UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK
Access to Federal Government Information (LBSC767)
3 credit hours
Spring 2013 Syllabus

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Catalog Description of Course
Research methods, information needs, information production and structure, information
sources and services, and selection policies related to federal government information.

Slightly More Detailed Description
The course will cover the fundamental aspects of the practice and theory of providing
government information through library services, with a focus on U.S. Federal government
information resources. Libraries enjoy long traditions of civic advocacy and mediation to make
sure members of the communities can identify, locate, use many vital Federal information
resources. Libraries remain a vital link between a community and that civic knowledge about
their government. This course will discuss, examine, and build an effective skill set that will
enable the student to mediate between this vast Federal e-government knowledge space. It will
also emphasize the related social media tools that now dominate the delivery of that same
knowledge: email, chat, twitter, virtual community spaces, and other social networking
approaches.

The class will study the specific methods, practices, and research to prepare students for taking
on the challenges created by the internet’s rapidly shifting formats and distribution schemes for
government information. Over the last twenty-five years, the traditional library services that
require the organization or access to federal government information has shifted from a
tradition of paper and print to a dynamic interactive environment that demands number of
changes in the way libraries serve their communities As more and more federal government
information becomes directly available to individuals via Internet-enabled technologies, this
demands an evolving paradigm for the aspects of librarianship associated with collection and
organization of government information – and requires present and future librarians to rethink
a century of government, library, and citizen relationships, as well as institutional practices.
This course seeks to provide students with an understanding of this changing environment, and
what it means to provide library services that depend on government information in this context.

Goals: The goals of this course are to introduce students to the:

- Organizational, policy, and social context of e-library services that focus on U.S. federal –government resources;
- Laws, regulations and policies that govern the distribution and access of e-government information in U.S. Libraries;
- Fundamentals and Evaluation strategies that measure the value and impact of effective government information services in libraries;

Course Approach and Expectations of Student Participation
This is an online course with no regularly scheduled “class time.” However, to facilitate discussion and participation, there will be a regularly scheduled online “meeting” arranged through the University of Maryland’s ELMS networked courseware: CANVAS. A time and day of the week will be arranged in advance of the first week of classes to be sure everyone can participate in these sessions. Other class work, discussion, and exchange of information will happen through email, discussion boards, podcasts, and other media arranged through CANVAS. For information about the I School’s support for its Online Course program, please review the information here: http://ischool.umd.edu/content/more-information-about-online-programs

It is imperative that every student participates in the class discussions about the course topics through the various channels of communication. Based on critical examination of course readings, assignments, and discussions each student should develop an analytical stance concerning the issues in the course.

Assignments and Grading
Your grade will be based on four aspects/assignments of the course:

- Assignment 1: Class Participation and Discussion
  You are expected to read all of the assigned readings, to think through the issues they raise, and to articulate your thoughts on the materials through the assignments and class discussions. This includes both articles and examination of assigned websites.

  Class participation will constitute 25% of your final grade.

- Assignment 2: Federal Government Information and E-government paper
  You will write a three page critical summary of one article they find that relates directly to the topic of that week. The article must be taken from academic library or information policy journals. It will include an overview of the reading, the points it makes, how it relates to the topic of that week’s class session, and questions for discussion.

  The paper will constitute 15% of your final grade
• Assignment 3: Evaluation of Government Information Library Services
Five page paper on how a particular library of your choice handles federal government information with their collections and services. The paper will include a brief description of the library and the community it serves. The majority of the paper should focus on comparing how well the library incorporates federal government information sources into its mission. Explore whether the library demonstrates innovative practices in how they deliver federal government information.

The paper will constitute 20% of your final grade.

