Introduction to Information Science

Learning Outcomes

This class will introduce you to fundamental ideas in information science, a multidisciplinary field that studies the **intersection of information, technology, and people.**

Most individuals, organizations, and governments are quick to adopt new technologies, but rarely take the time to consider how that technology is shaping their behaviors and, conversely, how users shape the development of future technologies. Successful completion of this course will give you the conceptual tools necessary to understand the social, political, and economic factors associated with a networked society. Issues will range from the *theoretical* (what is information and how do humans construct it?), to the *cultural* (how are newer communication technologies different from earlier distance-shrinking and knowledge-building technologies such as telephones?), to the *technical* (what are the basic architectures of computing networks?).

As a core BSIS course, this class will also provide you a knowledge-based foundation for future courses in information, technology, and policy. After successfully completing this course you will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of fundamental concepts and ideas around the rise of the information society.
- Demonstrate critical thinking in evaluating causal arguments regarding the relationship between technology and society, including analyzing major assertions, background assumptions, and explanatory evidence.
- Explain how information & communication technologies (ICTs) shape national and global events.
- Use information technologies to conduct research and to communicate effectively about ICTs.
- Articulate how the historical events leading to the information society have shaped our modern-day use of ICTs.
- Articulate ways technology use can be problematic, and how to harness technology for positive change.
- Work collaboratively to create and disseminate information content broadly.

Required Resources

There are no required textbooks for this class. All learning materials will be provided on the course ELMS page (elms.umd.edu).

Dr. Eric Hung
he / him / his
ehung124@umd.edu
Skype: msumeric

Online Class:
Asynchronous
Meetings

Office Hours
By appointment by Skype. I am generally available on Monday and Wednesday mornings.

Teaching Assistant
Rebekah Valentine
rvalent1@umd.edu
Office Hours:
Thursdays, 2-3pm
HBKN, Ground Floor
Lounge

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

Course Communication
- Time-sensitive announcements will be posted on ELMS and e-mailed to the class via ELMS.
- To contact me, please email via ELMS, and include INST201 in the subject line. I will reply to e-mails usually within 24 hours on weekdays and within 48 hours on weekends. If I have not replied within that time frame, please send me a reminder.

Campus Policies

It is our shared responsibility to know and abide by the University of Maryland's policies that relate to all courses, which include topics like:

- Academic integrity
- Student and instructor conduct
- Accessibility and accommodations
- Attendance and excused absences
- Grades and appeals
- Copyright and intellectual property

Please visit www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html for the Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies and follow up with me if you have questions.

Class Structure and Professionalism

Although this is an online course that meets asynchronously, I try to mimic the interactions that are possible in an in-person course. There are two class sessions per week. The first runs from Monday to Wednesday, and the second runs from Thursday to Sunday. The materials for each class will appear on ELMS shortly after midnight on Monday or Thursday. Begin each class session by "attending" the lecture. Each lecture is designed to take about 60 minutes to complete, and includes several short videos and discussion board activities. I encourage you to spend an additional 30 minutes during each class session reading and interacting with your classmates on the discussion boards. After you finish the lecture, you will need to complete an assignment that will take 90-120 minutes. Assignments include reading articles, watching videos, completing hands-on exercises, peer reviewing your classmates' work, and so on. As a university course, the class environment should be professional and respectful. Discussion board entries should demonstrate critical thinking and serious engagement with class materials. Some of the issues discussed in this course can involve strongly held beliefs and current political controversies. Remember: your classmates may have different perspectives on issues than you, but they still deserve your respect.

Activities and Learning Assessments

Your final grade will be based on the following components:

- Class Participation: Discussion Boards Within Lectures   15%
- Assignment Reflections   20%
- Individual Project: Wikipedia Edit   25%
- Team Project: Creating a Viral Meme   15%
- Take-home Midterm   10%
- Take-home Final   15%

Extra credit opportunities (totaling up to 5%) will be announced.

