of the final report (approximately 20 pages excluding references, double-spaced, 1” margins on all sides, 12 point font).

a) The final report should adhere to the following guidelines:

i. The final report must include an overview of the company (and the specific division if the group is only focusing on a subset of the larger company).

ii. The final report must evaluate all eight components in Davenport’s ecological model of information management—groups may choose how they wish to present
this information, as long as each component is addressed.

iii. The final report must either (a) present and evaluate an information problem the organization is currently facing and propose potential steps the organization can take to solve this problem or (b) make suggestions for how the organization can improve some part of its information environment in the future. In either case, these evaluations should be derived from what we have discussed throughout the semester.

iv. The final report should discuss the major findings and implications of the project/case study by making use of the concepts, theories, models, techniques, and tools learned throughout this course.

v. The final report should list all of the references cited in the report using APA format (for help with APA formatting, see http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/).

b) Presentations will be limited to 15 minutes plus five minutes for questions. Students are encouraged to use interactive media (PPT, video, etc.) in their presentations. Students should dress appropriately for the presentation (business attire) and treat the presentation as if it were part of a job interview.

c) Posters are becoming an increasingly common method for presenting data in the field of information studies and information management. Teams will create a poster that describes the project and findings and present it on the day of their presentation. On presentation days, there will be 45-minute poster sessions following the presentations to give students the opportunity to interact with teams on a more one-on-one level and ask more detailed questions about their projects. Sample posters that have been presented at national and international conferences can be found throughout the iSchool hanging in the hallways.
DAVENPORT’S ASSESSMENT SURVEYS FOR INFORMATION ENVIRONMENTS

Information Strategy
The greater level of agreement with the statements below, the better an organization manages information strategy.

- A comprehensive information strategy has been developed for this organization.
- A wide variety of senior and middle managers as well as professionals—from both information and non-information functions—actively participate in strategy-development sessions.
- In designing our information strategy, those in charge clearly articulated the difference between technology and information.
- One or more senior managers is responsible for implementing the information strategy.
- Our information strategy is easy to understand and takes a position on key information issues in the organization.

Information Politics
The greater level of agreement with the statements below, the better an organization manages information politics.

- Senior managers take an active interest in defining information categories and entities.
- Senior managers meet as a group to debate corporate information needs.
- The information entities to be managed centrally in my organization are clearly defined, with other information needs left up to individuals, business units, or functions.
- Information managers consciously assume political roles (such as dealer, broker, leaker) in order to further strategic objectives.
- Information politics can be discussed openly in our organization.

Information Behavior and Culture
The greater level of agreement with the statements below, the better an organization manages information behavior.

- My organization had clearly identified the types of information behaviors and overall information culture that it wishes to have.
- Employees are evaluated and rewarded on the basis of particular information behaviors—such as sharing or improving presentation.
- My organization has established and documented the information behaviors it wants to encourage.
- Training is provided to help develop desired information behaviors.
- We recruit and hire employees in part because of the way they currently (and potentially) handle information.
**Information Staff**
The greater level of agreement with the statements below, the better an organization manages its information support staff.

- A specific group or groups within my organization is charged with managing information of all types.
- Our organization has a mechanism for coordinating the activities of groups that manage information.
- Information providers are taught, through a regular and consistent program, how to add value to information.
- At least one information staff member helps users assess their needs and access multiple types of information.
- Our organization has evaluated its information management structure within the past five years.

**Information Management Processes**
The greater level of agreement with the statements below, the better an organization manages its information processes.

- My organization has created a generic model for the information management process that it hopes to implement.
- Information management process steps—such as determining information requirements, capturing, distribution, and use—have been assessed in a systematic manner and improvements undertaken.
- We can measure the performance of key information management processes.
- Specific information-intensive processes—such as market research, product configuration, and customer management—have been improved or reengineered.
- Key information users have played a role in designing how information processes should function.

**Information Architecture**
The greater level of agreement with the statements below, the better an organization manages its information architecture.

- My organization uses a planning approach to identify the non-computer-based information we need and have.
- Non-technical managers and employees can understand our computer-oriented architectural efforts.
- We have created information maps to guide individuals to the location of needed information.
- Our information architectures include pointers to the people who possess the information or who are knowledgeable about its use.
- Our architectural objectives are driven by explicitly stated behavioral objectives.