• Assignment 4: Evaluation and comparison of 3 federal e-government sites of your choice using an evaluation rubric that you design

This 8 to 10-page evaluation paper will offer a detailed comparison of 3 federal e-government sites of your choice using an evaluation rubric that you design. In this course, the evaluation of e-government sites will be discussed extensively and multiple evaluation rubrics for e-government will be examined. For the final paper, you will create an evaluation rubric, drawing upon those examined in the course and your own original ideas, and then will apply that rubric to 2-3 e-government sites that are appropriate. For example, you could create a rubric to evaluate sites for quality of agricultural information or for level of openness and transparency or for how accessible they are to persons with disabilities. Your evaluation rubric must have defined criteria (detailed in the paper) that you apply to each site. The three sites should be individually evaluated in terms of these criteria. Then, you should compare and contrast the sites in terms of how each fared in the evaluation and analyze the reasons for success and failure of the sites, including identification of features that directly affected evaluation scores. The evaluation paper will constitute 40% of your final grade.

Paper Guidelines
Each paper for this course should be double-spaced, using 12-point Times New Roman font. The margins should be 1 inch exactly on each side. Citations—both in the text and in the references section—must conform to the most recent APA style manual. Pages will be numbered and format will be consistent. Papers are to be submitted in paper form at the beginning of the class meeting that they are due.

Class Environment and Discussions
As a graduate seminar, the environment should be professional and respectful. Discussions should be based on course readings and critical thinking. Remember—your classmates may have different perspectives on issues than you, but they still deserve your respect.

Students with Disabilities
Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Disability Support Services office, and (2) discuss any necessary academic accommodation with their teachers. This should be done at the beginning of the semester.
Extensions
Timeliness is extremely important in graduate work, and extensions will only be available during personal emergencies. Students who need to request an extension should discuss the matter in advance with the professor. If an extension is granted, the work must be submitted within the extension period to avoid grade penalties. Unexcused delays in submission of the paper will result in a deduction of half of a letter grade for each day the paper is late, while unexcused delays in presentations will result in a deduction of half a letter grade for each class meeting the presentation is late.

Academic Honesty
Work submitted in this course will be individual and original, in line with the University’s Academic Honor Code and Honor Pledge. Engaging in any academic dishonesty will result in consequences in line with university policies. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to plagiarism, cheating, buying work, multiple submissions of the same paper, forging signatures, submitting fraudulent documents, and facilitating the academic dishonesty of others. When writing papers, be sure to carefully and thoroughly cite all materials you use in writing your paper and make sure all ideas and quotations are properly acknowledged.

Emergency Preparedness
Information about the status of the campus is available at http://www.umd.edu/emergencypreparedness/. If the campus is closed, please make sure to stay safe. Information about possible rescheduling of course activities will be provided via e-mail once the campus has reopened.

Weekly Topics

Course Introduction
Week 1: January 23, 2013
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES IN LIBRARIES: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Part One: The U.S. Federal Government and its information resources
Week 2: January 27, 2013
THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Week 3: February 4, 2013
THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Week 4: February 11, 2013
THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

Week 5: February 18, 2013
INDEPENDENT AGENCIES AND OTHER CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

Part Two: Discovery and Organization of Federal Government Information Resources
Week 6: February 25, 2013
LEGAL AND REGULATORY SOURCES
Week 7: March 4, 2013
Policy and Programmatic Sources

Week 8: March 11, 2013
Scientific and Statistical Sources

Week 9: March 18, 2013 -- Spring Break

Part Three: E-Government Information Resources from a Federal Perspective
Week 12: April 8, 2013
Evaluating Federal Web Resources

Week 13: April 15, 2013
Federal Information Resources and Their Relationship to Other Forms of U.S. Government

Week 14: April 22, 2013
Building Federal Government Information Services for Different Kinds of Libraries

Part Four: Evolution: Civic Librarianship and the Ongoing Paradigm Shift
Week 15: April 29, 2013
The Principles of Civic Mediation and Explanation: The Future Roles of Libraries

Week 16: May 6, 2013
So You Want to Be a Government Information Librarian?

Assigned Readings:

Syllabus Change Policy
This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice. With the changes in government that happen after a Presidential election, the websites in particular may change as the administration revises the content of government sites.