UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK

E-government: Information, Communication, and Policy (INST 607)
3 credit hours
Spring 2014 Syllabus

John Carlo Bertot, Ph.D.
Professor and Co-Director, Information Policy & Access Center
College of Information Studies
4121J Hornbake Building
e-mail: jbertot@umd.edu
skype: jcbbertot
phone: 301.405.3267

Ursula Gorham
Doctoral Candidate and Research Associate
Information Policy & Access Center
College of Information Studies
4121 Hornbake Building
e-mail: ugorham@umd.edu

A. Catalog Description of Course
The social, policy, and information science and technology factors driving the current evaluation of e-government in the United States, its various forms of implementation (from simple online presence through intermediate levels of basic capability, service availability and mature delivery, to service transformation), the identification of best practices and lessons learned from the national and international community, and emerging issues (e.g., privacy, security, and digital divide).

B. More Detailed Description
This course will examine the nature, current impacts, and potential future impacts of e-government, also known as digital government or electronic government. E-government is the use of the Internet and other information and communication technologies to provide government information and services, as well as channels of communication to citizens, businesses, and other governments. The United States and many other governments around the world at local, state, federal, and supra-national levels have developed an online presence, ranging from simple information to complex services. These are collectively known as e-government. E-government as a trend is only ten years old, still largely at the stage where its actual long-term role has yet to be determined. But, as its roots, it has a long history of government automation and the attempt to integrate automation and services to the public. This course will examine what it is currently doing and what it can do both in the US and internationally. Specific areas of study will include the e-government’s relation to the political process and to information policy, what populations are and are not using e-government, challenges to access, open government, the evaluation of e-government, public sphere entities
that support e-government, and social networking applications and e-government, among other topics.

**C. Goals of Course**
The primary goals of this course are to prepare students to understand the:

- Nature of e-government;
- Current and future social and political implications of e-government;
- Specific issues in e-government and the literature related to those issues;
- Different methods and types of e-government;
- Analysis of e-government within the larger policy environment and political context;
- Process of evaluating e-government websites; and
- Role of libraries and non-governmental organizations in providing e-government services.

**D. Course Approach and Expectations of Student Participation**
The course is taught through an online using Canvas. We will meet on the below dates (all Wednesdays from 7:00PM-8:00PM EST) as a group to discuss issues and have guest speakers using Adobe Connect (a Webinar technology):

- February 5
- February 19
- March 5
- March 26 (the 19th is spring break)
- April 9
- April 23
- May 7

We realize that work or other schedules may prohibit you from attending some of the sessions, and they will be recorded for viewing at your convenience. If you have never used Adobe Connect before, some useful setup information is available at:


and some general information is available at:


Please do run the checks. A microphone is helpful if your computer does not already have one built in.

The course content is accessible via http://elms.umd.edu in the INST607-ML01,SG01: E-Government: Information, Communication, and Policy-Spring 2014 jbertot site to which all registered students have access once logged into ELMS. The course material will consist of readings, recorded lectures, and other forms of making content available and interaction possible.
The course will be conducted as a seminar. It is essential that each student participates in the discussions of course materials. Participation means active involvement in class discussions via the discussion boards. Students should read the assigned readings for each week PRIOR TO THAT WEEK. The students are expected to question, challenge, argue, and discuss issues and topics related to that session's readings. Failure to participate in the course will result in a letter grade of F for this component.

Finally, much of your work throughout this semester will actually be put into practice. Three years ago, we (the American Library Association and the Information Policy & Access Center in the College of Information Studies) received a grant from the US Institute of Museum and Library Services to create a web resource with four goals:

1. To provide resources that help librarians think about how best to engage in e-government services in their libraries.
2. To provide communication tools to build and deepen relationships between librarians and government agencies.
3. To provide communication tools to facilitate the building of a community of practice among and between librarians to share best practice e-government engagement programs and services that meet community needs.
4. To identify selected and key government agency information, resources and services to assist librarians in meeting patron e-government needs.

The grant ended in August 2013, and we have completely redesigned and are about to relaunch the web resource (found at lib2gov.org), and continue to build partnerships with agencies (most recently the Social Security Administration). In addition, we are launching a webinar series on a range of topics throughout 2014. Some of your assignments (such as the blog entries) will be used to enhance the content on the site.

E. Assignments and Grading
Your grade will be based on five items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Grading</th>
<th>Due Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Throughout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>February 24, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog Entries</td>
<td>30% (15% each)</td>
<td>March 10, 2014 &amp; April 7, 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Written materials for this course should be double-spaced, using 12-point Times New Roman font. The margins should be 1 inch on each side. Citations—both in the text and in the references section—should conform to the most recent style manual of your choice (e.g., APA, Chicago). Pages should be numbered and the format consistent. Papers are to be submitted via ELMS on their specified due dates.

