COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Pursuing a doctorate in information studies involves the scholarly examination of the interaction between people, information, technology, and society. In this doctoral seminar, you will encounter, and will be challenged to respond to, the foundational ideas that have become key inspirations, assumptions, and frameworks in the research, design, and practice of information products, services, or infrastructures. These ideas will serve as your guide in your journey as a scholar of information in the years ahead. Wherever you take your scholarship, these foundational ideas will help you navigate the interesting or challenging information questions and problems you will encounter along the way.

The iSchool takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of information. This course offers a collection of important ideas drawn from various disciplines, which include psychology, library and information science, economics, archives, computer science, sociology, public policy, management, organization studies, history, and anthropology. I selected the readings for this course based on their contributions to my personal growth as a scholar and as a result of consultations with colleagues from Maryland’s iSchool and other similar programs. Many of the readings are foundational, so you will be encountering some materials written decades ago. It is important to gain broad understanding of key ideas and also appreciate them within their social and historical context.

You are beginning your doctoral studies and your research careers at a time when information is implicated in many of the fundamental shifts in economics, politics, the organization of societies; yet there are widely varying positions regarding the specific role of information in these changes and on the significance of these shifts for individuals, communities and society at large. We are living in a moment when the security of the basic information and communications infrastructure is in doubt, the reliability and credibility of information we consume is in question, and the key institutions for knowledge generation and dissemination, including scientific research and the free press, are under attack. At the same time, there is great optimism about the potential for theoretical knowledge combined with rich data and sophisticated analyses to solve or redress key problems in health and wellbeing, inequality, climate change, and a host of other social problems. It is both an exciting time and a challenging time to be an information scholar.

Because we will cover a large body of diverse ideas, the course is a reading-intensive discussion seminar. As instructor, I will assess your progress based on how well you articulate the ideas expressed in the readings, both orally and in writing. One goal of this course is to provide a framework for situating your research interests in theoretical and disciplinary contexts. This will require critical reading of scholarly literature from a variety of disciplines; selecting and justifying theories, concepts and methods that might be fruitful for your research; and applying some of these
concepts to research questions and issues in contemporary life and society. As the course progresses, you will be expected to compare, contrast and/or synthesize ideas from your prior experience, other courses you have taken, and material discussed earlier in the course. Additionally, we will work to develop creative, constructive, and critical engagement: the ability to identify and imagine how concepts and methods from one area may apply to others, even while rigorously analyzing ideas, methods, and results to probe for problems, errors, and alternative hypotheses or representations.

The overall course objectives are for you to:

• Identify, understand, and synthesize concepts, ideas, and literatures that are foundational to the study of information.
• Improve your ability to read, comprehend, and remember large bodies of diverse content and refine critical analytical and evaluative skills.
• Increase your awareness of and ability to engage with potentially useful concepts, theories, and literatures outside your own area of expertise.
• Improve your ability to explain your research interests to others and learn to appreciate contributions from scholars and researchers outside your immediate area of interest.
• Develop the skill of presenting succinct summaries and commentaries orally and in writing.
• Understand and practice the writing requirements for scholarly communication, including clear and succinct synthesis of prior literature, critical commentary, and crisp, compelling presentation of your own ideas.

EVALUATION:

Your final grade will be calculated based on the weighting of the following course requirements:

- Attendance and active class participation: 25%
- Reading Response: 10%
- Critical Review Essay 1: 20%
- Critical Review Essay 2: 20%
- Final exam: 25%

Attendance and active participation in all class sessions (25% of grade). You are expected to attend all classes and to arrive on time and thoroughly prepared to participate actively in all discussions. Note: this is a seminar; not a lecture course. Your informed participation in the discussion, based on your critical assessment of all required reading, is an important element of the course (25% of your grade).

Reading Response (600-800 words): Prepare in advance, and present orally in class, a response to the assigned readings for one class session. The purpose of the response is to train you in an important aspect of all academic writing, namely the literature review. Your response paper should:

(a) summarize the argument(s) of the week’s readings very succinctly (1-3 sentences per reading),

(b) discuss how the readings connect with each other and/or with previous weeks’ readings, and
(c) offer a cogent critique of an **intellectual** aspect of the reading (argument, theoretical constructs, method, evidence). Please **don't** critique writing style or quality (“too long,” “redundant”), or offer your feelings while reading it (“boring,” “exciting,” etc.). (10% of your grade)

**Critical Review Essays (2):** Write an analytical review essay (1,500 to 2,000 words) that responds to the theories, concepts, and issues covered in class. You will be expected to read more deeply into the assigned readings and incorporate works not included on the syllabus. The instructor will provide prompt questions to guide you in writing the essay. Essay 1 is due October 31 and essay 2, November 28. (Each essay is 20% of your grade for a total of 40%)

**Final Exam:** Complete final take-home exam in essay form. Questions for the essay exam will be released at the end of the last class (December 5 and due at 5 pm on Wednesday, December 12). (25% of your grade)

