University of Maryland
College of Information Studies

INST 888: Doctoral Seminar Part I – Mapping Information Studies Inquiry

Course Instructor: Katie Shilton
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:30-1:30 eastern | https://umd.webex.com/meet/kshilton
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COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Pursuing a doctorate in information studies involves the scholarly examination of the interaction between people, information, technology, and society. There are, however, as many ways to examine the interaction of people, information, technology and society as there are researchers, and many ways of understanding what counts as evidence and knowledge about information in society. This doctoral seminar will introduce you to the diverse scholarly traditions that comprise information studies, and will introduce you to how scholarly evidence and knowledge differ between them. It will examine why there are so many ways of knowing and methods of discovery within our field, and help you identify the social theory and methods that will support your path through information scholarship.

This course is designed to help you find your home among important ideas drawn from various disciples, which include psychology, library and information science, economics, archives, computer science, sociology, public policy, management, organization studies, history, and anthropology. The course has two goals:
1) to help you map the epistemology of key ideas in information studies – what counts as data, knowledge, and evidence in a given tradition, and why; and
2) to introduce you to broad research topics of interest in information studies, and how diverse epistemologies are used to investigate those topics.

The bookends of the course – the first and last module – introduce epistemology. The middle modules of the course help us think through epistemology by introducing broad objects of research interest in information studies.

The overall course objectives are for you to:

- Improve your ability to read, remember, and analyze large bodies of diverse content.
- Synthesize concepts, ideas, and literatures foundational to the study of information.
- Understand the diversity of theoretical and methodological frameworks in information studies and learn to appreciate contributions from scholars and researchers outside your area of interest.
- Apply best practices in scholarly communication, including clear and succinct synthesis of prior literature, critical commentary, and compelling presentation of your own ideas.
- Create your own epistemological stance by recognizing what counts as data, evidence, and knowledge in your own work.

Because we will cover a large number of ideas, the course is a reading-intensive discussion seminar. 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 theories and concepts from one area may apply to others.

**EVALUATION:**

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

- Attendance and active class participation 25%
- Reading Response 15%
- Claim Map 15%
- Epistemological Bingo 10%
- Theoretical Framework Essay 20%
- Theory Family Tree 15%

**Attendance and active participation in all class sessions (25% of grade).** You are expected to attend all class sessions and to arrive 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.

**Reading Response (600-800 words, 15% of grade):** Write, and then present orally in class, a response to all of the assigned readings (required and optional) 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 – where do they agree and disagree?
  (c) what evidence do authors use for each of their claims?
  (c) offer how would you apply the theory from this week to an empirical study. What would your data be?

**Knowledge Compressor Claim Map (Credit/no credit, 15% of grade):** Create a claim map for all of the articles for the week you choose using Knowledge Compressor. Knowledge Compressor is a tool to annotate scholarly literature and support literature reviews created by Dr. Joel Chan. Use Knowledge Compressor to annotate each of the articles from the week you chose.
  - What are the claims made by the authors?
  - What evidence do authors use to back up each of their claims?
  - How do the claims fit together?
  - How do they contrast with each other?
Your claim map will be a useful guide for your in-class presentation, as well. And we hope it will help read and retain scholarly literature by focusing on key claims and evidence.

*Knowledge Compressor* will also be a component of the spring 888 course. Our goal is for you to enter the spring seminar with a toolbox of usable claims and citable evidence to use in your own research.
Directions to download and start using Knowledge Compressor can be found here: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1R5a88sZMv7PxivvNvqkNSNvwr9X6j3uJyHUSftDXaYg/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1R5a88sZMv7PxivvNvqkNSNvwr9X6j3uJyHUSftDXaYg/edit?usp=sharing)

**Epistemological Bingo (Credit/no credit, 10% of grade):** Attend at least **four** talks hosted by the iSchool or elsewhere on campus. You will be assigned a bingo card collaboratively created by iSchool faculty and made up of theories and concepts common in the many disciplines that make up iSchool research. Whenever a guest lecture uses a concept or makes an assumption listed on your card, mark the square, and provide a 2-3 sentence summary of how they used that concept or assumption in their work. Sources of talks include:

- HCIL brownbags
- CASCI talks
- CLIP talks
- DCIC talks
- Job candidate talks (outside candidates, or practice talks by peers)

Talks elsewhere on campus are also permitted, although attending talks outside of the iSchool might make it harder to get bingo.

We will discuss your progress on your bingo cards at class sessions throughout the semester, and cards with the list of four talks you attended are due on December 4. The first person to bingo will win everlasting fame and bragging rights, plus a special prize from the Doctoral Committee.

**Mapping Your Theoretical Framework:**

**Essay (Due December 11, 20% of grade):** Choose a phenomenon of interest which you might (someday) research. Explain your theoretical orientation to this phenomenon in a short essay (2,000-3,000 words). Explore:

- Whether your approach will be deductive, inductive, abductive, and why.
- Positivist or interpretivist? Why?
- The important scholars working on this phenomenon of interest, and the theoretical traditions they draw from.
- Why your framework will support your research goals.