Class Participation: Discussion Boards Within Lectures (15%). To mimic classroom discussion and to ensure that students are processing the course materials, each lecture will include three to four discussion board questions, of which one is marked "required." I expect each student to contribute to the "required" discussion board and at least one substantial contribution to the "optional" discussion boards in each lecture. A substantial contribution is defined as a relevant and

thought-out post of at least 50 words. There are 26 lectures in the semester. Students will earn 15% for substantial contributions in 25-26 lectures, 14% for substantial contributions in 23-24 lectures, 13% for substantial contributions in 21-22 lectures, 12% for substantial contributions in 19-20 lectures, 11% for substantial contributions in 17-18 lectures, 10% for substantial contributions in 15-16 lectures, 9% for substantial contributions in 13-14 lectures, 8% for substantial contributions to 11-12 lectures, 7% for substantial contributions in 9-10 lectures, 5% for substantial contributions in 7-8 lectures, 3% for substantial contributions in 5-6 lectures, 1% for substantial contributions in 3-4 lectures.

Assignment Reflections (20%). There are four "300-word + images" reflection papers based on "real world" activities. Each reflection paper—each worth 5% of the final grade—must relate your experience to relevant course lectures and readings. The due dates are: Feb. 13, Feb. 27, Apr. 10, and May 1. Topics will be announced two weeks before each due date.

Wikipedia Edit (25%). Wikipedia is one of the most important resources today for the communication of information and knowledge. In this project, you will learn Wikipedia's history, understand how it works, and reflect on its social benefits and limitations. Each student will receive training on how to edit Wikipedia, do research on a topic, and then improve one Wikipedia article. This assignment was created with the aid of WikiEdu, who has set up this website for us: https://dashboard.wikiedu.org/courses/University_of_Maryland/Introduction_to_Information_Studies_(Spring_2019)?enroll=amntflvy. The components of the assignment are:
- Training (complete/incomplete)—various times in the semester: 2%
- Evaluating Wikipedia Article (due Feb. 17): 3%
- Complete Wikipedia Contract (due Mar. 3): 3%
- Submit Draft of Your Edits (due Mar. 25): 5%
- Peer Review Two Drafts (due Mar. 31): 2%
- Final Draft of Your Edits Uploaded on Wikipedia (due Apr. 14): 5%
- Reflection Paper (due Apr. 21): 5%

Details about this assignment will appear on ELMS in the coming weeks.

Viral Meme Team Project (15%). Understanding how information is created, distributed, and consumed is a critical component of nearly any job in the information sector. In your future classes and careers, you'll likely be creating and consuming content, searching for and sharing information, and trying to predict what will happen tomorrow. These activities require you to understand your audience and tailor your information practices to them. For this project, you will work in teams of 4-5 people created by the instructor and the TA. The goal of this assignment is to gain an understanding of how going viral works and we will accomplish this by having each group create a piece of **original** meme and track how it travels the internet. How do we measure virality? Quite simply, virality is about exposure. Most sites have metrics built into them to measure virality, but one component of this project is to create content where spread can be easily captured. The components of the assignment are:
- Meme Proposal (due Mar. 10): 2%
- Proposal Peer Review (due Mar. 13): 2%
- Meme Release Plan (due Mar. 31): 3%
- Group Presentation (due May 6): 4%
- Individual Reflection Paper (due May 13): 4%

Details about this assignment will appear on ELMS in the coming weeks.

Take-Home Midterm Exam (10%). The midterm exam will cover class content from Weeks 1 through 7. It will consist of short-answer questions and two short essays.

Take-Home Final Exam (15%). The final exam will cover all class content, with an emphasis on content from Weeks 8 through 14. It will consist of short-answer questions and three short essays.

Grades

Grades are not given, but earned. Your grade is determined by your performance on the learning assessments in the course. All assessment scores will be posted on the course ELMS page. If you would like to review any of your grades (including the exams), or have questions about how something was scored, please email me to schedule an appointment. I am happy to discuss your grades with you, and if I have made a mistake I will immediately correct it. Any formal grade disputes must be submitted in writing and within one week of receiving the grade.

