1 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 a variety of settings, and examine a number of examples of successful and unsuccessful online information management.

2 Learning Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students are expected to be able to:

1. Describe major concepts and theories of information.
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. Critically evaluate the complex relationship between technology and information.
5. Identify and assess information problems that arise in organizations and other environments and provide recommendations and/or solutions.
6. Demonstrate familiarity with contemporary information trends.

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

3.1 Prerequisites
This course has no prerequisites.

3.2 Course Materials

Text
Articles will be provided through Canvas.

Systems
Canvas (http://elms.umd.edu/) will be the authoritative source for the course syllabus, schedule, presentation materials, announcements, and assignment details. Canvas will host online discussions and course assignments will be submitted on Canvas.

3.3 Academic Integrity
The University of Maryland 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. As defined by the University of Maryland, Academic Dishonesty includes the following activities:

1. “CHEATING: intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.
2. FABRICATION: intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.
3. FACILITATING ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate any provision of this Code.
4. PLAGIARISM: intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise.”

Academic dishonesty also includes buying assignments, submitting the same paper more than once, forging signatures, bribery, and other acts that deceive others about your academic work or record. You may also find this Office of Student Conduct definition of academic dishonesty helpful: http://osc.umd.edu/OSC/AcademicDishonesty.aspx.

My general policy is “two strikes and you’re out.” The first incident will be penalized by reduction of up to one letter grade (i.e., 10%). If a second incident occurs, the student will automatically receive a failing grade and will be referred to the Honor Council, which would be a very unpleasant experience.

Although these consequences may seem harsh, the consequences for such behavior in a professional setting can be far more devastating to your career and reputation. If you have any questions about this policy or how to properly cite materials, please use all available resources, including the library, websites, and your professor. All assignments must reflect your own original work.
3.4 Attendance & Student Conduct

Regular class attendance is obligatory. Since in-class participation is part of the course evaluation, missing class will negatively affect your course grade. If you must miss class, notify the professor in advance by email and check with your classmates afterward so that you can catch up.

As a graduate student, I expect you are fully capable of behaving professionally in the classroom, which means treating the professor and your fellow classmates with the respect that you would like to experience yourself. Since you may need letters of reference for future employment, demonstrating your capacity for professional behavior now is also a great strategy to help ensure that your professors and peers are happy to recommend you for the jobs of your dreams. This means that:

- side conversations are discouraged,
- your cell phone must be silenced before the start of class,
- you should be using your electronic devices for class purposes only, and
- disruptive students will be asked to leave and will forfeit the participation grade for the day.

3.4.1 Excused Absences

In compliance with University policy, you may excuse yourself from one class session for medical reasons, making a reasonable effort to inform the professor in advance. More than two absences for medical reasons requires documentation from a health care provider in order to avoid penalties on participation grades.

In addition, it is the student’s responsibility to inform the professor of any intended absences for religious observances within the first two weeks of class (by September 11) to avoid penalties on participation grades.

Students may also be excused for participation in University activities at the request of university authorities; written documentation of such an event is required to avoid penalties on participation grades.

A limited number of make-up credit assignments are available for students who pre-arrange to make up for planned absences. If you know you will have more than one absence, contact the professor by September 10 to discuss whether this option is available to you.

3.4.2 Inclement Weather

Official closures and delays are announced on the campus website at umd.edu and snow phone line (301-405-SNOW), as well as on local radio and TV stations. Unless there is an official closure or delay, you should assume that class will meet.

3.4.3 Emergency Preparedness

If a public emergency arises, please see the University’s Emergency Preparedness Website at http://www.umd.edu/emergencypreparedness/ for information about the current status of the campus. If a class session needs to be rescheduled, I will email you as soon as possible.

3.5 Communications

Communication outside of class will use Canvas or your umd.edu email account. Course announcements will be posted on Canvas and individual correspondence will be conducted via email. I will
make every effort to send announcements with adequate advance notice; failure to receive email announcements will not be considered a suitable excuse for not being informed. Include “INFM600” in email subject lines for prompt response; messages without the course number in the subject line may be overlooked. I will typically reply in two business days, usually less. Telephone is not an effective way to contact me.

3.6 Academic Assistance

If you experience difficulties keeping up with the academic demands of this course, 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 services are free to UMD students.

3.7 Disability Accommodations

According to University policy, students with disabilities must acquire documentation from the Disability Support Service Office (4-7682 or dissup@umd.edu) prior to receiving accommodations. However, students are encouraged to speak with me by appointment or during office hours about disability accommodations while awaiting an Accommodation Letter from DSS, which must be presented by the end of the drop/add period.