1. **Classroom participation** (20% of final grade). You are expected to read all of the assignments, to think through the issues they raise, and to articulate your thoughts on the materials. In this course, each week’s assignments include both reading assigned articles and
examining assigned websites. What does participation mean? We will post lectures and questions at the beginning of each week. Students should read the materials, read the questions, and listen to/read the lecture content. Students are expected to answer the questions, add their analysis at the onset of the week, and then follow up again based on comments from other students later in the week. At a minimum, students should post twice during any week. However, simply posting (e.g., “I agree”) is not participation. Students are expected to engage in the content, analyze, and critique. You should feel free to introduce your own questions and observations based on the readings to engage in further discussion.

Absences are excused in cases of illness, religious observances, and other reasons in line with university policies.

2. **Annotated Bibliography** (25% of final grade). Working in groups of three, develop an annotated bibliography of 15 e-government pages/sites focused on a specific content area (retirement, personal finance, kids’ health, disaster preparation, and mobile app development (or one focused on e-government technologies), government information (e.g., GPO’s FDSYS, Library of Congress’ Congress.gov, or GSA’s USA.gov). Include a brief description of the content selected, the URLs, and a paragraph about what is included in the content of each page/site. Following the bibliography, provide a brief comparison of content across the sites. Sites for this assignment can be from abroad, U.S. federal, state, or local websites, and/or nonprofit or other professional organization.

3. Blog entries (2 entries; each is worth 15% of final grade). Each entry should be between 500-750 words, and can include images or other media (e.g., links to videos, figures, charts). Entries will be published on the [Lib2Gov](https://example.com) website.

   a) Blog Entry #1 – Review an e-government mobile app or interactive tool available through an e-government website.

   b) Blog Entry #2 – Review one of the websites you identified in Assignment #2 (Annotated Bibliography). *Be sure to coordinate with your group members so that you each review a different website.*

All blog entries should include each of the following elements:

- A description of the purpose of the website/tool/app -- what is it designed to do? Who is its target audience?
- An assessment of how well (in your opinion) the website/tool/app functions.
- A discussion of any barriers to use or other issues you’ve identified in connection with the website/tool/app.
- Recommendations for improving the website/tool/app.

Extra Credit: Select one of your blog entries (if there is overlap, we may pair you up) for further development into a website review for publication in *Government Information Quarterly*. We also want to ensure that the site hasn’t been reviewed before – unless
significant changes have occurred since the last review. If you choose to do this, please
review in particular the (under Student Reviews):

- April (Volume 29, number 2) issue;
- July (Volume 29, number 3) issue; and
- October (Volume 30, number 4) issue.

Below are useful guidelines for conducting a website review for publication. You may
also find these useful for guiding your blog entries.

**Components of Website Review**

A website review is a description, critical analysis, and an evaluation on the quality,
presentation, design, and content of a website. It should focus on the website’s purpose,
content, authority, service provision, and goal attainment. A critical website review is not
a summary. It is your assessment of the site, and should include a statement of what the
designers tried to do, evaluate how well (in the opinion of the reviewer) the designers
have succeeded, and present evidence to support this evaluation.

There is no right way to conduct a website assessment, though there are different
approaches and frameworks one could use – accessibility (i.e., 508 and usability, to name
two). For this assignment, we are asking you to look at the overall goals of the website
from and e-government service perspective and assess the extent to which the website
achieves those goals: how it succeeds; why it might fall short; how it could be improved;
what works well.

The following are some suggestions for writing the review:

1. Write a statement giving essential information about the website: title, URL,
   Agency/Department, when designed/last modified, general content/service area, special
   features (maps, interactive services, visualizations, datasets, etc.).

2. State the website’s purpose. Why does this exist? There may be an “about” feature that
can help identify this.

3. Identify key services offered on the site – data, online forms, interactive
   services/features, etc.

4. Assess the implementation, design, content:
   a. Is the material useful?
   b. What barriers or challenges did you encounter in trying to use the site?
   c. How might the general public use the site?
   d. In a service context (e.g., libraries), how might this site be useful or challenging to the
      public?
5. Examine the demographics of the community the website is supposed to serve and describe its basic social, educational, and economic characteristics. Does the website take any of the characteristics into account?

h. Other observations.

5. Summarize (briefly), analyze, and comment on the website’s overall utility. State your general conclusions. Think of you as serving as someone who would recommend that other librarians or information professionals use this website to help the public.

4. E-Government Issue Paper (25% of final grade): A 5-7 page paper focused on an information policy issue related to e-government (e.g., open government; digital inclusion; privacy). This paper should:

- Explain how the issue relates to e-government;
- Offer a brief review of the relevant literature;
- Identify 2-3 local/state/federal government initiatives that currently address this issue and provide an overview of each of these initiatives (e.g., goals, history, implementation issues); and
- Identify areas for future research related to this issue.

F. Online Classroom Environment
As a graduate seminar, the classroom 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.

G. 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.

H. 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.
I. 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.

J. Emergency Preparedness
Information about the status of the campus is available at www.umd.edu. 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.

