LBSC 601: Users and Information Context
Fall, 2009
College of Information Studies, University of Maryland

Instructor:
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Course Description and Objectives:
Nature and roles of information and information institutions; information behavior; studying information behavior; information policy; the information professions.

Upon satisfactory completion of this course, students will:
• Understand fundamental concepts in the study of information and its use
• Appreciate the role of institutions in generating and disseminating information to users
• Understand components and functions of information systems and services and how they relate to users’ needs and behaviors
• Be acquainted with methods of inquiry for the study of information and information use
• Understand users of information deeply in terms of their goals, workflows, social and content needs, behaviors, preferences, and more.
• Be aware of key information policy issues that affect the profession and users’ lives
• Be aware of the core values, ethics, and social responsibilities of information professionals and the roles of professional associations and organizations
• Be prepared for further study in information needs, information generation, information transfer, and information systems.

Evaluation Criteria:
Reading reflection (30 points)
Critique of study (20 points)
Final paper (40 points)
Class participation in threaded discussion forum (10 points)

Total maximum points (100)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Assignments due</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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| 1    | Aug. 31| Course overview & basic concepts                      |                 | Case, Ch. 3 & 4  
| 2    | Sep. 8 | Information seeking models                             | Reading reflection | Case, Ch. 6  
| 3    | Sep. 14| Specific user groups (by occupation)                   | Reading reflection | Case, Ch. 11: Research by Occupation  
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Reflection</th>
<th>Reading References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Oct. 5</td>
<td>Reviewing the research</td>
<td>Reading reflection</td>
<td>Case, Ch 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Oct. 26</td>
<td>Catch up week – no additional readings</td>
<td>Critique of study due</td>
<td>No Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Nov. 16</td>
<td>Information profession</td>
<td>Reading reflection; Critique of study</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Nov. 23</td>
<td>Thanksgiving break</td>
<td>No Readings</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Nov. 30</td>
<td>Interview/survey report</td>
<td>No Readings</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Dec. 7</td>
<td>Summary of course</td>
<td>Final paper due, Dec. 11th</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Dec. 14</td>
<td>END OF COURSE</td>
<td>Case, Ch 13</td>
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**Academic Integrity:** This course follows all University policies and procedures, including adherence to the Code of Academic Integrity. (http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/code.html)

**Students with Disabilities:** Please inform me at the start of the semester if you have a physical or learning disability that will affect your coursework. I am happy to work out appropriate accommodations for you along with the University’s Disability Support Services (301-314-7682; http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/).

**Attendance Policy:** The University’s attendance policy can be found at http://www.testudo.umd.edu/soc/atedasse.html. Students who for any reason (esp. religious observance) cannot attend an examination or other required class activity should contact the instructor.

**Late Assignments:** It is important that assignments are turned in on time since we will typically be discussing them as a class once they are submitted. If there are extenuating circumstances that make it impossible to turn in an assignment please let the instructor know ahead of time (i.e., before the assignment is due) so that appropriate arrangements can be made.
Course Readings

Textbook:


Week 1: Overview & basic concepts

- Case, D. Ch. 3: The concept of information.
- Case, D. Ch. 4: Information needs and information seeking

Week 2: Information seeking models

- Case, D. Ch. 6: Models of information behavior

Week 3: Information seeking behavior of specific user group (I)

- Case, D. Ch. 11: Research by Occupation

Week 4: Information seeking behavior of specific user group (II)

- Case, D. Ch. 12: Research by Social Roles and Demographical Groups

Week 5: Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS)


Week 6: Review the information use literature

- Case, D. Ch 8: The research process
Week 7: Research methods I

- Case, D. Ch 9: Methods: Examples by Type

Week 8: Research methods II


Week 9: Catch up week - no additional reading

Week 10: Other concepts in information seeking

- Case, D. Ch 5: Related concepts

Week 11: Usability testing


Week 12: Information profession


Week 13: Interview/Survey report -No reading

Week 14: Summary

- Case, D. Ch 13: Reviewing, Critiquing, Concluding
Graded Assignments

Class Participation:
Goal: Much of the learning that will occur in this course will be as a result of the online discussions. Therefore, you are expected to log onto the course website’s Threaded Discussion Forum every week and to participate in the ongoing discussions. You should be ready to discuss any of the readings and provide your own ideas and experiences related to the topic at hand. You should contribute in a meaningful way at least once a week.

Evaluation: Your participation represents 10 points of your final grade. You will receive all of the points if you make at least one substantive comment or contribution each week.

Reading Reflections
Goal: This assignment motivates you to read the required articles actively and helps you prepare yourself for deeper class discussion.

Instructions:
Think about what you have read.

- What are the main points?
- What special thoughts or insights does this reading give you?
- What is one concept or theory that you agreed with disagreed with and why?
- Do you have personal work experiences that illustrate or refute a point in the reading?

For at least one of the readings each week, compose a short essay (about 200 words is sufficient, but you may write more if you wish) responding to any of these questions, as appropriate. Post your essay to the appropriate Forum in the Discussion Board in Blackboard.

Length: About 200 words for each essay
Due date: Due by midnight on Fridays of each week.
Evaluation: This assignment represents 30 points of your final grade (3 points for each; 30 points total).

Critique of Study
Goal: To give you an in-depth understanding of one kind of qualitative study, this project requires you to critique such a study. Discussion of the reports will give you a sense of the variety of research topics, questions, methods, and purposes of “qualitative research.”

Instructions:

- Select one of the following two articles to critique:

- Your report should address the following issues:
  1. The importance of the research topic; the nature and clarity of the research question(s), and the suitability of a qualitative approach for the study
  2. The adequacy of the literature review and the foreshadowing questions
  3. The quality of the data collection plan and the data collection itself
  4. The quality of the data analysis plan and the data analysis itself
  5. The strength of the findings and the appropriateness of the conclusions
  6. The validity, reliability, and transferability of the study

Length: 2 pages or so (single-spaced, 12 point, Times Roman)
Due date: Friday, Nov. 20th, 2009 at midnight
Evaluation: This assignment represents 20 points of your final grade.

**Final Paper**

Goal: This assignment provides you with an opportunity to get familiar with a research method for the study of information seeking and use and know about non-traditional users.

Instructions:

- Identify a concrete research question related to information seeking and use. Some examples are:
  1. ELIS: What are the information seeking behaviors of stay-at-home mothers?
  2. Users as creators: How do lay information mediaries provide information on behalf of others in a community-based Q&A site?

- Select one research method between survey and interview
  1. Justify the selection of the research method in the report

- For a survey paper:
  2. Create a short survey instrument
  3. Conduct a survey with at least 10 users

- For an interview paper:
  1. Create a short interview protocol
  2. Conduct a brief interview (no more than 30 minutes) with at least one user

- Write up a summary and interpretation

Length: 10 pages or so (single-spaced, 12 point, Times Roman) including a list of references and survey questionnaire/interview protocol
Due date: Friday, Dec. 11th, 2009 at midnight
Evaluation: This assignment represents 40 points of your final grade.