Final letter grades are assigned based on the total points earned. I do not round grades up. The cutoffs are as follows:

A+ 97+%	B+ 87-89.9%	C+ 77-79.9%	D+ 67-69.9%	F ≤59.9%
A 94-96.9%	B 84-86.9%	C 74-76.9%	D 64-66.9%	
A- 90-93.9%	B- 80-83.9%	C- 70-73.9%	D- 60-63.9%	

Missed Deadlines

If you will not be able to meet an assignment deadline, contact Dr. Hung **before the due date** to explain why you will need to submit the assignment late and what your plan is; these will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Unless prior permission has been granted, **no late work is accepted without a documented medical or family emergency**. This policy is in place to ensure all students have their work returned to them in a timely fashion. Please prepare in advance so that you will not encounter technical difficulties that may prevent submission of a given assignment. If you have a conflict with the due date, assignments can always be submitted early. Since the exams in this course are "take-home," this "missed deadlines" policy also applies to exams.

Collaboration, Group Work, and Academic Integrity in INST 201

All of the individually graded assessments must be completed independently. You are welcome (and highly encouraged) to study and discuss the course material with your peers, but providing or receiving exam answers or letting someone else contribute to your writing assignment constitutes academic dishonesty. Penalties for academic dishonesty can include a 0 on the assignment or an automatic failure and "XF" on your transcript.
For the team project assignments, you may and should collaborate with members of your team (but not other teams). To address social loafing, you will be asked to complete confidential individual peer reviews of your teammates—team members who do not pull their weight may receive a different grade than the rest of the team.
Exams are open-book.

Accommodations

Students with disabilities should inform me of their needs at the beginning of the semester. Please also contact the Disability Support Services (301-314-7682 or http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/). DSS will make arrangements with you and me to determine and implement appropriate academic accommodations. Inclusion is one of the iSchool's core values, and I have attempted to make all materials and assignments accessible to people with varying abilities. However, if there is something else I can do to make the class more accessible please schedule a time to come talk to me. This will benefit not only yourself but also my future students.

Get Some Help!

You are expected to take personal responsibility for you own learning. This includes acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. Everyone can benefit from some expert guidance on time management, note taking, and exam preparation, so I encourage you to consider visiting http://ter.ps/learn to schedule an appointment with an academic coach. Sharpen your communication skills (and improve your grade) by visiting http://ter.ps/writing and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center. Finally, if you just need someone to talk to, visit http://www.counseling.umd.edu. These services are a part of your tuition, so please use them. **Everyone needs help**… all you have to do is ask for it.

Names/Pronouns and Self Identifications

The University of Maryland recognizes the importance of a diverse student body, and we are committed to fostering equitable classroom environments. In your introduction video, I invite you to tell us how you want to be referred to both in terms of your name and your pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, etc.). The pronouns someone indicates are not necessarily indicative of their gender identity. Visit trans.umd.edu to learn more. Additionally, it is your choice to disclose or not to disclose how you identify in terms of your gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity. I will do my best to address and refer to all students according to their wishes, and I will do my best to not presume an identity. I ask you to do the same for all of your fellow Terps.

Students in Need

Students encountering psychological problems that hamper their course work are referred to the Counseling Center (301-314-7651 or http://www.counseling.umd.edu) for expert help. For more information on UMD's Student Services, see http://www.studentaffairs.umd.edu/student-life

If you or someone you know feels unsafe, the university has resources (see list below). Read more about hate-based crimes here: https://ocrsm.umd.edu/files/Hate_Bias_FAQs_final.pdf

Name	Phone	Website
University Counseling Center	301-314-7651	www.counseling.umd.edu
University Health Center and Mental Health Services	301-314-8180	www.health.umd.edu
University of Maryland Chaplains		thestamp.umd.edu/memorial_chapel/chaplains
Office of Civil Rights and Sexual Misconduct	301-405-1142	www.ocrsm.umd.edu

Tips for a Successful Semester

(Adapted from *Dr. Vitak's Tips for a Successful Semester* by Jessica Vitak.)

