A. Catalog Description of Course

The course will cover the nature, structure, development, and application of information policy. This includes the interactions, and interdependence, of society’s social objectives, stakeholders, rapidly evolving systems of telecommunications and information technology, along with other social, economic and political forces that shape information policy decisions.

B. Detailed Description

The access, exchange, and management of information have been key recurring issues throughout the history of the United States, from the Declaration of the Independence through today. This course examines selected aspects of public policy questions that relate to information and communications, with special attention paid to complex policy issues that involve value conflicts among information ownership rights, personal privacy rights, and public access rights to information. It focuses on constitutional principles, statutory provisions, laws and regulations, and federal policies. Topics include information equity, universal service, privacy, intellectual property, censorship, and e-government. The course focuses on providing students with a fundamental understanding of the importance and impact of information policy on the information profession.

C. Course Goals and Learning Objectives

The course will introduce students to a variety of key information and telecommunications policy laws, traditions, literature and issues. The intent of the class is to assist students:

- Understand the relationships among the various policy issues such as access rights, proprietary rights, consumer rights and privacy rights in the information and telecommunications policy arenas;
- Understand selected policy issues of importance to information professionals and to the general public;
- Become familiar with constitutional and statutory legal provisions, domestic laws, regulations and federal policies that relate to selected information and telecommunications policy issues;
- Gain an appreciation for the methods of policy analysis and research; and
- Describe and analyze information policy issues.
At the completion of the course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a broad understanding of major information and telecommunications policy issues;
- Demonstrate familiarity with significant literature, constitutional and statutory provisions, domestic laws, regulations and federal policies relating to information and telecommunications policy issues;
- Describe and analyze information and telecommunications policy issues; and
- Demonstrate an awareness of the interrelationships among key information and telecommunications policy issues such as information access rights, universal service, and privacy.

This course is designed as a policy *primer*. Thus, students will be exposed to a number of policy issues and literature. Given the breadth and depth of a number of these issue areas, it will not be possible to cover all aspects of the issues throughout the course.

**D. Course Approach and Expectations of Student Participation**

The course is taught asynchronously online using CANVAS. The course content is accessible via [http://elms.umd.edu](http://elms.umd.edu). The course material will consist of readings, recorded lectures, discussion threads, and other forms of making content available and interaction possible. It is essential that every student contribute to the discussions and demonstrate a clear knowledge of the course materials. Students are expected to question, challenge, argue, and discuss issues and topics related to each weekly session's readings. Much of your participation will take place via the discussion threads in Canvas. You should plan on posting at least twice to each posed discussion question: once as an initial response to the question, and a second time to respond/react to classmate postings. Contributions will be assessed based on substance, the incorporation of reading materials, and your insights/assessment. Failure to participate in the course will result in a letter grade of F for this component.

We will also use Present.me for student presentations. Accounts have been established for you, and you can access the site at [http://ipac.present.me](http://ipac.present.me).

**E. Classroom Environment**

As a graduate level course, the classroom online environment should be professional and respectful. Discussions should be based on course readings and critical thinking. Issues of policy can involve strongly held beliefs and engage current political controversies. Remember--your classmates may have different perspectives on issues than you, but they still deserve your respect.

**F. Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who need 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. Please do let me know how I can be of help.

G. Extensions

Timeliness is an essential component of 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 a letter grade for each day the paper is late, while unexcused delays in presentations will result in a deduction of a letter grade for each class meeting the presentation is late.

H. 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.

Syllabus Change Policy: This syllabus is a guide for the course. It may become necessary to make changes, however, we will discuss and agree upon those in advance as a class.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND OTHER ITEMS:

There is no required text for the course. All readings will be available to students online or in another accessible format. Nearly all the required journal article readings are accessible through the University’s library e-journal/database holdings accessible at http://www.lib.umd.edu.

For this class, you will also need to register for the Communications Related Headlines listserv run by the Benton Foundation (http://www.benton.org). From the Benton Web site, the Benton Foundation “works to realize the social benefits made possible by the public interest use of communications. Bridging the worlds of philanthropy, public policy, and community action, Benton seeks to shape the emerging communications environment and to demonstrate the value of communications for solving social problems.” The Headlines listserv provides you with a daily summary of the more significant communications policy events of the week.

