

INST 352-0102 Information User Needs and Assessment

College of Information Studies, University of Maryland

Fall 2018

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 12:00 to 12:50 PM

Hornbake Building, South Wing, Room 0115

Instructor:

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Office Hours: Mondays, 2:30 to 4:00 or by appointment [NOTE: When emailing Gagan and I regarding this class, please include “INST 352” in the subject line. Please allow 24 hours for email responses Mondays – Fridays, 48 hours on weekends/holidays.]

Catalog Description [Prerequisites: INST 311 (plus INST 201 either prior to or concurrent with this course)]

This course will focus on the use of information by individuals, including the theories, concepts, and principles of information, as well as user information behavior and mental models. Methods for determining information behavior and user needs, including accessibility issues, will be examined; strategies for using information technology to support individual users and their specific needs will be explored.

Extended Course Description

This course will introduce students to the myriad relationships between users and the information they seek. The first part of the course will first introduce students to the concepts and the importance of understanding the information needs (what is being sought) and information behavior (how it is being sought and what is being done with the results) of users, as well as the methods of accessing and assimilating information employed by users (physical, cognitive, and social). The course will next introduce a range of the major models and theories employed in exploring information needs and behavior.

The second part of the class will focus on assessment techniques and issues. Major approaches to assessment – such as usability, accessibility, user experience, and human computer interaction – will be examined in detail, as will many methods and techniques that can be used in assessment. The ethics of assessment will also be explored.

The third and final part of the course will include a closer examination of users and user populations. Several weeks will be devoted to the discussion of different user populations and the ways in which populations may interact differently with information. Factors examined will include age, race, socio-economic status, education level, literacy levels, ability, migration, immigration, and orientation, etc. Considerations of users will include detailed examinations of issues of literacy, inclusion, and digital divides in terms of the roles of information and information technologies in supporting information needs and behavior.

Across these areas of focus in the course, students will gain an understanding of the myriad issues pertaining to the use of information. In this course, students will learn:

- Principles of information access, information behavior, and user needs;
- Models and theories that explain information needs and behavior;
- Different types of user populations and their differing information needs;
- The impacts of literacy, inclusion, and digital divides;
- The roles of information technologies in supporting information needs and behavior;
- Techniques and methods for assessing user needs and information behavior; and
- Ethical considerations in assessment.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Describe key principles of information behavior and user needs;
- Articulate strengths and weaknesses of different methods, models, theories, and techniques for expressing and studying information needs, use and behavior;
- Examine the diverse information needs and behavior of different user groups;
- Identify various ways that information technology can be used to meet and evaluate user needs; and
- Determine appropriateness of techniques and methods for assessing the information needs and information behavior of different user groups.

Course Materials: There is one required textbook for this course. An eBook version of this textbook can be accessed for free through our library: <https://umaryland.on.worldcat.org/oclc/923550250>. If you would prefer, you can rent or purchase a copy through the University Book Center: https://umcp.bncollege.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/BNCB_TextbookDetailView?catalogId=10001&item=N&langId=-1&productId=600006642925&storeId=15551 or through Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/Looking-Information-Research-Seeking-Behavior/dp/1785609688/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1502833037&sr=1-1

Case, D. O. & Given, L. M. (2016). *Looking for Information: A Survey of Research on Information Seeking, Needs, and Behavior* (4th ed.). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing. [ISBN: 978-1-78560-968-8].

Other Readings: Other relevant readings will be assigned from journals, trade publications, newspapers, edited books, conference proceedings, etc. as necessary. Links have been provided in the syllabus to a number of readings; additional assigned readings are available through our class Canvas site (under “Course Reserves”). All journal articles are also accessible through UMD Libraries. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any trouble locating assigned readings at any point in the semester.

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 any questions.