1. Complete all assignments on time and in the order listed on ELMS.
2. Struggling to keep up with all the reading? Check out *How to Read a Book,* which provides highly useful advice on reading quickly without losing comprehension.
3. Struggling with classes in general? Talk to me, friends, family, and/or the counseling center. I will work with you to help you succeed.
4. Engage on the discussion board. Ask questions. Share your opinions. Be open to others' viewpoints, even if they're different than your own.
5. Do not hesitate to email me (using ELMS) if you have any questions. Make sure to include the course number ([INST 201]) in the subject line to ensure I see it. I will respond within 24 hours on weekday and 48 hours on weekends/holidays.
6. Arrange a Skype meeting with me or drop by Rebekah Valentine's office hours to talk about course content or anything else on your mind.
7. Know your rights as an undergraduate student at UMD: University of Maryland Policies for Undergraduate Students.
8. Have fun!

Course Schedule

This is the initial draft of the course schedule to give a birds-eye view of the overall schedule. Please consult the weekly summary pages on ELMS for the most current links to the assignments and required readings/audio/video for the week.

WEEK #	WHAT'S DUE?	TOPICS	ASSIGNMENT
UNIT 1: Information, Information Science and People			
1 Jan. 28 – Feb. 3	Discussion Boards	Information, Information Literacy, and Information Science	Fake News Exercises and Articles
2 Feb. 4 – Feb. 10	Discussion Boards; Wikipedia Week 2 Training	Information Careers, and Wikipedia	Readings on Wikipedia and information behavior
3 Feb. 11 – Feb. 17	Discussion Boards; Reflection Paper #1; Evaluate Wikipedia Article	Information Behavior, (Mis)Behavior and Organization	Readings on information behavior and organization; Library classifications exercise

WEEK #	WHAT'S DUE?	TOPICS	ASSIGNMENT
UNIT 2: Information, Technology and the Information Society			
4 Feb. 18 – Feb. 24	Discussion Boards	History of Information Technologies, and Introduction to Viral Meme Project	Readings on ancient libraries, the telegraph and the invention of the Internet
5 Feb. 25 – Mar. 3	Discussion Boards; Reflection Paper #2; Wikipedia Project Contract	Current Information Technologies, Infrastructures, and Economics	Readings on Information infrastructures and economics
6 Mar. 4 – Mar. 10	Discussion Boards; Meme Project Proposal	Mobile and Social Technologies, and Virility	Readings and videos on mobile technologies and virility; Day without data exercise
7 Mar. 11 – Mar. 16	Discussion Board; Meme Project Peer Reviews; Midterm	The Social Impacts of Living in an Information Society; Review	Readings and podcast on lovers and haters of information society; midterm released on Thursday (Mar. 14) at 12:01am, due Saturday (Mar. 16) at 11:59pm
Week 8 (April 17 – 24): Spring Break			

UNIT 3: The Effects of Data

9 Mar. 25 – Mar. 31	Discussion Boards; Wikipedia Draft and Peer Review; Meme Release Plan	Big Data, Small Data	Readings and videos on the opportunities offered by and the social effects of data
10 Apr. 1 – Apr. 7	Discussion Boards; Meme released on April 1	Managing and Analyzing Data	Readings on social aspects of algorithms and on artificial intelligence

UNIT 4: The Legal and Political Contexts of Information Society

11 Apr. 8 – Apr. 14	Discussion Boards; Reflection Paper #3; Final Draft of Wikipedia Edit	Information Institutions in the Information Age	Readings on how libraries and museums are adapting to information society; Interactive exhibit design exercise
12 Apr. 15 – Apr. 21	Discussion Boards; Reflection Paper on Wikipedia Edit	Political Change and Equity in the Information Age	Readings on the contributions and limitations of ICTs in aiding democratic change and furthering oppression
13 Apr. 22 – Apr. 28	Discussion Boards; Collect Data About Your Meme	Information Ethics and Policy	Readings on ICTs' effects on laws, E-government, advertising, and trolls
14 Apr. 29 – May 5	Discussion Boards; Reflection Paper #4; Meme Group Presentation	Privacy and Security	Readings and videos on the advantages and dangers of surveillance in the Information Age
15 May 6 – May 12	Discussion Boards; Individual Meme Reflection Paper	Meme Presentations; VR, AR, and the Future of Information	Readings on virtual reality and on relevant events that happened over the course of the semester
16 May 13 – May 16	Final	Review	Final to be released on Monday (May 13) at 12:01am, due on Thursday (May 16) at 11:59pm