3.8 Intellectual Property

The University of Maryland’s official policy is that copyright for all course materials is held by the professor. Because I hold the intellectual property rights under this policy, I am making them freely available via a Creative Commons 3.0 BY-NC-SA license, http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/.

With respect to ownership of student work, I may request written permission to use exceptional work as examples for future classes, but you hold all copyright to your own work and may decide whether or not to permit such use. By extension, you do not have the right to reuse or redistribute any work of your classmates without their consent, so you and your teammates should agree on acceptable uses of any team project materials for other purposes, e.g., professional portfolios.

Please see the description of the Information Organization assignment for an exception to this policy. If you have IP or privacy concerns related to this assignment, please contact me by September 15 to discuss your options, which include arranging an alternate assignment.
4 Course Schedule

Note the course schedule is subject to change. Assignment due dates are also posted in Canvas.

Readings are listed for the dates for which they should be completed; for example, you should read the selections listed under Week 2 by class time on September 10, etc. Note that required online discussion makes it inadvisable to wait until the last minute to complete course readings.

Part 1: Information Perspectives

Broad theories and perspectives on information.

Week 1, September 3: Introduction to Information Environments

- **Administrivia** Review of syllabus and course policies
- **Topics** Course introduction & administration; information, technology, & society; data vs. information vs. knowledge
- **Assignment** Pre-course survey & feedback on office hours due by 9/2

Week 2, September 10: Seeking Information

- **Topics** Relational components of information seeking; newcomer strategies in socialization; information seeking strategies
- **Assignment** Email top 3 preferred readings by 9/9

Week 3, September 17: Producing, Consuming, & Interpreting Information

- **Topics** The value of information; information consumption; information overload

Week 4, September 24: Organizing Information

- **Topics** Metadata; information architecture
- **Assignment** Information Seeking

Week 5, October 1: Analyzing Information

- **Topics** How organizations use data; quantified self; big data in organizations
Part 2: Information Applications
Specific environments and situations in which information is a critical factor.

Week 6, October 8: Collaboration, Cooperation, & Competition
- **Topics** Making collaboration work; role of distance; online community participation
- **Assignment** Team project topics announced
- **Guest Lecture** Dr. Matt Germonprez, University of Nebraska Omaha

Week 7, October 15: Envisioning Information in the 21st Century
- **Topics** Knowledge management; information ecologies; networked publics
- **Assignment** Information Organization; Team lists due

Week 8, October 22: Social Media as an Information Environment
- **Topics** Affordances of social media; business applications
- **Readings** Leonardi et al. (2013), DiMicco et al. (2008), Lampe et al. (2012)
- **Guest Lecture** Dr. Mohammad Jarrahi, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Week 9, October 29: Information Culture in the Workplace
- **Topics** Organizational & informational cultures that work; learning from failure
- **Assignment** Information Problem Analysis

Week 10, November 5: Information Security & Privacy
- **Topics** Penalties vs. pressures in organizations; private vs. public disclosures; privacy vs. obscurity; privacy on social media
- **Assignment** Team progress reports
- **Guest Lecture** Dr. Katie Shilton, University of Maryland iSchool

Week 11, November 12: Information Policy
- **Topics** Political economy of information; rise of the “choice engine”; information disclosure
- **Guest Lecture** Mr. Wayne Davis, Ashford University, the Community Colleges of Baltimore County, & U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Week 12, November 19: Information Ethics

- **Topics** Ethics & privacy; ethics in research; Internet’s impact on information policy
- **Readings** Zimmer (2010), Culnan & Williams (2009)
- **Guest Lecture** Anne Bowser, University of Maryland iSchool

November 27—No Class—Thanksgiving Recess

Week 13, December 3: Future of Information

- **Topics** Mobile/wifi in business & personal life; big data analytics; other topics nominated by students
- **Readings** TBD

Week 14, December 10: Final Presentations

- **Projects** Presentations of team projects
- **Assignments** Powerpoint poster, White paper

5 Assessment

This course provides an overview and introduction to key topics in the field of information management. To practice valuable professional skills, class members will engage in discussions, readings, and collaborative and individual assignments. Discussions will help you develop your ability to reflect about practical issues and discuss these with colleagues. Readings will provide an introduction to topics and exposure to current issues, debates, issues, and solutions. Written and group assignments serve as skill building exercises.