To subscribe to the Benton Communications Related Headlines, go to http://benton.org/headlines and follow the instructions. The Benton Foundation content can be accessed through a number of other means (e.g., RSS feeds, e-mail). Pick your preference.
Assignments and Grading

Your grades will be based on four items, as detailed below:

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<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Percentage of Grade</th>
<th>Assignment Type</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Each topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who Are My Legislators?</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Friday, July 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Topics Article</td>
<td>30% (20% paper,</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Presentation due: Friday,</td>
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<td>Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issue Brief</td>
<td>35% (25% paper;</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Presentation due: Friday,</td>
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<td>10% presentation)</td>
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<td>August 15</td>
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Letter Grade Equivalents

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<th>Grade</th>
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More detailed assignment information is on the course website and at the end of this syllabus.

Weekly Topics, Readings, and Review Material

Summer Session II begins on July 14, 2014 and ends August 22, 2014. This gives us six (6) weeks to complete the course. As a result, we’ll cover roughly two topics per week and allow for presentations.

**WEEK 1: PRELIMINARY MATTERS AND THE ORIGINS OF INFORMATION POLICY (JULY 14, 2014)**

**TOPICS:**

A. Introduction to course and description of course expectations  
B. Sources of information policy and locating policy resources  
C. Overview of topics and concepts to be covered  
D. The differences between politics and policy  
E. Constitutional origins of federal information policy  
F. Development of information policy  
G. Information policy and the political environment  
H. Stakeholders related to information policy

**Preparation/Readings:**

- U.S. Constitution, Articles 1-3, VI, Amendments I, IV, X, XIV. You can get an online version in the historical documents section on the Library of Congress's Congress.gov (https://beta.congress.gov/). In particular, you can find a wealth of founding information at http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/continental/.

Activity:
• Watch TED lecture video by Lawrence Lessig on Election Reform, filmed February 2013 and posted April 2013: http://www.ted.com/talks/lawrence_lessig_we_the_people_and_the_republic_we_must_reclaim.html.

WEEK 2: TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND UNIVERSAL SERVICE (JULY 21, 2014)

TOPICS
A. Telecommunications policy
B. Broadband policy
C. Universal access to telecommunications

Preparation/Readings:
• FCC National Broadband Plan (http://www.broadband.gov/).

Assignment:
• Who Are My Legislators? Due: Friday, July 25, 2014

WEEK 3: ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION; FOIA (JULY 28, 2014)

Topics
A. Importance of information policy in shaping information access
B. Importance of information policy in promoting participation
C. The First Amendment
D. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

Preparation/Readings: (the first two are very short)


Activity: sampling FOIA-related web sites

• US Department of Justice site for basics of FOIA, www.FOIA.gov
• A spectrum of FOIA blogs:
  o Cause of Action, http://causeofaction.org
  o Center for Effective Government, http://www.foreffectivegov.org
  o Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), http://www.citizensforethics.org/
  o Judicial Watch, http://www.judicialwatch.org

Assignment:
• Current Topics Article Analysis (Presentation portion) Due: Friday, August 1, 2014

WEEK 4: PRIVACY, SECRECY, & SECURITY (AUGUST 4, 2014)

TOPICS
A. Information Privacy
B. The European Union and Canadian Approaches
C. Secrecy and Security
D. Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and the FISA Court
E. Homeland Security Act and USA PATRIOT Act

Preparation/Readings:

Activity:
• Watch Frontline, “Spying on the Home Front.” It is divided into parts. http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/homefront/

Assignment:
• Current Topics Article Analysis (Paper portion) Due: Friday, August 8, 2014

WEEK 5: INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM; NETWORK NEUTRALITY (AUGUST 11, 2014)

TOPICS
A. The First Amendment
B. Banned Books and Materials Challenges
C. Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA), Deleting Online Predators Act (DOPA), Children’s Online Protection Act (COPA)
D. Network Neutrality

Preparation/Readings:
• The ALA Library Bill of Rights http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill
• There are a range of resources on network neutrality available on the Public Knowledge website at https://www.publicknowledge.org/issues/net-neutrality. They are an advocacy group, so be aware of that. But some good resources.

Activity:
• Watch John Oliver: Net Neutrality
He does use adult language (some bleeped out, some not), so be warned. But it cuts through a bunch of clutter.