Policy on Academic Misconduct

Cases of academic misconduct will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct (<https://www.studentconduct.umd.edu/>) irrespective of scope and circumstances, as required by university rules and regulations. It is crucial to understand that the instructors do not have a choice of following other courses of actions in handling these cases. There are severe consequences for academic misconduct, some of which are permanent and reflected on the student’s transcript. For details about procedures governing such referrals and possible consequences for the student, see: <https://www.president.umd.edu/sites/president.umd.edu/files/documents/policies/III-100A.pdf>

It is very important that you complete your own course assignments, and do not share any work. The best course of action to take if you are having problems with an assignment for a class is to contact the instructor.

University of Maryland Code of Academic Integrity

The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity (<https://www.president.umd.edu/sites/president.umd.edu/files/documents/policies/III-100A.pdf>), administered by the Student Honor Council (<http://shc.umd.edu/SHC/Default.aspx>). 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.

Special Needs: Students with disabilities should inform the instructor of their needs at the beginning of the semester. Please also contact the Accessibility & Disability Service (ADS) Office (<https://www.counseling.umd.edu/ads/>; 301-314-7682). ADS will make arrangements with the student and the instructor to determine and implement appropriate academic accommodations. Students encountering psychological problems that hamper their course work are referred to the Counseling Center (<http://www.counseling.umd.edu/>; 301-314-7651) for expert help.

Academic Assistance: If you're experiencing difficulties in keeping up with the academic demands of this course, please consider contacting the University of Maryland Counseling Center, 1101 Shoemaker Building, 4281 Chapel Lane, 301-314-7651, <https://www.counseling.umd.edu/>. The Counseling Center has provided some links to on-campus and online academic resources here: <https://www.counseling.umd.edu/academic/>.

Academic Assistance: Writing Center (<http://www.english.umd.edu/academics/writingcenter>): The University of Maryland Writing Center has tutors available in person and online to help you improve your writing, research, and critical thinking skills. The Writing Center also hosts a Grammar Hotline: 301-405-3785.

Emergency Preparedness: Please see the University's Emergency Preparedness Website (<https://prepare.umd.edu/>) for information about the current status of the campus. If a class session needs to be rescheduled, I will e-mail you as soon as possible.

Course Specific Policies:

Attendance: Students are expected to attend every class and to be present on time. If you will be unable to make it to a class, please e-mail me beforehand and please be sure to check in with a fellow student following class so that you can catch up on anything you missed. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class session. As per University policy, students may submit a self-signed note for a medically necessitated absence from a single lecture during the semester. Any student missing more than one lecture is required to provide documentation from the Health Center or from an outside health care provider that verifies the dates of treatment and time frame during which the student was unable to meet academic responsibilities.

In-Class Behavior: Students are expected to arrive on time and to stay for the duration of the class, unless they have made prior arrangements with me. They are also expected to actively participate in every class – this will require that you **finish all assigned readings prior to each class session**. Please be on time for class and stay until the end, unless you have made special arrangements with me. Entering late and leaving early is distracting to the instructor and to other students. If you must enter late or leave early, please take the seat nearest an exit and enter or leave as quietly as possible. In general, be aware of the people around you and avoid doing things that will disturb them or otherwise prevent them from fully engaging with the content. Put your phones on silent before the start of class. If you need to make/take a phone call, leave the classroom before doing so. Any student creating a disruption will be asked to leave for the day.

Missed Deadlines: If you will not be able to meet an assignment deadline, contact me at least 48 hours before the due date to explain why you will need to submit the assignment late; requests will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Assignments submitted more than seven days late will not be accepted.

If you need to miss an exam because of outside circumstances (e.g., a religious holiday, military duties, work/athletic team travel), you must email me at least 48 hours before the exam to reschedule your exam time. If you miss an exam due to other circumstances (e.g., oversleeping), you will not be able to make up the exam. Exam extensions will not be granted beyond seven days.

Late Assignments: A 10% penalty will be deducted for each day or part of a day that an assignment is late. Please prepare in advance so that you will not encounter technical difficulties that will result in your work receiving a late penalty. If you have a conflict with the due date, assignments can always be submitted early.