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Approximately 1/3 of your grade will come from your team project, about 1/3 from participation, and a little more than 1/3 from individual assignments. This will give you opportunity to demonstrate your mastery of course concepts both independently and as part of your team.

Notably, participation makes up a substantial portion of your grade. It should be easy to get full credit for participation simply by showing up and contributing to the discussion, both in class and online. However, chronic absence or silence will slowly chip away at your grade and employers will expect you to speak up and share your insights and expertise, so participating in these discussions will be good professional practice.

5.1 Guidelines for preparing assignments

Prepare a professional document with tables and graphs that support your content where appropriate. Follow all instructions carefully, and ask questions as soon as they arise if you are uncertain about the assignment requirements.

Document requirements:

- Use 11pt Times New Roman in black, single spaced with 1” margins on all sides; you may use larger font sizes, sans serif fonts, boldface, and/or italics for section headers. Content that does not match these guidelines will be subject to additional scrutiny for potential plagiarism.

- On every page, document headers must include your name and UMD email address on the left and the assignment name on the right.

- On every page, document footers must include page numbering; for the White Paper portion of the Team Project, cover pages should not include numbers or headers.

- At the end of the document, include the word count (not counting references).

- Title your assignment documents using the following format: DirectoryID-Assignment.pdf. For example, my reading and summary discussion document would be titled Wiggins-Summary.pdf.

- See assignment descriptions on Canvas for accepted file types and to submit assignments.

When you prepare assignments or post on the discussion boards be sure to provide proper bibliographical information for any sources referenced, for direct quotations, and for the sources of key concepts or ideas. Any citation format is acceptable, as long as it provides sufficient information for a reader to find the source. If you cite a webpage, be sure to indicate the URL and the date on which you accessed the page, as pages do change. Check the UMD citation guide for more details: http://www.lib.umd.edu/ues/guides/citation-tools. If you have questions about what must be cited or how to cite, please ask. Students are encouraged to check their assignments prior to submission using one of the free online plagiarism checkers (e.g., www.grammarly.com).

In addition to punctuality, the grammar, presentation and your ability to follow instructions are very important, as in the real world. If your work does not meet professional standards, up to 30% of your score may be deducted. This applies to all assignments, including online discussions. It is essential that you spell check and proofread your documents; it may help to compose your discussion posts in a Word document to verify spelling and grammar before copying into Canvas. Proofreading a printed copy of your work is especially effective for finding errors that you might overlook on the screen and is strongly recommended for all assignments.
5.2 Grades and Grading

Assignments are due as defined in the syllabus unless otherwise specified. The penalty for late assignments will be **10% within the first 24 hours, and an additional 25% for each week thereafter.** An exception is possible in an extreme circumstance in which there is no reasonable way to anticipate or control the situation. Computers crashing, viruses, lost files, etc. are specifically not grounds for an extension.

Grading rubrics for each assignment will be provided on Canvas; please take advantage of them as you prepare your assignments. If you wish to discuss a grade, submit a written explanation of your argument and arrange for a private conversation. Except for unusual circumstances, no appeals will be considered more than two weeks after the graded paper is returned. For final course grades, no appeal will be considered more than two months after the final day of classes.

Unless announced otherwise, I will respond to questions or postings on Canvas within two business days. Assignments submitted by the due date will be graded within 1 week. Final projects may require up to 2 weeks to grade. Assignments submitted late will receive lower priority and so will take longer to grade.

Satisfactorily meeting the assignment criteria will normally earn a “B” grade. “A” grades represent exceptional, above-average work; if you wish to earn an A, you should plan to go above and beyond expectations. Rubrics are provided for all assignments so you can check whether your work meets grading criteria before you submit it.

The course grade is based on the assessment items described above. Final grades will be computed based on the scale below and partial points/percentages will be rounded for final grades.

- 94 - 100%: A (4.0)
- 90 - 93%: A- (3.7)
- 86 - 89%: B+ (3.3)
- 82 - 85%: B (3.0)
- 78 - 81%: B- (2.7)
- 74 - 77%: C+ (2.3)
- 70 - 73%: C (2.0)
- 66 - 69%: D (1.0)
- 0 - 65%: F (0.0)

5.3 Discussion and Participation  30% total

5.3.1 In-class Participation  15%

Class discussions are an important way to learn and demonstrate learning; everyone is expected to partake in discussion of readings, presentations, and in-class activities. Non-attendance will be reflected in a decrease in this grade (and likely other grades as well). You can earn 1 point (percent) each week, with an extra point for actively interacting with the presentations on the last day.

