LBSC 601-SG01 Users and Information Context  
College of Information Studies, University of Maryland  
Fall 2012  
Mondays 5:30 to 8:15 PM  
Shady Grove Campus: Building 3, Room 3203

Beth St. Jean, Assistant Professor  
Hornbake Building, Room 4117K  
College of Information Studies  
University of Maryland, College Park  
301-405-6573  
bstjean@umd.edu

Office Hours: Mondays, 3:30 to 5:00 PM in Building 3, Room 5100 or by appointment  
[NOTE: I will not be able to hold my regular office hours on 10/29 or 12/3.]

COURSE DESCRIPTION: What is information behavior and why does it matter? In this course, students will learn about the many facets of user information behavior, with a particular emphasis on users’ information needs and how information professionals can design services that will best meet the needs of various user groups.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a familiarity with general theories and models of information behavior, as well as with some of the approaches commonly taken to study this phenomenon.
2. Understand the importance of placing the central emphasis on the individual user when studying information behavior and when designing information services that will best meet the needs of a specific user group.
3. Recognize that information behavior varies across different user populations.
4. Recognize that a person’s information behavior varies across different information use contexts and across time.
5. Assess the information needs of a particular user population and tailor information services to the needs of this specific population.

TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS: This course will be taught in a seminar fashion. The primary methods of instruction for this course will be lecture, course readings, and presentations and class discussion relevant to course readings. You will be expected to have read the assigned readings in preparation for each class meeting. Additionally, you will be expected to actively participate in class discussions.

READING MATERIALS: There is one required text for this course:


This text is available on electronic reserves through our class Blackboard site. Please login at http://elms.umd.edu and look for the link to our class (“LBSC601 Fall 2012: Users and
Information Context”). If you wish to purchase your own copy of the text, it can be purchased through Amazon.com: 
http://www.amazon.com/Looking-Information-Second-Research-Behavior/dp/0123694302/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1317143132&sr=8-1

There is also one recommended text for this course:


This book is available on reserve at the Priddy Library. If you wish to purchase it, it can also be purchased through Amazon.com:
http://www.amazon.com/Theories-Information-Behavior-Asist-Monograph/dp/157387230X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1317243423&sr=8-1

Additional readings are available through our class Blackboard site (see the “Course Documents” section). Please note that assigned readings must be completed in preparation for each class.

Although it is not required for this course, you may wish to browse through some of the following relevant journals and/or sign up to receive automatic alerts as new issues come out:

- Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology (JASIS&T) [formerly Journal of the American Society for Information Science (JASIS)]
- Library & Information Science Research (LISR)
- Information Processing & Management (IP&M)
- Journal of Documentation (JDOC)
- First Monday (http://www.firstmonday.org/)
- Information Research (http://informationr.net/ir/)
- Annual Review of Information Science and Technology (ARIST)

COURSE POLICIES:

Attendance: Students are expected to attend every class and to be present on time. If you will be unable to make a class, please e-mail me beforehand and please be sure to check in with a fellow student following class so that you can catch up on anything you missed. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class session. Absences will only be excused in accordance with University policy (illness, religious observances, participation in University activities at the request of University authorities, and compelling circumstances beyond your control). Any planned absences due to religious observances must be communicated to me in writing during the first two weeks of class. Students may miss one class session with no penalty; thereafter, each unexcused absence will result in your grade being lowered by one step (for example, an A- will become a B+). Repeated tardiness may be considered an unexcused absence.

Class Participation: Students are expected to actively participate in every class. This will require that you finish all assigned readings prior to each class session. Participation forms an integral part of your own learning experience, as well as that of your classmates. Your participation in classroom discussions will count for 10% of your final grade. Class participation grades will take into account both the quantity and quality of your contributions to class discussions; however, the quality of your contributions (whether questions, viewpoints, responses to others’ questions, etc.) to a meaningful, ongoing discussion will be much more heavily weighted. Classroom discussions should remain professional and respectful at all times.
Please be sure to silence your cell phones before entering class. Laptop use is permitted during class, but only for class-related activities.