**Theory Family Tree (Due December 11. Credit/no credit, 15% of grade):**
The Theory Family Tree is a visualization created by doctoral student Karen Boyd: [https://karenleslie.github.io/theory-family-tree/colorcodedbytype.html](https://karenleslie.github.io/theory-family-tree/colorcodedbytype.html). It visualizes a linked dataset that connects social science epistemology, theory, and methods. Like the family tree at the beginning of an epic novel or the title sequence in *Game of Thrones*, the map is meant to guide and ground a researcher, as well as inspire discussion and expansion.

Your assignment is to add your own touch to the Theory Family Tree by doing at least one of the following:

- Connect a method you’re interested in, but not already included, to the map: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfJi62bE1NO2BnuoxwCOC8xvb0pCiXbS391aSNoCVMv2lDFw/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfJi62bE1NO2BnuoxwCOC8xvb0pCiXbS391aSNoCVMv2lDFw/viewform)
- Connect a theory you’re interested in, but not already included, to the map:
  https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfj62bE1NO2BnuoxwCOC8xvbd0pCiXbS391aSNcCVMv2lDFw/viewform
- Flesh out new relationships between at least three existing nodes:
  https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfj62bE1NO2BnuoxwCOC8xvbd0pCiXbS391aSNcCVMv2lDFw/viewform
- Add a new type of relationship and connect at least three nodes using that relationship:
  https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc2ndm9jUS6KMOv-hjWwgbVgc3vc_XJ5DkdL8MvclWd97dLA/viewform
- Add two papers that apply a concept to the theory family tree:
  https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdcXlEPCKKNcLfz1juLTliQaSuizkWCaXWTp58AtUWthx78vQ/viewform
- Define a new visualization for this dataset, or propose a dataset of your own.

For whichever addition you choose, you must submit a description and at least two citations on the Google form.

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>
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<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>
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<tr>
<td>84.0-86.9</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>80.0-83.9</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<td>74.0-76.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>70.0-73.9</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<td>67.0-69.9</td>
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<td>64.0-66.9</td>
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<td>60.0-63.9</td>
<td>D-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Below 60.0</td>
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</tbody>
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**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Note:** Content may be changed periodically to reflect the interests of the student in the course. You will be notified by email when this occurs.

  Before the course begins...  5
  Week 1. Defining Science  5
Week 2. Contrasting and Mapping Epistemologies 6
Week 3. What is this Information Science? (Or is it Information Studies?) 6
Module 2: Investigating Information in Human Behavior and Interaction 6
Week 4. Investigating Information and Individual Behavior 6
Week 5: Investigating Computer-Mediated Communication and Cooperation 7
Week 6: Investigating “Big” and Pervasive Interactions and Traces 7
Module 3: Investigating Information in Socio-Technical Interaction 7
Week 7: Investigating Information as Thing 8
Week 8: Investigating Technology as an Agent 8
Week 9: Investigating Infrastructure 8
Module 4: Investigating Information Through and With Design 8
Week 10: Human- and User-Centered Design 9
Week 11: Design for * [Information, Cooperation, Change] 9
Week 12: Critical Design 9
Module 5: Investigating Information in Institutions 9
Week 13: Investigating Information and Organizations 9
Week 14: Investigating Cultural Institutions 10
Module 6: Theory and Model Building 10
Week 15: Building your own theory and models 10

Module 1: What is Epistemology? What is Science? What is Information Science?

Before the course begins…

Please read:

• Edwards, Paul N., How to Read a Book. 
  http://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/howtoread.pdf

Week 1. Defining Science

Required:


Optional:

In class:
• Introducing the Claim Map.

**Week 2. Contrasting and Mapping Epistemologies**

Required:

In class:
• Introducing the Theory Family Tree

**Week 3. What is this Information Science? (Or is it Information Studies?)**

Required:

Optional:
• Strasser, B.J. and P.N. Edwards. 2017. “Big Data is the Answer... But What is the Question?” *Osiris* 32(1): 328-345.

**Module 2: Investigating Information in Human Behavior and Interaction**

**Week 4. Investigating Information and Individual Behavior**

Required:

Optional:

**Week 5: Investigating Computer-Mediated Communication and Cooperation**

Required:

Optional:

**Week 6: Investigating “Big” and Pervasive Interactions and Traces**

Required:

Optional:

**Module 3: Investigating Information in Socio-Technical Interaction**
Week 7: Investigating Information as Thing

Required:

Week 8: Investigating Technology as an Agent

Required:

Optional:

Week 9: Investigating Infrastructure

Required:

Optional:

Module 4: Investigating Information Through and With Design
Week 10: Human- and User-Centered Design

Required:

Optional:

Week 11: Design for * [Information, Cooperation, Change]

Required:

Optional:

Week 12: Critical Design

Required:

Optional:

Module 5: Investigating Information in Institutions

Week 13: Investigating Information and Organizations

Required:

Optional:

Week 14: Investigating Cultural Institutions

Required:

Optional:

Module 6: Theory and Model Building

Week 15: Building your own theory and models


COURSE POLICIES:


Attendance. Students are expected to attend every class session and to be present on time. If you will be unable to make a class, please e-mail the instructor beforehand and please be sure to check in with a fellow student following class so that you can catch up on anything you missed. 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 the instructor 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+).

**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, you may use the style guide most appropriate to your area of scholarship, but you must be consistent.

**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), and please include your last name in the file name.

**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.studenthonor council.umd.edu/code.html](http://www.studenthonor council.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