The weighted average of your grades on all of the assignments will be converted to a letter grade according to the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weighted Average</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>97.0 and above</td>
<td>A+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94.0-96.9</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90.0-93.9</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87.0-89.9</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84.0-86.9</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80.0-83.9</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77.0-79.9</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74.0-76.9</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70.0-73.9</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67.0-69.9</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64.0-66.9</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.0-63.9</td>
<td>D-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 60.0</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**COURSE POLICIES:**

**Attendance.** Students are expected to attend every class and to be present on time. If you will be unable to make 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. Absences will only be excused in accordance with University policy (illness, religious observances, participation in University activities at the request of University authorities, and compelling circumstances beyond your control). Any planned absences due to religious observances must be communicated to me in writing during the first two weeks of class. Students may miss one class session with no penalty; thereafter, each unexcused absence will result in your grade being lowered by one step (for example, an A- will become a B+). Repeated tardiness may be considered an unexcused absence.
**Class Participation.** Students are expected to actively participate in every class. This will require that you finish all assigned readings prior to each class session. Participation forms an integral part of your own learning experience, as well as that of your classmates. Your attendance and participation in classroom discussions will count for 25% of your final grade. Class participation grades will take into account both the quantity and quality of your contributions to class 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. Classroom discussions should remain professional and respectful at all times. Please be sure to silence your cell phones before entering class. Laptop use is permitted during class, but only for class-related activities.

**Citation and Formatting.** Use standard professional formatting (double spacing, 1” margins, Times New Roman, 12-point font) for all assignments. For citations, use the *Chicago Manual of Style* (Author-Date).

**Submitting Assignments.** Each assignment must be submitted before the beginning of class on the indicated due date through our Canvas site (“INST888”). Please submit only one file per assignment (Word or .pdf format for papers; PowerPoint for presentations), naming your file using your last name (e.g. ‘Punzalan’).

**Late Work.** Unless you are facing an emergency situation AND you request an extension from me at least 48 hours in advance of the due date, late work will automatically be graded down by one step for each day that it is late. Assignments more than seven days late will not be accepted.

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

**Academic Integrity.** It is important that you practice academic honesty in all aspects of the class. Much of your learning happens when you challenge yourself to produce original work. You should familiarize yourself with violations of the Code of Academic Integrity. Among these include:

- **Cheating:** Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.
- **Fabrication:** Intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.
- **Facilitating Academic Dishonesty:** Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.
- **Plagiarism:** Intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own in an academic exercise.

For further clarification or information on the Code of Academic Integrity: http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/code.html

**Students With Disabilities.** The University provides appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities. The campus’ Disability Support Services Office (DSS) works with students and faculty to address a variety of issues ranging from test anxiety to physical and psychological disabilities. If you think you may have a disability, you should consult with DSS (4-7682, email
Dissup@umd.edu). To receive accommodations, you must first have your disabilities documented by DSS. Once notified, DDS prepares an Accommodation Letter for course instructors regarding needed accommodations. Students are responsible for presenting this letter to their instructors.

**Emergency Preparedness.** For complete information, please visit: http://www.umd.edu/emergencypreparedness/.

**Course Evaluation.** Course evaluations are a part of the process by which the University of Maryland seeks to improve teaching and learning. The University Senate approved the implementation of a standard, online, University-wide course evaluation instrument. Each course evaluation contains a set of universal questions, and some are supplemented by questions from specific colleges. Across the University, course evaluations are being administered through a web-based system dubbed CourseEvalUM. Students who leave no "Pending" evaluations in their Evaluation Dashboard each semester can view the aggregate results of a sub-set of universal items online.

All information submitted to the Evaluation System is confidential. Instructors and academic administrators can only view summarized evaluation results after final grades have been submitted. Instructors and academic administrators cannot identify which submissions belong to which students. This standardized set of evaluation results provides the University with useful information on teaching and student learning across the campus.

For additional info see Student Fast Facts at: https://www.irpa.umd.edu/Assessment/CourseEval/stdt_faq.shtml
Note: Please some readings may be added, dropped, or replaced. You will be notified by email when this occurs.

Week 1. Aug. 29. Course Overview and Logistics

We shall go over the class outline, course requirements, as well as key themes of the semester. We shall also discuss strategies for handling doctoral level seminar discussions and writing assignments. To help you prepare for the overwhelming volume of readings this semester, read:


Week 2. Sep. 5. Studying Information 1


- Weaver, W. 1949. “Recent Contributions to The Mathematical Theory of Communication.” *Scientific American*


Week 5. Sept. 26. New Media and Remediation


Week 6. Oct. 3. Information and Organizations


**Week 7. Oct. 10. Design**


**Week 8. Oct. 17. Human-Computer Interaction**


Week 10. Oct. 31. Networks and Infrastructure


Week 11. Nov. 7. Data and Knowledge Infrastructures


**Week 13. Nov. 28. Social Networks and Algorithm**


**Week 14. Dec. 5. ICT and Development**