**Written Work:** All written work should be proofread and revised as necessary before you submit it. Use Times New Roman 12-point font and one-inch margins. All documents should be single-spaced. Be sure to organize your papers, using section and subsection headings to identify portions of your work. Use APA Style for in-text citations and reference lists. There are many resources about APA style available on the Internet. See, for example, [http://www.lib.umd.edu/guides/citing_apa.html](http://www.lib.umd.edu/guides/citing_apa.html); [http://www.apastyle.org/learn/faqs/index.aspx](http://www.apastyle.org/learn/faqs/index.aspx).

**Submitting Assignments:** Each assignment must be submitted before the beginning of class on the indicated due date through our Blackboard site (“LBSC601 Fall 2012: Users and Information Context”). Please submit only one file per assignment (Word or pdf format for papers; PowerPoint for presentations), naming your file using the following convention: LastName_FirstName_Assignment#_Date (e.g. ‘StJean_Beth_Assignment2_10122012’). Additionally, a hardcopy of each assignment is due at the beginning of the class session on the specified due date.

**Late Work:** Unless you are facing an emergency situation AND you request an extension from me at least 48 hours in advance of the due date, late work will automatically be graded down by one step for each day that it is late. Assignments more than seven days late will not be accepted.

**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 [www.shc.umd.edu](http://www.shc.umd.edu). To further exhibit your commitment to academic integrity, remember to type and sign the Honor Pledge on all examinations and assignments: “I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this examination (assignment).” When submitting an assignment electronically, there is no need to sign the pledge – your submission of the assignment with this sentence included implies your signature.

All assignments in this class must reflect your own original work. You must cite and properly attribute any material quoted or paraphrased from some other source. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, cheating, buying assignments, submitting the same paper more than once, forging signatures, submitting fraudulent documents, facilitating the academic dishonesty of others, etc. Infractions may result in a penalty, such as a failing grade on a specific assignment or for the entire course or even expulsion from the University. Please read and adhere to the University of Maryland Code of Academic Integrity (http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/docs/III-100A.pdf). You may also find this Office of Student Conduct definition of academic dishonesty to be helpful: [http://osc.umd.edu/OSC/AcademicDishonesty.aspx](http://osc.umd.edu/OSC/AcademicDishonesty.aspx).

**Emergency Preparedness:** Please see the University’s Emergency Preparedness Website (http://www.umd.edu/emergencypreparedness/) for information about the current status of the campus. If a class session needs to be rescheduled, I will e-mail you as soon as possible.
Syllabus Change Policy: This syllabus is subject to change with advance notice. If a change becomes necessary, I will announce the change in class and e-mail all of you.

Student Course Evaluations (CourseEvalUM): Toward the end of the semester (Tuesday, November 27th through Wednesday, December 12th), you will have an opportunity to evaluate this course. Your participation in these evaluations is integral to the success of our school. Your feedback will remain completely confidential and will be immensely valuable in improving our school’s teaching effectiveness and learning environments. Beginning November 27th, please go to https://www.courseevalum.umd.edu/ to complete your evaluation of this course. If over 70% of the students in the class complete their evaluation, you will be able to access the aggregate results through Testudo.

Special Accommodations: If you need any accommodations due to a disability, please first register with the Disability Support Service (DSS) office (http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/) and file any required documentation, and then see me as early as possible in the semester to let me know. We can then work with DSS to determine how to best accommodate your needs. Please note that the Center for Academic Success (CAS) (http://www.shadygrove.umd.edu/campus-services/cas) is the Disability Support Services office at the Universities at Shady Grove.

