

INST 352-0105 Information User Needs and Assessment

College of Information Studies, University of Maryland

Spring 2019

Instructor:

Gagan Jindal, MPH, Doctoral Candidate
Hornbake Building, South Wing, Room 4117M
gjindal@terpmail.umd.edu

Office Hours: Please e-mail for an appointment [NOTE: When emailing 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 and methods to assessment – such as surveys, interviews, and focus groups – will be examined in detail. 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 or through Amazon.

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].

ELMS/Canvas: All additional course materials, modules, and instructions will be on our course site on canvas.

Other Readings: Other relevant readings will be assigned from journals, trade publications, newspapers, edited books, conference proceedings, etc. as necessary. Links have been provided to a number of readings in the syllabus; additional assigned readings are available through our class Canvas site under each week's module. All journal articles are also accessible through UMD Libraries. Please contact me if you have any trouble locating assigned readings at any point in the semester.

Modules: Each week in the semester will be associated with an online module on Canvas. The module will include all of the required readings for the week and the associated lecture slides. The lecture slides are meant to guide you through the readings. I recommend reviewing the lecture slides and supplementing them with your own notes from the readings to ensure you understand the material for this course. However, the lecture slides are not comprehensive of all of the material in the readings and may include additional information. You are responsible for all of the material in the readings and the lecture slides. The modules will also include directions and/or a link to each week's discussion board post (which will be graded for class participation). The modules will have detailed information on your other assessments for this course, such as your writing assignments, midterm, and final exam. Carefully review all of the materials in each module to ensure you meet all of the requirements for class this semester. I will include a checklist in each module that will outline the required assignments in order to help you stay on track each week.

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:

Class Participation: Please complete the readings and review the lecture slides before posting on our online discussions. You are responsible for all of the content in the readings and the lecture slides posted in each week's module on Canvas. The lecture slides are meant to guide you through the readings for this course, but they may only clarify some of the main concepts from the readings (and may include additional information not in the readings). You will need to ensure you understand the material from both the readings and the associated lecture slides. You must also actively participate in our online class discussion boards in Canvas. You must make one (substantial) post on our Canvas discussion board every week. You will also need to make one response post to another classmate's discussion post each week.

You are expected to take even more personal responsibility for you own learning in an online format. Therefore, if you are having difficulty understanding any of the content in this course, please make an appointment with me and seek help early so you are prepared to successfully complete the assessments for this course. Do not passively skim the content in each week's module. The assessments for this course will test your ability to critically apply the content, not merely memorize major concepts. You must actively engage with the material in order to succeed.

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.

You must submit documentation from the Health Center or from an outside health care provider to verify the dates of treatment and time frame during which you were unable to meet your academic responsibilities due to a medical reason.

Late Assignments: A 10% penalty will be deducted for each day or part of a day that an assignment is late (but you must first seek approval to submit an assignment late, otherwise you will still receive a zero for an assignment you've submitted 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. Extensions will not be granted beyond seven days.

Syllabus Change Policy: This syllabus is subject to change with advance notice. If a change becomes necessary, I will 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 Canvas, 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%)

You are expected to actively participate in our online class discussion boards in Canvas. Each student must make **one (substantial) post on our Canvas discussion board every week**. The topic for each week's discussion post will be posted on Canvas by Monday morning each week to allow you enough time to make a meaningful contribution. Discussion posts regarding weekly readings or other related course topics are **due by 11:59 PM on the Wednesday of each week**. You will also need to make **one response post to another classmate's discussion post** each week. Your response posts are **due by 11:59 PM on the Thursday of each week**. Late discussion or response posts will not be accepted.

Participation forms an integral part of your own learning experience, as well as that of your classmates. Your participation in online discussions will count for 15% of your final grade. Course participation grades will take into account both the quantity and quality of your contributions to online discussions; however, the quality of your contributions (whether questions, viewpoints, responses to others' questions, etc.) to a meaningful, ongoing discussion will be much more heavily weighted. All discussions should remain professional and respectful at all times.

II. Written Assignments (35% total)

1. **Information Behavior Analysis (15%) [Due by 11:59 PM on Monday, 3/4]:** 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 Monday, 4/22]:** 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 article, including (but not limited to) 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