5.3.2 Online Discussions  15%

In addition to in-class discussions, there will be separately graded online discussions. Each week, provided topics for discussion focus on the themes we are studying that week. Preparation and participation in the discussion will be worth 1 point each week, with an extra point for the week that you are managing discussion related to a course reading. Participation is more than a minimal “I agree” or “I disagree” and should include (for example) a justification, explanation, or analysis; a good strategy is to introduce a new idea or question. Posts should show engagement with the
course materials, readings, and activities: posing and answering questions, offering examples or identifying useful resources, or analysis and critiques.

The online discussions will be summarized along with the readings for each week; forums close 24 hours before class (Tuesdays at 6 PM) so that the discussions can be fully summarized for class.

5.4 Reading & Discussion Summaries

Throughout the course, each person will manage the online discussion about one weekly reading and then summarize, synthesize, and present the both the article and discussion about it. Presenters for Week 2 will be selected from volunteers during the first class session. **By September 9, review the list of readings and email the professor with your top 3 choices of articles (or weeks) to present;** every effort will be made to honor your preferences. The list of reading assignments will be posted on Canvas by 6 PM on Thursday, September 11. Students added to the course after September 11 will be offered their choice of remaining readings to present on a first-come, first-served basis.

This assignment has 5 parts:

- develop a short thread starter topic about the article, due the Tuesday before the reading is assigned,
- manage the online discussion about the article, responding and prompting others as needed,
- create a handout summarizing the article and main points of the online discussion, due the day the reading is discussed in class,
- give a 5-minute in-class presentation about the article and online discussion,
- lead a 5-minute in-class discussion about the article and online discussion.

To prepare to host the online discussion, you will prepare a discussion starter topic and create a post that opens at 6 PM on Wednesday the week before you present in class, and closes at 6 PM the following Tuesday. The starter topic should be about 4–6 sentences, with 2–3 questions for the rest of the class to discuss. You will then actively manage the discussion of your assigned article, asking and answering questions in reply to your classmates’ responses to your topic, until the discussion closes. You can begin your summary handout during the discussion process to reduce the amount of last-minute work.

The summary will be shared with the class in a handout and an informal 5-minute presentation at the start of the class period. The summary should cover the main themes of the reading, how it relates to other readings or topics we have covered in class, the main points made in the online discussion about the reading, and must include at least one question for in-class discussion. The presentation will be made **without** slides. Following your presentation, you will lead a 5-minute discussion about the question (or questions) you pose. I recommend preparing one or two follow-up questions in case your primary question falls flat.

The handout you prepare will include both a brief summary of the article and your discussion synthesis notes. The handout should fit on one side of a sheet of paper when formatted according to the assignment preparation guidelines, and should not include page numbering and word count. Proofread carefully, as grammar and spelling errors will be penalized. If desired, you may include additional related references, websites, or materials in your handout.
Submit the handout as a Microsoft Word document or PDF on Canvas (upload to the correct assignment) by noon on the Wednesday that you’re presenting. The handout will be re-posted on Canvas for your classmates’ use as a reference material.

5.5 Information Seeking 10% total

Each student will pick a topic or issue related to one or more of the information applications discussed in Part II of the class. For example, a student interested in information security may pick the issue of whether biometrics provide a sufficient level of security on personal devices like phones. A student interested in information policy may pick the issue domestic drones. A student interested in collaboration and cooperation in the workplace may choose to evaluate the decision by several companies to end work-from-home policies. For topic ideas, you may want to review business intelligence reports from Gartner and business and tech news sites, such as Wired, TechCrunch, Businessweek, or ComputerWorld, among others. Students should then do some background research (i.e., information seeking) to learn more about the topic.

This assignment must include three things:

1. A 1–2 paragraph description/rationale for your topic choice that shows how the topic is related to one or more of the topics discussed in the second half of class.

2. A list of at least five articles (include title, source, and link) that provide information related to that topic. Examples of appropriate sources include The New York Times, Harvard Business Review, Wired, Businessweek, etc. Wikipedia is not a valid source, but a reasonable starting place for looking for credible sources.

3. At least five questions that an in-depth analysis of this topic should address (students only need to provide the questions, not answer them). To return to the work-from-home policy example, one question a student may ask is, “Do communication technologies help or inhibit remote collaboration in the workplace?”