Academic Assistance:

a. Center for Academic Success (Shady Grove): The Center for Academic Success (CAS) (www.shadygrove.umd.edu/campus-services/cas) offers onsite academic assistance for students attending classes at the Shady Grove Center. CAS services include:
   • Review of papers and all writing assignments by a professional writing consultant (in person or over the phone)
   • Finding an individual tutor for a course
   • Weekly reviews, called Guided Study Sessions (GSS), in business, psychology, nursing and other areas led by peer tutors who aced the class last year and who know the ropes
   • Workshops in speed reading, memory strategies, writing with research, or textbook reading strategies
   • Academic coaching: Personal academic sessions to improve study habits and time management
   • Conquer writing snags with grammar assistance handouts, online exercises (with answers) and software programs on our computers

   Contact information for CAS:
   Hours:
   SG Bldg. 3, 1st floor, Student Services suite   M & W 9:00 – 5:30
   (301) 738-6315; Email: sg-cas@umd.edu   Tue & Th 9:00 – 7:00
   Fri 9:00 – 5:00

b. Learning Assistance Service (College Park): If you are experiencing difficulties in keeping up with the academic demands of this course, please consider contacting the Learning Assistance Service, 2202 Shoemaker Building, 301-314-7693. Their educational counselors can help with time management, reading, math learning skills, note-taking and exam preparation skills. All their services are free to UMD students.
EVALUATION:

Your final grade will be calculated based on the weighting of course assignments shown in the table at the top of the next page. Please note that revision and resubmission of assignments for the purpose of obtaining a higher grade will not be permitted. Also, you will not be allowed to drop any of these grades. All assignments must be submitted through our class Blackboard site (‘LBSC601 Fall 2012: Users and Information Context’) prior to the start of class on the due date indicated. Please also bring a print-out of your assignment to hand in to me at the beginning of the class session. Please note that your slides or any other electronic materials you’ve prepared for your final presentation need to be posted to the Discussion Board section of our Blackboard site no later than noon on Monday, December 3rd. Also, your final paper needs to be submitted to the Assignments section of our Blackboard site by noon on Friday, December 14th.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Assignment Description</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>Every class meeting</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Discussion Leading: Ranked Preferences</td>
<td>September 17, 2012</td>
<td>Check-off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Discussion Leading</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Final Project: Proposal</td>
<td>October 8, 2012</td>
<td>Check-off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Information Seeking Diary</td>
<td>October 29, 2012</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Final Project: Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>November 12, 2012</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Final Project: Presentation</td>
<td>December 3, 2012 (noon)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Final Project: Paper</td>
<td>December 14, 2012 (noon)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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Please see the last few pages of this syllabus for specific instructions regarding each of the assignments. The weighted average of your grades on all of the assignments (including your class participation grade) will be converted to a letter grade according to the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weighted Average</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>97.0 and above</td>
<td>A+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93.0-96.9</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90.0-92.9</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87.0-89.9</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83.0-86.9</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80.0-82.9</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77.0-79.9</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73.0-76.9</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70.0-72.9</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67.0-69.9</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63.0-66.9</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.0-62.9</td>
<td>D-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 60.0</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
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<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 4    | 10/1 | Information Needs and Information Seeking | Case. Chapter 4: Information needs and information seeking.  
| 5    | 10/8 | Related Concepts | Case, Chapter 5: Related concepts  
| 6    | 10/15 | Models and Theories (Part I) | Case, Chapter 6: Models of information behavior  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Readings</td>
<td>Assignment Due</td>
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| 9    | 11/5   | Research Methods (Part I)                               | Case, Chapter 8: The research process.  
| 10   | 11/12  | Research Methods (Part II); *The Information Profession: Ethics and Values* [date tentative] | Case, Chapter 9: Methods: Examples by type.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>12/3</td>
<td>Final Project Presentations</td>
<td>** *** IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS OF FINAL PROJECTS *** 3. Final Project: Presentation [Slides must be posted by noon]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Readings</td>
<td>Assignment Due</td>
</tr>
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Assignment 1: Discussion Leading

Due Dates:
   a) Ranked Preferences: Due September 17, 2012 (check-off)
   b) Discussion Leading: Variable dates (20%)

For this assignment, you will first look through the syllabus and identify a handful of the readings from weeks 4 on (other than the ones from our textbook) that you are particularly interested in. Then prepare a list showing your ranked preferences. Please include at least five readings. Please use the table format below, inserting your name in the first row and copying and pasting the citation for each of the readings from this syllabus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Week Number (&gt; 3)</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

I will take your preferences into account as much as possible in assigning each of you one reading for which you will lead the class discussion. In order to prepare to lead the week’s discussion about your reading, please:

1. Read the article carefully
2. Prepare to lead a 30-minute in-class discussion in which you will:
   a. First briefly summarize the article for the class (no more than 10 minutes)
   b. Provide your thoughts about the article (no more than 5 minutes)
   c. Pose questions that will stimulate class discussion about the reading

I. Article Summary (20 points)
   • Does the summary accurately and comprehensively cover the major points in the article?

