Information Studies’ eclectic interdisciplinary is both its greatest strength and its most significant weakness. As an increasingly multi/inter/trans/non-disciplinary intellectual community, Information Studies embraces a wide variety of conceptual frameworks, theories, methodological approaches, and intellectual traditions. As such, it is able to bring many different intellectual perspectives to bear on the complex, nuanced, phenomena that are its focus. The variety in the intellectual toolbox of Information Studies is central to its ability to avoid reduction of its focal topics to trite, simplistic characterizations.

However, Information Studies’ paradigmatic richness places particular burdens on the individual researcher. Framing research agendas, motivating research questions, conducting literature reviews, selecting methods, and even arguing for particular conclusions is complicated by the number of alternative approaches available to the Information Studies scholar. Faced with this complexity, it is tempting to select a single paradigm and “be done with it” – and in doing so forego a primary strength of the interdisciplinary field.

The purpose of this seminar is to help you develop a reflective practice that you can rely on to turn your interests into valuable new insights in an interdisciplinary domain like Information Studies.

Towards this end, we will focus our activities and time together to work on the following dimensions of your reflective practice:

1. Regularly developing your ideas in conversation with the literature;
2. Navigating interdisciplinary literatures, collaborators, and scholarly networks;
3. Recognizing and selecting research problems that can lead to valuable new insights.

In the process of developing these dimensions of your practice, you will also develop a solid knowledge base you can grow and rely on as you develop as a scholar, and develop clear and effective writing skills.
COURSE ACTIVITIES AND GRADING:

This course will rest on the following foundational activities:

1. Weekly **intermediate insight reports** where you demonstrate progress investing in your knowledge base for your topic of interest. This provides an accountability structure for you to make timely and steady progress at building up the knowledge base you need to formulate good research problems, as well as the context for your ongoing reflection on developing your practice. I will provide more details on expected quantity and format of investments.

2. Weekly **diary entries** where you explicitly reflect on the development of your practice. I will provide prompts.

3. A series of **interdisciplinarity quests** where you plan, execute, and reflect on serious attempts to bring your ideas into dialogue with one or more disciplines / perspectives that are outside your core expertise; details forthcoming, but broadly it will include 1) actively looking for, processing, and attempting to synthesize and iterate on your research problem based on literature outside your core expertise, and 2) scheduling a meeting to discuss your ideas with at least one expert outside your discipline.

4. The completion of a **full research proposal** that fleshes out your research interests into a concrete research problem and associated proposed approach, enriched by one or more Information Studies perspectives/methods.
   a. We will build towards this with at least three intermediate opportunities to workshop your ideas in class, and three intermediate written draft deliverables.

5. In class **reflective discussions and scaffolded micro-practice** to build our community of practice and workshop/develop our practices and ideas; usually accompanied by a few short assigned readings/materials to initiate discussion.

In addition to our focus on the conceptual work of becoming an Information Studies scholar, we will also discuss other meta-topics (as appropriate) that support this conceptual work. Example topics include mechanics of searching for and synthesizing research literature, practical heuristics for generating research ideas, and getting feedback on your ideas at varying stages of development. We will decide together what exactly we discuss based on our unique personalities, circumstances, and needs.

Additional details for each activity (including instructions and readings) will be provided in class and in this document throughout the semester.

GRADING:

The main “deliverables” for credit for this course will be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deliverable</th>
<th>Grade weight</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly intermediate insight reports</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly diary entries</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two interdisciplinarity quests (10% each)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing an outline (10%), initial (10%), revised (10%) and final draft (20%) of a research proposal
Actively participating in in-class discussion and activities

Developmental feedback will be provided through peer feedback exercises, discussion of your work, and written feedback. While it should not be a primary focus of your efforts in this course, your final grade for the semester will be calculated based on the weights for each activity listed above. 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>
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</tbody>
</table>

COURSE POLICIES:

Attendance and Class Participation. Interaction with colleagues, the instructor, and other visitors is a critical part of this course. As such, you are expected to attend and actively participate in every class session. If you will be unable to make a class, please e-mail me beforehand and please be sure to check in with your colleagues following class – while it is not possible to “catch up” on missed materials, discussion of the topics with others is the next best alternative. Excessive absences (more than 2) will negatively affect your evaluation and may result in your final grade being lowered.