Syllabus Change Policy: This syllabus is subject to change with advance notice. If a change becomes necessary, I will announce the change in class and post an announcement on our Canvas site. The version posted on Canvas will always be the most up-to-date.

Guidelines for Written Assignments: All written assignments should be submitted via ELMS, by the date and time indicated on the syllabus. Please remember to include your name on all of your work. Written work should be proofread and revised as necessary before you submit it. Use Times New Roman 12-point font and one-inch margins. All documents should be single-spaced. Be sure to organize your papers, using section and subsection headings to identify portions of your work. Use APA Style for in-text citations and reference lists. Many resources about APA style are available on the Internet [e.g., <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>; <http://www.apastyle.org/learn/faqs/index.aspx>].

Assignments and Grading:

I. Class Participation (15%)

Throughout the semester, we will have small group and class-wide discussions, as well as in-class activities, to reinforce course content. The only way to receive credit for in-class activities is to be present during class. One component of your class participation grade will be seven in-class “10-minute writing exercises.” We will announce the essay questions beforehand; however, we will not announce the specific day on which you will be asked to write these essays during class. At the end of the semester, we will drop your two lowest grades on these essays.

II. Written Assignments (35% total)

1. **Information Behavior Analysis (15%) [Due by 11:59 PM on Monday, 10/1]:** Describe one of your own recent information seeking experiences in 500-750 words. Discuss what your experience demonstrates about your information needs, how and where you look for and use information, and the information problems you face in your life. Your discussion should make clear that you have thought about and understand the concepts of information, information needs, information seeking, and information behavior, as discussed in course readings.

Please consider the following questions as you work on this assignment: What factors may have prompted this information need? What kinds of sources did you consult (books, friends, intermediaries, search engines, etc.?) In what ways did these sources prove helpful or not helpful? What kinds of barriers did you encounter? What advantages do you have because of your education, training, or prior knowledge? Were you satisfied with the outcome of the information seeking process?

Assessment: This assignment will be graded based on your selection and discussion of a recent personal information seeking experience; evidence that you have read the required readings and understand the central concepts relevant to this assignment; evidence of critical thinking; adherence to the length, formatting, and citation requirements; and clarity and precision of thought in your writing.

2. **Research Article Analysis (20%) [Due by 11:59 PM on Friday, 11/16]:** First, select a particular user group that interests you, such as people with visual impairments, physicians, homeless parents, or first-generation college students. Next, find a **peer-reviewed research article** that describes a study of the information behavior of your selected user group. The article must contain a “Methods” or “Methodology” section and must present the authors’ findings relating to their study participants’ information needs, seeking, and/or use. After carefully reading your selected article, write a brief paper (750-1,000 words). Please be sure to include the following components: (1) A summary of the article (be sure to state the authors’ research questions and describe their findings); (2) A critical assessment of the recruitment, data collection, and data analysis methods used by the researchers; (3) A discussion of how the study findings might be used to help the user group you have selected; and (4) Two ideas for future research on the information behavior of this user group.

Assessment: This assignment will be graded based on your selection and discussion of a relevant article; evidence that you have read the required readings and understand the central concepts relevant to this assignment; evidence of critical thinking; adherence to the length, formatting, and citation requirements; and clarity and precision of thought in your writing.

III. Midterm and Final Exams (50% total)

1. **Midterm exam (25%)** [Exam will be administered in class on Monday, October 22nd. Please note that you will need to pass in your exam by 12:50 PM, regardless of when you arrived to class.] A midterm exam will be administered to test the students' understanding of the concepts introduced in the course. This exam will take place in class, but you are free to use your books and notes for this class. You must complete the exam on your own – if you have any questions, please direct them to me.
2. **Final Exam (25%)** [The final exam will be administered in our classroom on Monday, December 17th, from 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM. Please note that you will have to pass in your exam by 10:00 AM, regardless of when you arrived to the classroom.] A final exam will be administered to test the students' understanding of the concepts introduced in the course. This exam will be administered on Monday, December 17th, from 8:00 to 10:00 AM in our usual classroom. You are free to use your textbook and your notes; however, you may NOT discuss the exam with other students – if you have any questions, direct them to me.