II. Student Viewpoints (30 points)
   • Has the student clearly presented and explained his/her viewpoints on the article?

III. Class Discussion (50 points)
   • Has the student come prepared with questions to stimulate class discussion?

IV. Extra Credit (2 points)
   • Either:
     o Compare and contrast the reading with other course readings
     o Tie in any relevant current events with the discussion
Assignment 2: Information-Seeking Diary

**Due Date:** October 29, 2012 (20%)

For this assignment, you will observe your own information behavior within a particular context of your life. Select some information-related activity in which you will be engaged for some purpose in your life, such as going to find books at the library that pertain to a topic you’re researching or searching for information on the Internet that has to do with a personal hobby of yours. Please be sure to select an activity that you will be working on for at least one hour.

As you’re conducting your selected activity, keep a diary of your information behaviors. You may want to develop a coding scheme that you can use for this purpose. Please record only those information behaviors which are observable. In other words, do not record purely internal things, such as your information needs or your thoughts. Your completed diary should cover your information behaviors over a period of at least 1 hour.

Write a 3-page paper that begins with a description of the information behaviors you recorded, along with any coding scheme(s) you might have used for recording purposes. Next, reflect on the accuracy and comprehensiveness of your diary. Do you feel that your diary adequately reflects what you really did? Is there any way that you might improve your recording processes if you were to repeat this assignment? Now think about the internal processes that are missing from your diary – for example, the information needs that were driving your information activities. What would you infer about these processes if you were just looking at your diary? How well do these inferences match what was really going on in your thought processes? In the final section of your paper, select one information behavior model or theory from our readings and discuss its applicability to your information behaviors. Does this model or theory adequately/accurately describe and/or explain your information behaviors? Why or why not?

I. Description of Information Behaviors (15 points)
- Has the student limited their reporting of their information behaviors to one particular context and to purely observable (non-internal) information behaviors?
- Has the student provided an easy-to-understand description of their information behaviors?

II. Reflections on Accuracy and Comprehensiveness of Diary (20 points)
- Has the student reflected on whether his/her diary accurately and comprehensively reflects their information behaviors?
- Has the student suggested ways in which they might improve their recording processes?

III. Discussion of Internal Processes Underlying Observable Information Behaviors (25 pts)
- Has the student included a discussion about their information needs and any other internal processes that underlie the information behaviors they’re recorded in their diary?
- Has the student talked about how inferences that might be made based on purely observable behaviors may differ from what was actually occurring?
IV. Applicability of Selected Model or Theory (40 points)

- Has the student selected one particular model or theory and discussed its applicability to his/her own information behaviors?
- Has the student reflected on the capacity of the model or theory to adequately and accurately describe and/or explain his/her information behaviors?

V. Extra Credit (2 points)

- Attach your coding scheme(s) as an appendix to your paper.
Assignment 3: Final Project

Due Dates:

a) **Proposal**: Due October 8, 2012 (check-off)
b) **Annotated Bibliography**: Due November 12 (10%)
c) **Presentation**: Due by noon on December 3, 2012 (15%)
d) **Paper**: Due by noon on Friday, December 14, 2012 (25%)

Your final project for this course will be a research paper about the information behavior of a particular user population. You may choose any user population you wish. Once you have chosen your user population, find a minimum of six papers that have focused on the information behavior of your user population. At least three of these papers should report results from empirical studies involving this user population.