K. Office Hours & Contact Information
I am always available to you by appointment. Send me an e-mail (jbertot@umd.edu) and we will set up a time to meet – by phone, skype, or chat, or in person. Ursula: do you want to add any contact info or be available to students?

L. Weekly Topics, Readings, and Review Material
The class begins on January 27, 2014 and ends May 13, 2014. With online content, class lectures and content will be available to students the Monday of each week. Discussions will take place throughout the week via the discussion boards. I encourage students to bring in outside readings and observations to enhance our discussions.

M. Weekly Topics and Assignments

WEEK 1 (JANUARY 27): INTRODUCTION TO COURSE AND EXPECTATIONS; WHAT IS E-GOVERNMENT?
   A. Overview of topics and concepts to be covered
   B. Introduction to Lib2Gov
   C. Preliminary discussion of e-government
   D. The nature of e-government
   E. The legal bases of e-government
   F. The intents of e-government

Preparation:


• Visit: http://www.lib2gov.org

**WEEK 2 (FEBRUARY 3): BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR E-GOVERNMENT (GROUP MEETING VIA ADOBE CONNECT ON FEBRUARY 5)**

A. Technology infrastructure  
B. Broadband  
C. Interoperability  
D. Policy

**Preparation:**


WEEK 3 (FEBRUARY 10): ACCESS TO E-GOVERNMENT
A. Issues of access and acceptance

Preparation:
• Plattfaut, R., et al. (2013). Unravelling (E-)Government channel selection: A quantitative analysis of individual customer preferences in Germany and Australia. HICSS Conference. DOI: 0.1109/HICSS.2013.585 (you can access this via the IEEE Xplore database).
• Visit: http://www.pewinternet.org (search for current data on e-government access)

WEEK 4 (FEBRUARY 17): USING E-GOVERNMENT (GROUP MEETING VIA ADOBE CONNECT ON FEBRUARY 19)
A. How citizens (want to) contact government
B. Trust of e-government
C. Citizens as customers?
D. What happens when the government goes dark?

Preparation:
WEEK 5: DESIGNING, DEVELOPING, AND IMPLEMENTING E-GOVERNMENT (FEBRUARY 24)

A. Special populations
B. Design considerations
C. Mobile Technologies

Preparation:

- Visit: http://www.houstontx.gov/disabilities/
- Visit: http://pewinternet.org/Commentary/2012/February/Pew-Internet-Mobile.aspx (Pew Internet: Mobile)

DUE: Annotated Bibliography

WEEK 6 (MARCH 3)– USERS OF E-GOVERNMENT AND BARRIERS TO USE (GROUP MEETING ON MARCH 5)

A. WHO USES E-GOVERNMENT?
B. FACTORS ENCOURAGING USAGE OF E-GOVERNMENT
C. WHO DOES NOT USE E-GOVERNMENT
D. BARRIERS TO ADOPTION AND USE

Preparation:


**Week 7 (March 10) – Open Government: Overview**

A. What is open government?
B. What is transparency?
C. What is open data?
D. What is open data?

**Preparation:**


• Visit: data.gov


**Due: Blog Entry #1**

**Week 8 (March 17): Spring Break – No Class**
WEEK 9 (MARCH 24) OPEN GOVERNMENT: SMART CITIES (GROUP MEETING VIA ADOBE CONNECT ON MARCH 26)

Preparation:

WEEK 10 (MARCH 31): OPEN GOVERNMENT: POLICY IMPLICATIONS
A. Access and Dissemination
B. Privacy, Security, and Accuracy
C. Use, Storage and Preservation

Preparation:

WEEK 11 (APRIL 7): LIBRARIES AND E-GOVERNMENT (GROUP MEETING VIA ADOBE CONNECT ON APRIL 9)
A. Roles of libraries in ensuring access and training for e-government
B. Implications for residents, communities, and governments

Preparation:

Due: Blog Entry #2

WEEK 12 (APRIL 14): E-GOV 2.0 AND E-PARTICIPATION Social media, networks and virtual worlds
  A. E-gov 2.0
  B. E-participation

Preparation:

WEEK 13 (APRIL 21): INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS AND ISSUES (GROUP MEETING VIA ADOBE CONNECT ON APRIL 23)
  A. General international issues
  B. Comparison of different international efforts and overview approaches

Preparation:


**WEEK 14 (APRIL 28): EVALUATING E-GOVERNMENT** (User-centered evaluation

A. Policy-centered evaluation  
B. E-government maturity

Preparation:


**WEEK 15 (WEEK OF MAY 5): DEVELOPING ISSUES AND FUTURE RESEARCH (GROUP MEETING ON MAY 7)**

A. What is e-government really meant to do in the long run?  
B. What are the directions of e-government research?

Preparation:


**DUE: E-Government Issue Paper**

**N. Syllabus Change Policy**

This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.