**Assignment:**
- Issue Brief (Presentation portion) **Due: Friday, August 15, 2014**

**WEEK 6: INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY/COPYRIGHT; CONCLUSIONS; FINAL PRESENTATIONS (August 18, 2014)**

**TOPICS**
- A. Digital Millennium Copyright Act
- B. The networked environment and intellectual property
- C. Patents, TRIPS, orphan works, and other intellectual property issues
- D. Policy implications of the future of libraries in a digital world

**Preparation/Readings:**
- University of Minnesota Libraries, Copyright Basics. [https://www.lib.umn.edu/copyright/basics](https://www.lib.umn.edu/copyright/basics) (read all sections).

**Activity:**

**Assignment:**
- Issue Brief (Paper portion) **Due: Friday, August 22, 2014**
Key Characteristics of the Policy Process

The word policy is used in a number of different ways, ranging from a large-scale meaning (“foreign policy”) to a very particular meaning (“the police chief’s policy of ticketing people driving yellow cars”).

In studying information policy, policy can be used collectively (“information policy in the United States”) to refer to particular policies (“the policy of filtering Internet access in public libraries”). As an area of study, information is rife with specific policy issues; often these policies have an acronym or shorthand descriptor—DOPA, CIPA, USA PATRIOT, DMCA, Section 508, IP, E-gov, etc.

In terms of policy research and analysis, a policy can be generated by executive or legislative arms of a local, state or provincial, or federal government; the judiciary; supranational organizations; and sometimes even professional or governing bodies. A policy can be articulated through the creation, enactment, implementation, or enforcement of legislation, executive orders, judicial holdings, administrative rules or guidelines, proposals, authorizations, programs, outputs, outcomes, or processes.

Key Characteristics of Policy Research and Analysis

1. It is about real economic, social and political problems that exist in society.

2. It is oriented toward identifying and solving economic, social and political problems that arise from the creation, implementation, and enforcement of public policy. It can also serve to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the policy process.

3. It is multi-disciplinary. Research methods, approaches, and perspectives can be drawn from numerous academic disciplines—primarily those of social science, behavioral science, and law—in analyzing policy. The methods can include quantitative and qualitative approaches. The tools used will depend heavily on the policy at hand and the design of the researcher.

4. It can employ literature reviews, scientific research methods, and interpretation and analysis based on the findings of the research.

5. It is influenced by contextual factors, often beyond the control of the researcher. Policy research does not occur in laboratory; as a result, the researcher cannot change many factors that influence a policy and its implementation. Research must be designed with such realities in mind.

6. It accounts for the populations, organizations, and government agencies affected by the policy and the significance of the impacts.

7. The findings and recommendations should be actionable. Findings from policy research can be innovative and creative, but they must also be practicable and practical.
Aspects of analysis used in the study of a Policy

1. Clarity – Does it have a clear meaning? Can a reasonable person understand the intent? Are the key terms carefully defined? Are there examples or applications in the policy?

2. Consistency – Is the policy internally consistent?

3. Ambiguity – Can the policy be interpreted in multiple plausible ways? Are there established parameters for the policy? Does the policy cover one topic or multiple topics?

4. Contradiction – Does this policy run counter to another policy? Are there inherent contradictions within the policy? Does the policy comply with related judicial holdings? Is it constitutional?

5. Duplication – Does the policy duplicate another policy?

6. Implementation – Are methods of implementation defined? Are responsibilities in implementation defined? Are timelines for implementation defined?

7. Enforcement – Are methods of enforcement defined? Are responsibilities for enforcement defined? Are timelines for enforcement defined?

8. Gaps – Is additional guidance not in the document needed to implement it? Is there sufficient detail to implement and enforce the policy?

9. Combination – What happens when the policy is viewed in combination with other policies?

10. Evaluation – Are there mechanisms for citizen or agency input? Are there modification processes? Are there sunset clauses? Are there timeframes or benchmarks for policy evaluation or reevaluation?

11. Impacts – What populations, organizations, or government agencies are affected? Are there disproportionate impacts on certain populations? Is the policy biased in favor of or against certain groups? What short-term and long-term social impacts can be reasonably foreseen from the policy? What is the best-case impact of the policy? What is the worst-case impact?

Identifying and Focusing Policy Issues for Research

• Does the policy create a social or political problem?
• Is the problem of significance?
• Who is affected by the problem?
• Is the problem solvable?
• Can actions be taken? If so, what might they be?
Research Materials

In conducting policy research, there are several important types of materials.