Grading: Your course grade will be determined by your class participation, written assignments, midterm exam, and final exam. The weight of each component is listed in the Assignments and Grading section (see above). Please note that revision and resubmission of assignments for the purpose of obtaining a higher grade will not be permitted. Any challenges to a grade must be submitted in writing via email *within one week*. After considering the issue, I will adjust your grade if appropriate and inform you of my decision within one week. Please note that requesting reconsideration of a grade could result in a lower grade if additional problems are detected. Final grades will be submitted 48-72 hours following the close of the Final Exam period. Please note that I do not round grades up. Final grades will be assigned using the following categories:

A+	97-100	B+	87-89.9	C+	77-79.9	D+	67-69.9	F	Less than 60
A	93-96.9	B	83-86.9	C	73-76.9	D	63-66.9		
A-	90-92.9	B-	80-82.9	C-	70-72.9	D-	60-62.9		

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments Due
Week 1 (8/27, 8/29, 8/31)	Overview and Introduction to Information Behavior	Case & Given, Ch. 1 & Ch. 2	
Week 2 (9/5, 9/7)	Core Concepts: Information, Information Needs, Information Behavior	Case & Given, Ch. 4 [NOTE: No class on Monday 9/3 (Labor Day)]	
Week 3 (9/10, 9/12, 9/14)	Information Seeking; Information Needs	Case & Given, Ch. 5	
Week 4 (9/17, 9/19, 9/21)	Related Concepts	Case & Given, Ch. 6	

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments Due
Week 5 (9/24, 9/26, 9/28)	Theories and Models of Information Behavior	Case & Given, Ch. 7	
Week 6 (10/1, 10/3, 10/5)	M/W: Theories and Models of Information Behavior (cont'd) F: Library Orientation	Case & Given, Ch. 8 F: Library Orientation with Rachel Gammons, Head of Teaching & Learning Services (Meet at McKeldin Library, Room 6107)	Assignment 1: Information Behavior Analysis (due Monday, 10/1 by 11:59 PM, via ELMS)
Week 7 (10/8, 10/10, 10/12)	M: Reading and Understanding Scholarly Journal Articles W/F: Research Design and Ethics	How to Read (and Understand) a Social Science Journal Article: http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/files/instructors/How_to_Read_a_Journal_Article.pdf Reading a Research Article Quickly and Efficiently. http://www.prchn.org/Downloads/Reading%20a%20Research%20Article%20Quickly%20and%20Efficiently.pdf How to (Seriously) Read a Scientific Paper: http://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2016/03/how-seriously-read-scientific-paper Case & Given, Ch. 9 (up through 9.2.5)	
Week 8 (10/15, 10/17, 10/19)	M/W: Research Methods for Assessing Information Needs F: Midterm Exam review	M/W: Case & Given, Ch. 9 (finish reading entire chapter) F: Review for the Midterm Exam	
Week 9 (10/22, 10/24, 10/26)	M: Midterm W: Research Methods for Assessing Information Needs (cont'd.)	M: Midterm Exam (in class) W: Case & Given, Ch. 9 (continued) F: Guest Talk: Fiona Jardine, Doctoral Candidate: "Information behavior of women who exclusively pump breast milk"	

