



Course Syllabus

Information User Needs and Assessment

INST 352

Fall 2019

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.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Describe key principles of information behavior and user needs;

Class Information

Teacher

Dr. Rachael Bradley
Montgomery
rlb@umd.edu

Class Meets

Online, Asynchronous

Office Hours

By Appointment

Teaching Assistant

Rachel Mattos
rmattos@umd.edu

Course Communication

I will send time-sensitive information to students via ELMS announcements. Please ask questions about class content and assignments using the discussion forums on ELMS. Please contact me via email to discuss absences, accommodations, or other personal matters.

Here is a link with helpful guidance on writing professional emails ([ter.ps/email](#)).

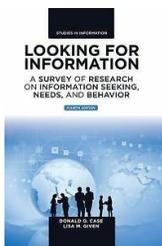
- Articulate strengths and weaknesses of different methods, models, theories, and techniques for expressing and studying information needs, use and behavior;
- Examine the diverse information needs and behavior of different user groups;
- Identify various ways that information technology can be used 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.

Required Resources

Course website: elms.umd.edu

There is one required textbook for this course that you can access as an ebook for free through our library. We will be reading in it selectively.

umaryland.on.worldcat.org/oclc/923550250



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 come from journals, trade publications, newspapers, conference proceedings, etc. as helpful. Additional assigned readings will be available through our class ELMS/Canvas site. All journal articles are also accessible through UMD Libraries or posted on the site. At any point in the semester, please do not hesitate to contact one of us if you have any trouble locating or accessing assigned readings.

Campus Policies

As a student, you have the responsibility to be familiar with and uphold the Code of Academic Integrity and the Code of Conduct. You also have the responsibility to notify your course instructors in a timely fashion regarding academic accommodations related to absences and accessibility, as indicated below.

As a student, you have the right to know the expectations set by University Policy. The University of Maryland values the diversity of its student body and is committed to providing a classroom atmosphere that encourages the equitable participation of all students.

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.

Activities, Learning Assessments, & Expectations for Students

While class is asynchronous and online, I expect that you complete and turn in all the activities and assignments for each week by the due date given. You are responsible for setting your own pace and contacting me if you are having difficulties **before** an assignment/activity is late.

Readings and Lectures:

- Complete all listed readings and post to the discussion forums. You are expected to both post a quality response to at least one discussion prompt and respond to at least 3 other posts to get full credit for the week.
- Lectures will be brief and will cover key points in the course material, but you'll only develop a deep enough understanding of the material for tests, assignments, projects, and discussion by completing the assigned readings. You are responsible for keeping up with readings per the schedule in the syllabus.

Weekly Posting and "Class" Activities:

- Because we do not meet each week, I gauge your progress through weekly activities and the postings about them. These may be discussions, activities, quizzes or a combination. All are graded and contribute to a significant portion of your grade. You are expected to complete them each week as they prepare you for upcoming work and build on one another.

Information Behavior Analysis:

- Describe one of your own recent information seeking experiences in 500-750 words. Discuss what this 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 you have thought about and understand the concepts of information, information needs, information seeking, and information behavior as discussed in course readings. (Additional Details are on ELMS)

Research Article Analysis:

- For this assignment, your first task is to select a user group that interests you – students in previous semesters have chosen diverse groups, ranging from World Cup fans to refugees who have recently arrived

in the US to college students with disabilities. Then, you are to locate a research article that discusses some aspect of information behavior (e.g., information seeking, decision-making, information anxiety) in connection with this 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 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. (More details are available on ELMS)

Exams

- A Midterm and Final exam will be administered to test the students’ understanding of the concepts introduced in the course. Both will be open book, open notes, take-home exams. 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 exams 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.

Course-Specific Policies

Late Assignments: All assignments must be submitted on ELMS. Assignments must be turned in by 11:59pm on the day they are due. The general policy in this class is that late assignments (both individual and team assignments) will be deducted 15% of its points after 11:59pm, and an additional 10% of its points each day they are late. Late assignments will be accepted according to this policy up to three days after the assignment due date. Assignments more than three days late will not be accepted. It is at the instructor’s discretion to accept late work and assign late point deduction. Because the assignments of this course accumulate for the final project, it is crucial to follow the assignment schedule.