1. Source policy documents. The laws, regulations, executive orders, guidelines, and other government documents are the literal source of public policy. These can be retrieved from LexisNexis, Beta.Congress.gov, USA.gov, and other sources.

2. Scholarly materials. The following are key journals that feature scholarly materials related to information policy:

   - CQ Researcher
   - First Monday (online journal)
   - Foreign Policy
   - Governance
   - Government Information Quarterly
   - Information, Communication & Society
   - Information Research (online journal)
   - Information Society
   - International Journal of Electronic Government Research
   - International Journal of Internet Research Ethics
   - Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology
   - Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory
   - Library and Information Science Research
   - Library Quarterly
   - Media, Culture & Society
   - New Media & Society
   - Policy Studies Journal
   - Political Research Quarterly
   - Public Administration Review
   - Social Science Computer Review
   - Telecommunications Policy

   Also, check for relevant scholarly books and academic studies. If you go trolling for materials on the Internets, make sure that they are from legitimate sources. There is a big difference in academic merit between reports from respected think tanks and reports from lobbying groups.

3. Popular media. The media often provide reports on perceptions or impacts of policies. Generally, it is best to use only materials from highly regarded media, such as major newspapers (i.e., New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Washington Post), major news magazines (i.e., Economist, Newsweek), and news websites (i.e., CNN.com, MSNBC.com). Keep in mind that most media outlets, even the well-respected ones, still will have a particular perspective on most policy issues.

4. Professional organizations. Perspectives on policy issues are often provided by related professional organizations, though these will directly reflect the goals of the organization.
ASSIGNMENTS

Who are My Legislators? Assignment

This assignment intends to get you more familiar with your local political context from the perspective of your local federal elected members to the U.S. Congress.

As you will discover, the context in which your organization (should you be employed) in general resides within a regulatory environment deeply embedded in the two party system of the United States. The range and extent of regulation will vary depending on the nature of your organization – environmental impact, pharmaceutical, and similar organizations are subject to substantial regulation; libraries and information-based organizations tend to come in and out of the regulatory process as current issues arise – business records, privacy, decency, etc.

To better understand the policy context, you need to have a grasp of how these elected officials create the policies – your federal, state, and local representatives – as well as the legislative process. This assignment asks you to identify your federal representatives (the policy makers) and find out about their voting records on selected items (the legislative process).

For this assignment, please answer the following questions:

U.S. Senate

- Identify the two senators from your state (where you currently reside)
- Identify their respective political parties (e.g., Democrat, Independent, Republican)
- Identify the year in which they were first elected to the Senate
- Identify whether either is up for re-election this fall
- Identify at least one committee on which your senators serve
- Identify whether either of your Senators serves in a leadership position (e.g., majority leader, committee chair)
- What is the length of term of a Senator?

U.S. House of Representatives

- Identify your Congressional district (hint: there are 435, one for each member of the House)
- Identify your Congressman/woman
- Identify his/her political party (e.g., Democrat, Independent, Republican)
- Identify at least one committee on which your Member serves
- Identify whether your Member serves in a leadership position (e.g., majority leader, committee chair)
- What is the length of term of a Congressman/woman?
Voting Records for Congressman/woman and Senators

For your representatives (both Senate and House), find out how they voted and whether they supported these on these legislative acts:

- USA PATRIOT Act (original and reauthorization)
- Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25). This is the law that gave us the sequester.
- Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA)
- Telecommunications Act of 1996
- Deleting Online Predators Act (DOPA)
- OPEN Government Act of 2007 (amendment of FOIA)

Note: Some of your legislators will not have been in office at the time some of these bills/legislation. Also, in some cases, your Senator may have been a Congressman/woman and some legislative activity may have taken place during that time in office.

As you look up the voting records of your representatives, take a few moments to review the legislative action on the above bills. Some things to consider as you complete this assignment:

- Nearly all members of Congress have websites, etc., from which you can learn about them.
- Not all legislation is stand alone. In fact, you will soon discover that a bill may be incorporated into a larger bill for passage (typically, but not always, an appropriations bill). This is a common tactic used to get legislation enacted that would otherwise fail on its own.
- We have bicameral system (House and Senate). Legislation goes through both before final passage and signature (or veto). It is common for legislation from the House to be changed in the Senate (and vise versa), thus leading to a Conference.

An excellent place to start this assignment is on the congressional legislative website at http://beta.congress.gov/.