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments Due
Week 10 (10/29, 10/31, 11/2)	M/W: Digital Divide & Digital Inclusion	<p>Anderson, M. & Perrin, A. (2016, Sept. 7). <i>13% of Americans don't use the internet. Who are they?</i> http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/07/some-americans-dont-use-the-internet-who-are-they/</p> <p><i>What is Digital Inclusion?</i> https://www.webjunction.org/explore-topics/digital-inclusion.html</p> <p>Tsetsi, E., & Rains, S. A. (2017). Smartphone Internet access and use: Extending the digital divide and usage gap. <i>Mobile Media & Communication</i>, doi: 10.1177/2050157917708329 [See "Readings" folder on our ELMS site]</p> <p>F: Guest Talk: Ursula Gorham, Senior Lecturer: "Access to Justice"</p>	
Week 11 (11/5, 11/7, 11/9)	User Experience	<p>The Definition of User Experience (watch short video) (https://www.nngroup.com/articles/definition-user-experience/)</p> <p>Review: User Experience Design - http://semanticstudios.com/user_experience_design/</p> <p>Lamb, K. et al. (2016). User experience in the newly refurbished CUED Library space: Exploring the study needs and habits of library users through ethnographic and UX methods. https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1810/256152/Lamb et al-2016-User experience in the newly refurbished CUED Library space-VoR.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y</p>	
Week 12 (11/12, 11/14, 11/16)	Usability and Accessibility	<p>M: Guest Talk: Paul Jaeger, Professor, Diversity Officer, and Co-Director of iPAC</p> <p>Review: <i>Usability Evaluation Basics</i> (https://www.usability.gov/what-and-why/usability-evaluation.html)</p> <p>Watch: <i>10 Usability Heuristics</i> (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWc0Fd2AS3s&feature=youtu.be)</p> <p>Review: <i>10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design</i> (https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ten-usability-heuristics/)</p> <p>Quesenbery, W. (2009, Feb. 16). <i>Usable Accessibility: Making Web Sites Work Well for People with Disabilities</i>: http://www.uxmatters.com/mt/archives/2009/02/usable-accessibility-making-web-sites-work-well-for-people-with-disabilities.php</p> <p>Fox, S. (2011). <i>Americans living with disability and their technology profile</i>. Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project. http://www.pewinternet.org/2011/01/21/americans-living-with-disability-and-their-technology-profile/</p> <p>Jaeger, P. T. (2015). Disability, human rights, and social justice: The ongoing struggle for online accessibility and equality. <i>First Monday</i>, 20(9). Available: http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/6164/4898</p> <p>F: Guest Talk: Tammy Clegg, Associate Professor: "What is Design?"</p>	Research Article Analysis (due Friday, 11/16 by 11:59 PM, via ELMS)

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments Due
Week 15 (12/3, 12/5, 12/7)	M/W: Information Behavior of Online Content Contributors W/F: Information Needs of First Responders	<p>Zhang, X., Liu, S., Deng, Z., & Chen, X. (2017). Knowledge sharing motivations in online health communities: A comparative study of health professionals and normal users. <i>Computers in Human Behavior</i>, 75, 797-810.</p> <p>St. Jean, B., Rieh, S. Y., Yang, J. Y., & Kim, Y.-M. (2011). How content contributors assess and establish credibility on the Web. Research paper presented at the <i>ASIS&T 2011 Annual Meeting</i>, New Orleans, LA, October 9-13, 2011. Available: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/meet.2011.14504801163/epdf</p> <p>Chakraborty, R., Agrawal, M., & Rao, H. R. (2014). Information processing under stress: A study of Mumbai Police first responders. <i>IIMB Management Review</i>, 26(2), 91-104. http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0970389614000299</p> <p>Hughes, A. L., St Denis, L. A., Palen, L., & Anderson, K. M. (2014, April). Online public communications by police & fire services during the 2012 Hurricane Sandy. In <i>Proceedings of the 32nd annual ACM conference on Human factors in computing systems</i> (pp. 1505-1514). New York: ACM. https://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=2557227</p> <p>F: Guest Talk: Diane Travis, PhD Student & Research Coordinator: “The Distinctiveness of First Responders’ Information Needs”</p>	
Week 16 (12/10)	Final Exam Review	Review for the Final Exam	
Monday, 12/17	Final Exam (in class): Monday, December 17 th , 8:00 – 10:00 AM (in our usual classroom)		

Note: This is a tentative schedule, and subject to change as necessary – monitor the course ELMS page for current deadlines. In the unlikely event of a prolonged university closing, or an extended absence from the university, adjustments to the course schedule, deadlines, and assignments will be made based on the duration of the closing and the specific dates missed.