No Extra Credit Work: Students sometimes ask for some extra credit work in an attempt to bring up grades. However, extra credit work will not be given on an individual basis.

Get Some Help!

Taking personal responsibility for you own learning means acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. I hope you will come talk to me so that I can help you find the right approach to success in this course, and I encourage you to visit tutoring.umd.edu to learn more about the wide range of campus resources available to you. In particular, everyone can use some help sharpen their communication skills (and improving their grade) by visiting ter.ps/writing and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center. You should also know there are a wide range of resources to support you with whatever you might need (see go.umd.edu/assistance), and if you just need someone to talk to, visit counseling.umd.edu or [one of the many other resources on campus](#).



Most services free because you have already paid for it, and **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 inclusive and equitable classroom environments. I invite you, if you wish, 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, how you identify in terms of your gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity, is your choice whether to disclose (e.g., should it come up in classroom conversation about our experiences and perspectives) and should be self-identified, not presumed or imposed. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly, and I ask you to do the same for all of your fellow Terps.

Grades

Grades are not given, but earned. Your grade is determined by your performance on the learning assessments in the course and is assigned individually (not curved). If earning a particular grade is important to you, please speak with me at the beginning of the semester so that I can offer some helpful suggestions for achieving your goal.

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 a time for us to meet in my office.

Late work will not be accepted for course credit so please plan to have it submitted well before the scheduled deadline. I am happy to discuss any of 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.

Learning Assessments	#	Points Each	Category Total	Category Weight
Readings and Responses	12	10	120	20%
Weekly Class Activities	14	10	140	30%
Written Assignments	2	15/45	60	20%
Exams (EX)	2	100	200	30%
Total Points:			700	

Final letter grades are assigned based on the percentage of total assessment points within each category multiplied by the category weight. I round to the second decimal point. To be fair to everyone I have to establish clear standards and apply them consistently, so please understand that being close to a cutoff is not the same as making the cut (89.99 \neq 90.00). It would be unethical to make exceptions for some and not others.

Final Grade Cutoffs					
+	97.00%	+	87.00%	+	77.00%
		+	67.00%		
A	94.00%	B	84.00%	C	74.00%
		D	64.00%	F	<60.00%
-	90.00%	-	80.00%	-	70.00%
		-	60.00%		

Course Schedule

Each week, you will be asked to post responses to that week's reading as well as classwork activities.

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
Week 1 8/26-9/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Overview • Introduction to Information Behavior 	Case & Given, Ch. 1 & Ch. 2 Bates, Marcia (2010). "Information Behavior" in <i>Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences, 3rd Ed.</i> Available at: https://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/bates/articles/information-behavior.html	
Week 2 9/2-9/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Information Needs • Information Behavior 	Case & Given, Ch. 4	
Week 3 9/9-9/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Seeking 	Case & Given, Ch. 5	
Week 4 9/16-9/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Overload • Information Anxiety • Related Concepts 	Case & Given, Ch. 6	
Week 5 9/23-9/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Models and Theories of Information Behavior 	Case & Given, Ch. 7	
Week 6 9/30-10/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Models and Theories of Information Behavior 	Case & Given, Ch. 8	Information Behavior Analysis
Week 7 10/7-10/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midterm Exam Preparation 		Midterm Exam
Week 8 10/14-10/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Design, Methods and Ethics • Scholarly Reading 	Case & Given, Ch. 9 Select Readings (See Elms)	
Week 9 10/21-10/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Divide • Digital Inclusion 	Select Readings (See Elms)	

Week 10 10/28-11/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User Experience • Usability 	Select Readings (See Elms)	
Week 11 11/4-11/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility 	Select Readings (See Elms)	
Week 12 11/11-11/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research by Roles and Context 	Case & Given, Ch 10	
Week 13 11/18-11/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research by Roles and Context Cont. 	Select and Self-Guided Readings (See Elms)	Research Article Analysis
Week 14 11/25-11/29	Break	Happy Thanksgiving	Rest
Week 15 12/2-12/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exam Preparation 		
Week 16 12/9-12/13			Final Exam

Note: This is a tentative schedule, and subject to change as necessary – ELMS contains the most up to date due dates and content. 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.