- 1. Midterm exam (25%) [Exam will be posted on ELMS at 8 AM on Monday 4/1; Completed exams are due by 11:59 PM on the same day (4/1), via ELMS]** A midterm exam will be administered to test the students’ understanding of the concepts introduced in the course. This is an open book, open notes, take-home exam. You may consult any of the course materials (and other outside materials if you wish) in figuring out the answers to the questions. However, you may NOT discuss the exam with ANYONE, whether they are taking the class or not. If you have any questions, direct them to me, either in my office hours or by e-mail (gjindal@terpmail.umd.edu). I will post the exam on ELMS at 8:00 AM on Monday, April 1; you will have until 11:59 PM on Monday, April 1 to submit your completed exam. Late submissions will not be accepted.
- 2. Final Exam (25%) [Exam will be posted on ELMS at 8AM on Monday 5/20; Completed exams are due by 11:59 PM on the same day (Monday, 5/20), via ELMS]** A final exam will be administered to test the students’ understanding of the concepts introduced in the course. This is an open book, open notes, take-home exam. You may consult any of the course materials (and other outside materials if you wish) in figuring out the answers to the questions. However, you may NOT discuss the exam with ANYONE, whether they are taking the class or not. If you have any questions, direct them to me, either in my office hours or by e-mail (gjindal@terpmail.umd.edu). I will post the exam on ELMS at 8:00AM on Monday, May 20; you will have until 11:59PM on Monday, May 20 to submit the exam. Late submissions will not be accepted.

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 (1/28 – 2/1)	Overview and Introduction to Information Behavior	Case & Given, Ch. 1 & Ch. 2	
Week 2 (2/4 – 2/8)	Core Concepts: Information, Information Needs, Information Behavior	Case & Given, Ch. 4	
Week 3 (2/11 – 2/15)	Information Seeking; Information Needs	Case & Given, Ch. 5	
Week 4 (2/18 – 2/22)	Related Concepts	Case & Given, Ch. 6	
Week 5 (2/25 – 3/1)	Theories and Models of Information Behavior	Case & Given, Ch. 7	
Week 6 (3/4 – 3/8)	Theories and Models of Information Behavior (Part II)	Case & Given, Ch. 8	Writing Assignment 1: Information Behavior Analysis (due Monday, 3/4 by 11:59 PM , via ELMS)
Week 7 (3/11 – 3/15)	Research Design and Ethics	Case & Given, Ch. 9 (up through 9.2.5)	
Week 8 (3/18 – 3/22)	No class	SPRING BREAK	

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments Due
Week 9 (3/25 – 3/29)	Research Methods for Assessing Information Needs Midterm review	Case & Given, Ch. 9 (finish reading entire chapter) Complete Practice Midterm	
Week 10 (4/1 – 4/5)	Midterm Research Methods for Assessing Information Needs (Part II)	Midterm Exam (online) – Monday, April 1 Case & Given, Ch. 9 (continued)	Midterm Exam (due Monday, 4/1 by 11:59 PM, via ELMS)
Week 11 (4/8 – 4/12)	Digital Divide & Digital Inclusion	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/ <i>What is Digital Inclusion?</i> https://www.webjunction.org/explore-topics/digital-inclusion.html 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	
Week 12 (4/15 – 4/19)	Voting-related Information Behavior	Moeller, J., de Vreese, C., Esser, F., & Kunz, R. (2014). Pathway to political participation: The influence of online and offline news media on internal efficacy and turnout of first-time voters. <i>American Behavioral Scientist</i> , 58(5), 689-700. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0002764213515220 <i>Why are Millions of Citizens Not Registered to Vote?</i> https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2017/06/why-are-millions-of-citizens-not-registered-to-vote	

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments Due
Week 13 (4/22 – 4/26)	Health Information Behavior of Older Adults	Turner, A. M., Osterhage, K., Hartzler, A., Joe, J., Lin, L., Kanagat, N., & Demiris, G. (2015). Use of patient portals for personal health information management: The older adult perspective. In <i>AMIA Annual Symposium Proceedings</i> (Vol. 2015, p. 1234). American Medical Informatics Association. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4765678/	Writing Assignment 2: Research Article Analysis (due Monday, 4/22 by 11:59 PM , via ELMS)
Week 14 (4/29 – 5/3)	Health Information Behavior of Adolescents and Young Adults	Kent, E. E. et al. (2013). Talking about cancer and meeting peer survivors: Social information needs of adolescents and young adults diagnosed with cancer. <i>Journal of Adolescent and Young Adult Oncology</i> , 2(2), 44-52. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3684139/ Kodama, C., St. Jean, B., Subramaniam, M., & Taylor, N. G. (2017). There’s a creepy guy on the other end at Google!: Engaging middle school students in a drawing activity to elicit their mental models of Google. <i>Information Retrieval Journal</i> . https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10791-017-9306-x	
Week 15 (5/6 – 5/10)	Information Behavior of Online Content Contributors	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. 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. http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/meet.2011.14504801163/epdf	
Week 16 (5/13 – 5/14)	Information Needs of First Responders Final Exam Review	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 Complete Practice Final Exam	
Monday, 5/20	Final Exam (online): Monday, May 20 Submit by 11:59 PM , via ELMS		

Note: This is a tentative schedule, and subject to change as necessary – monitor the course ELMS/Canvas 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.