While not part of the assignment, it would be good for you to also begin familiarizing yourself with your local representatives – e.g., Mayor, City/County Council, state senator, and House/Assembly representative.

A key to understanding the policy environment is to know the political environment in which the policy context evolves.

It’s a bit difficult to estimate page/word count on this assignment, given that your legislators will have a range of activity depending on their engagement and length in office.
Current Topics Article Assignment

This assignment has two parts – a paper and a presentation. For this assignment, you are to find, analyze, and summarize a current information policy article. You may use online newspapers, news websites, and other resources (i.e., blogs) besides print newspapers, magazines, etc.

**Paper**

Search for a current article that reviews an information policy topic (e.g., digital divide, digital inclusion, universal service, privacy, open government, intellectual freedom, NSA/eavesdropping, copyright, FOIA, preserving access, Internet filtering, network neutrality). Summarize the article and include the following:

1. The overall issue about which the article is written;
2. The specific issue that the article addresses;
3. The key stakeholders regarding the issue and their stances on the issue;
4. The potential impact of the policy issue on individuals and society at large; and
5. Your analysis of the issue.

Don’t forget to include the full citation of the article – author, title, name of newspaper/website, date, etc.

The paper should be 750-1000 words (three-four double-spaced typed pages).

**Presentation**

For this you will use Present.me (ipac.present.me).

Using present.me, develop a 10-minute presentation that details and discusses the issue you’ve selected for your paper. As with the paper, your presentation should include: The overall issue about which the article is written; the specific issue that the article addresses; the key stakeholders regarding the issue and their stances on the issue; the potential impact of the policy issue on individuals and society at large; and your analysis of the issue. In short, the presentation should cover the issue, its impact on information policy, and why it matters.
Issue Brief Assignment

The final assignment consists two parts: 1) A written issue brief on an information policy topic of your choice, and 2) a presentation based on your issue brief. Students are to model their issue briefs on those of the Congressional Research Service (CRS), such as the CRS reading on the E-rate used in this class. Additional CRS reports are available online in a range of places, though not directly by CRS itself. A good place to start is http://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/CRSR/, a project by the University of North Texas library to digitize and make available CRS reports. This is a very useful resource. Or you may use another search engine to find examples of these reports: https://opencrs.com/

Sample topics for the assignment include:

- Homeland security;
- NSA clandestine wiretapping;
- Digital wiretapping;
- Federal support of public television;
- The FCC mandate for digital television;
- Copyright protection of software and/or databases;
- Digital Copyright/fair use in the digital environment;
- Redefining universal service in the networked environment;
- E-rate;
- Information access in the networked environment;
- Filtering of content in schools and libraries;
- Hate speech and Internet hate sites;
- Confidentiality of personally identifiable medical records;
- Monitoring your Web surfing: is your clickstream your business?
- Regulating media/telecommunications mergers in the public interest;
- Network Neutrality;
- Digital divide, digital inclusion, digital readiness;
- Accessibility;
- Access to government information;
- Privacy;
- E-government and libraries;
- E-government;
- Open government;
- Open data/Big data; and
- Topic of your own choosing.

If you do choose your own topic, please discuss this with the instructor PRIOR to working on the Brief.

The paper should follow the formatting and styling of a CRS issue brief. Remember, the purpose of an issue brief is to inform policy makers on a particular topic. This means that you will need to present technical, legislative, and policy issues in a concise and informative format. Policy
makers have little time to digest large amounts of information, and yet need to be aware of the key issues and debates surrounding a particular topic. The briefs should be no longer than 10-12 pages (single spaced), excluding any charts, tables, graphs, or appendices you might include. Include a complete bibliography of source materials used, and follow a citation style with which you are familiar (e.g., APA or Chicago style). A good example of a CRS report is http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc96711/m1/1/high_res_d/R41933_2011Jul26.pdf on FOIA. It’s on the longer side, but you can get a sense of the style and formatting.

Presentation

For this you will use Present.me (ipac.present.me).

Using present.me, develop a 10-minute presentation that details and discusses the issue you’ve selected for your paper. Think of this as you having 10 minutes to inform a member of Congress and/or his/her staff about your topic. What would you want them to know/walk away with from you presentation (knowing that you are also giving them your issue brief)? In short, the presentation should cover the issue, the key issues (controversies, what’s at stake) embedded within the topic, its significance, where the deficiencies/gaps in current policy exist.