This assignment is due Week 4 (September 24) and a full example of this assignment is posted on Canvas (this topic cannot be used by students).

5.6 Information Organization 10% total

For this assignment, you will contribute to developing a new information resource, a “data census” that will describe sources of data about online communities, along with students at McKendree University, Illinois Institute of Technology, and University College of Dublin. The assignment involves creating metadata records and writing a reflective statement. Before you begin the assignment, read the special note below. If you have questions or concerns, contact the professor.

Identify two data sets about (or from) online communities to document. If the answer to the question “could you use this data set to learn something about a specific online community or sub-community?” is yes, then it should be a suitable data set. You can start by finding academic articles or sources similar to those suggested in the Information Seeking assignment to find studies of online communities. You can also start from an online community that interests you and locate a data set from or about that community. For each data set, verify whether it has already been described on the wiki. Note that neither Twitter nor Facebook (or similar social media sites) are considered a “community” for this assignment, as they are platforms used by multiple communities, but data sets about a specific community may be gathered from a platform. If you are unsure about whether the data set you have selected represents a community versus a platform, contact the professor before October 8.
To start the assignment, go to the wiki at http://wiki.opendata.missouri.edu and create a new account. Use the template on the wiki to create a new page for the data you selected. Fill in the template as well as possible: not all of this information will be easily available. On the Discussion page, include the sources for the metadata, document what you were unable to fill in, and if relevant to using the data, why.

You are encouraged to add more information to the record that is not already part of the template, but which you believe would be useful for understanding and using the data. Including additional metadata beyond what the template requires will be indicative of “A” work on this assignment; browse existing pages to get ideas of what other additional information, annotation, citations, or description might be useful to a potential data user. If you are able to fill in less than 50% of the fields in the template for both of your selected data sets, you should create records for (at least) one additional data set and describe the challenges you encountered in your reflective statement.

Write a 250-300 word reflective statement about the assignment: What was easy? What was hard? What did you learn about the community from documenting the data about it? What was the most important thing you learned related to information organization? How would you suggest improving the assignment and the wiki?

At the end of the statement, include your wiki username and the URLs for the pages you created. Submit the statement on Canvas by the start of class on Week 7 (October 15).

Special note on intellectual property and privacy: This assignment requires you to post your work to a public wiki. The FERPA laws that safeguard your personal privacy and intellectual property rights were created before blogs and wikis existed, so it is unclear how the law applies to course assignments that require participation in a public space.

If you are concerned about your personal privacy, you are encouraged to use a pseudonym. All students should avoid posting private or self-identifying information, regardless of whether or not they use a pseudonym.

Using a pseudonym to protect your privacy means you will receive no public acknowledgment for your work. Some students may therefore prefer to choose a username that is personally identifiable because publicly visible contributions can have positive effects on your professional reputation (of course, they can also have negative reputation effects). The decision of whether or not to associate your personal identity with your work on this assignment is entirely your own and will not affect your grade.

In order to create a useful information resource, the wiki and its contents will have an open license. This means that for this assignment only, you will not hold the copyright for your work because it will become part of a shared public resource.

If you have any concerns about this assignment, please make an appointment to talk to me by September 15 about your options, which include an alternate assignment.

5.7 Information Problem Analysis  10% total

Three recent “information problems” (faced by organizations or individuals) will be posted to Canvas by October 1. Incorporating knowledge gained from class, evaluate the information problem in a 1000–1500 word (excluding references) critical paper that addresses all questions included in the chosen scenario. Analyses should include a minimum of five references, which can include but are not limited to readings from class.
You will be graded on your ability to evaluate the problem and provide a well-researched response, not your ability to offer your own opinion (unless it is directly requested in the question). As in the prior assignments, proper citations must be included, and Wikipedia is not an acceptable reference. This paper will be due at the beginning of Week 9’s class on October 29.

5.8 Team Project

From the projects submitted for the Information Seeking assignment, the professor will select 10 that represent a diverse set of topics and that provide questions that are interesting, have a significant relationship to the class material, and will provide for a useful research and learning experience for the class. The professor may also provide feedback on the direction of these projects. The 10 projects will be announced and posted to Canvas during Week 6.

The individuals responsible for the 10 selected projects will become team leads for the final project, and will each choose two additional team members. A list of team members should be submitted (via email) to the professor by class time on October 15, Week 7.