By October 8\textsuperscript{th}, you will need to submit a very brief proposal (approximately 1 page) in which you indicate your selected user population and your reason(s) for choosing this population. Your proposal also needs to include citations for at least six articles that focus on the information behavior of your selected user group. These articles should be ones that you are planning to read and use for your final project.

By November 12\textsuperscript{th}, you will need to submit an annotated bibliography. For each article you will be using for your final project, provide a citation in APA style, a brief summary, and a critical appraisal. Be sure to explain how each paper is relevant to your final project. This paper should be approximately 3 pages long (approximately one-half page for each article you discuss).

Both your presentation and your paper need to include the following sections:

1. Introduction: Who is your user population? Why did you select this user population?
2. Literature Review: What do we know about the information behavior of this particular user population? Your discussion should draw on at least six articles. [For your paper, be sure to add a References section on the last page. Citations should be in APA-style.]
3. Proposed Research Questions: What do we still need to know about the information behavior of this particular user population? [Propose at least two research questions]
4. Proposed Methodology: How might you go about finding out the answer to these questions? What are the advantages and disadvantages of using various types of research methodologies? Be sure to cover participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis methods in your discussion.
5. Potential Significance and Impact: What is the potential significance and impact of knowing the answers to your proposed research questions?

You will have 20 minutes for your presentation. Please plan to talk for approximately 15 minutes and to field questions from the audience for the remaining 5 minutes. Please keep in mind that these are to be delivered as professional presentations.

Your final paper should be between six and eight pages single-spaced. As you will have some time to work on your paper following your presentation, please be sure to consider incorporating any feedback you receive from me and/or from your fellow students at your presentation.
Proposal (Check-off)

- Has the student indicated which user population he/she has selected and explained his/her selection?
- Has the student included citations for at least six articles that focus on the information behavior of the selected user population?
- Do at least three of these articles report on empirical studies that focus on the information behavior of the student’s selected user population?

Annotated Bibliography (10%)

- Has the student provided annotations for at least six papers that focus on the information behaviors of their selected population and do at least three of these papers report empirical results? (20 points)
- Has the student provided a citation in APA style for each article? (10 points)
- Has the student provided an adequate summary of each article? (30 points)
- Has the student critically evaluated each article? (30 points)
- Has the student described how each of the articles is relevant to his/her final project? (10 points)

Presentation (15%)

- Introduction: Did the student introduce his/her user population and explain why he/she selected this particular population? (10 points)
- Literature Review: Did the student discuss some of the literature that has focused on this user population? Was there evidence that the student had synthesized the various articles that they read for this assignment? (25 points)
- Proposed Research Questions: Did the student propose at least two research questions that were not addressed in their selected articles? (10 points)
- Proposed Methodology: Did the student suggest how he/she might go about finding the answer to these questions? Did he/she discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using different types of research methodologies? Did his/her discussion cover recruitment, data collection, and data analysis methods? (25 points)
- Potential Impact: Did the student discuss the significance and potential impact of finding out the answers to his/her proposed research questions? (20 points)
- Presentation Quality: Was the student’s presentation well-organized and clearly delivered? Did the student keep his/her presentation to the time allotted? How well did the student field questions from the audience? (10 points)

Paper (25%)

- Introduction: Has the student written about their selection of a user population? Did he/she explain why he/she selected this particular population? (10 points)
- Literature Review: Did the student include a synthesized discussion of some of the literature that has focused on this user population? Are at least six articles included in this discussion? Has the student included a References section in which he/she has provided APA-style citations for all of these articles? (25 points)
- Proposed Research Questions: Did the student propose at least two research questions that were not addressed in their selected articles? (10 points)
- **Proposed Methodology:** Did the student describe how he/she might go about finding the answer to these questions? Did he/she write about the advantages and disadvantages of using different types of research methodologies? Did his/her discussion cover recruitment, data collection, and data analysis methods? (25 points)
- **Potential Impact:** Did the student discuss the significance and potential impact of finding out the answers to his/her proposed research questions? (20 points)
- **Writing Quality:** Is the student’s writing clear, organized, and easy-to-understand? (10 points)