Each team will be responsible for analyzing the chosen research topic and research questions provided by the project lead and creating a dynamic deliverable that showcases the results. This project will include:

1. A progress report “brief” summarizing progress to date, submitted on Week 10 (November 5), 5%.
2. A short (approx. 2500 word) problem/solution white paper, submitted on the last class (December 10), 15%
3. A Powerpoint (or Keynote) poster, presented to your colleagues during the last class, 10%.

5.8.1 Progress Report

By the start of class on Week 10 (November 5), each team should submit a one-page (minimum) report summarizing progress to date. This report can take the form of a draft white paper (with whatever sections have been written to date); it can include a discussion of questions and/or problems the team has encountered; and/or it can outline the team’s plans for completing the project. Just as project teams have supervisors review their progress, this is an opportunity for the professor to review each team’s progress and offer feedback to improve the project prior to its submission.

5.8.2 White Paper

Each team’s white paper will evolve from the individual project and research questions that team is assigned. This project should follow a similar format to a problem/solution white paper, in which you identify the issue of interest, provide background on why it is a “problem,” offer a “solution,” and provide supporting evidence for your stance.

A general outline for the white paper follows. Your paper is not required to follow this exact format, but certain information must be included as indicated below. You can include additional sections as you desire. Overviews and descriptions of white papers vary, but some examples can be found at https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/owlprint/546/ and http://www.dirjournal.com/business-journal/how-to-write-a-white-paper/.

1. Cover page with title, author names, author email addresses (required).
2. Executive Summary: short (150–200 words) description of the paper that describes the problem and solution (required).

3. Introduction: Introduces the topic, provides overview of the white paper, i.e., what the rest of the paper will do.

4. Background: Describes the problem in detail based on what other research has found.

5. Solution/Recommendations: Argues for the best solution(s) and discusses alternative solutions and why they are not recommended.

6. Conclusion: Summarizes the paper; used as a way to enhance readers’ understanding of topic.

7. Visuals: Charts, graphs, or images can be included to highlight or enhance your argument. Note: if you are using an image from another source, you MUST cite the source.

8. References: Make sure these are formatted consistently and properly referenced in the text (required).

In addition, your paper must include a contributorship statement as an appendix, either just before or after the references; do not include it in the word count. This statement requires just a few sentences to document which team member took responsibility for each part of the research, analysis, and writing. Negotiating these roles up front should help simplify your project planning.

Some important questions to ask when preparing your white paper and conducting your background research:

1. What is your overarching research problem?

   • Think about how these research questions are related and come up with a problem you will focus on. From the sample Information Seeking assignment, the research questions could lead to focusing on assessing whether the benefits of teleworking outweigh its drawbacks.
   
   • What are the most important variables (factors) related to this topic? Make sure you define/describe all key topics that relate to your problem/solution.
   
   • Provide enough details in your background that a lay person feels comfortable with the topic.

2. Why is this topic interesting/important?

   • How is it related to class? Try to explicitly relate course concepts to your discussion of the topic and solution. You may be interested in how a number of concepts tie into your topic (e.g., privacy, security, ethics); it’s fine to discuss all of these.
   
   • What is the role of information in this topic? This should be clear throughout the paper.
   
   • What value do we gain by researching/sharing information about it?

3. Is your solution the “best” one for the problem?

   • Consider/present counter solutions.
   
   • Why is the one you chose better than the others? Be able to defend your choice.
5.8.3 Poster Presentation

During the final class session, we will hold staggered poster presentations in which several teams at a time will present their posters to the rest of the class. Each team will design a creative and informative Powerpoint poster to share the results of your white papers with your colleagues. This set of Powerpoint slides (6–8 slides printed one sided) should address the main points of the analysis including (but not limited to):

- the research “problem”
- background on the topic
- the role of information
- the role of technology
- the team’s proposed solution(s)

Each team will be responsible for (a) submitting an electronic copy of their slides to Canvas by the start of the final class (December 10), and (b) preparing a printed full-size (one slide per page) presentation copy of the sides and bringing them to class. The professor will provide materials to attach the slides to the wall for the poster discussion sessions.

There will be three 45-minute sessions (two with three teams and one with four teams), with 10-minute breaks between sessions. During each session, the teams will secure their posters in their designated part of the wall. Each team will give a 5-7 minute “brief” on their project, then the class will spend the rest of the time browsing the posters and interacting with the team members about their projects. Rehearsing your presentation for the briefing is recommended.

All students are required to attend this class and are expected to be active participants in this session, as this is an excellent opportunity to both learn about a variety of information topics and practice valuable presentation skills that will be important in the workplace.

6 Course Readings