Submitting Assignments. Each assignment must be submitted before the beginning of class on the indicated due date through our Canvas site (“INST888”). Unless you are facing an emergency situation AND you request an extension from me at least 24 hours in advance of the due date, late work will receive a late work penalty. Assignments more than seven days late will not be evaluated for grading purposes (though developmental feedback will be provided). Please note that “being busy”, “not being sure about the requirements”, and foreseeable constraints (such as conference or grant deadlines) do not constitute emergencies.

Syllabus Change Policy. This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change.
**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](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/](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](https://www.irpa.umd.edu/Assessment/CourseEval/stdt_faq.shtml)
COURSE SCHEDULE (Overview):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Topic</th>
<th>Due*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/27</td>
<td>Intros to class and logistics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>What is a good research problem?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2/10</td>
<td>A process you can trust</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2/17</td>
<td>Topic explorations 1 of 2</td>
<td>Intermediate Insight Report (weekly hereafter)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Diary Entry (weekly hereafter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2/24</td>
<td>Topic explorations 2 of 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>Foraging and problematization strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3/9</td>
<td>Navigating interdisciplinarity 1</td>
<td>Research Proposal Outline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3/16</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3/23</td>
<td>Writing workshop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3/30</td>
<td>Workshopping research proposals 1 of 2</td>
<td>Interdisciplinarity Quest 1 Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>4/6</td>
<td>Workshopping research proposals 2 of 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>4/13</td>
<td>Navigating interdisciplinarity 2</td>
<td>Research Proposal Draft 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>4/20</td>
<td>Synthesizing literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>4/27</td>
<td>Workshopping revised research proposals 1 of 2</td>
<td>Interdisciplinarity Quest 2 Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>5/4</td>
<td>Workshopping revised research proposals 1 of 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>5/11</td>
<td>Show and tell / final reflections</td>
<td>Research Proposal Draft 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>5/18</td>
<td>Finals week</td>
<td>Research Proposal Final Draft</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All deliverables are due the night before class (11:59p on Sunday)
* This is a living document and subject to change (with notice / discussion); details on readings and preparation for class provided below
COURSE SCHEDULE (Detailed; will be updated as the semester progresses):

All/most materials linked to in our shared Google Drive of readings / resources:

**Week 1 1/27 - Intros**

Readings / materials:
- https://promarket.org/esther-duflo-how-to-find-the-right-questions/
- http://matt.might.net/articles/phd-school-in-pictures/

**Week 2 2/3 - What is a good research problem?**

Readings / materials:
- http://pgbovine.net/PG-Vlog-192-research-paper-soul.htm (roughly 12-min vlog)

Bring to class:
- Examples (N >= 3) of your favorite research papers / scholarly outputs (doesn’t have to be published; could be research statements or extremely well-written blog posts also)

**Week 3 2/10 - A process you can trust**

Readings / materials:
- https://praxis.fortelabs.co/how-to-take-smart-notes/
- Recommended but optional
  - https://zettelkasten.de/posts/identity-schedule-serious-writing/
  - https://accidentalcreative.com/creating/there-are-no-secrets-there-are-no-shortcuts

**Week 4 2/17 - Topic Explorations 1 of 2**

Readings / materials:
- TBD

**Week 5 2/24 - Topic Explorations 2 of 2**

Sign-ups:
Readings / materials:
  ● TBD

Sign-ups:
  ●

**Week 6 3/2 - Foraging and problematization strategies**

Readings / materials:
  ● TBD

**Week 7 3/9 - Navigating interdisciplinarity 1**

Readings / materials:
  ● TBD

**Week 8 3/16 - Spring Break NO CLASS**

**Week 9 3/23 - Writing workshop**

Readings / materials:
  ● TBD

**Week 10 3/30 - Workshopping research proposals 1 of 2**

Readings / materials:
  ● TBD

**Week 11 4/6 - Workshopping research proposals 2 of 2**

Readings / materials:
  ● TBD

**Week 12 4/13 - Navigating interdisciplinarity 2**

Readings / materials:
  ● TBD

**Week 13 4/20 - Synthesizing literature**

Readings / materials:
  ● TBD

**Week 14 4/27 - Workshopping revised research proposals 1 of 2**
Readings / materials:
  • TBD

*Week 15* 5/4 - *Workshopping revised research proposals 2 of 2*

Readings / materials:
  • TBD

*Week 16* 5/11 - *Show and tell / final reflections*

Readings / materials:
  • TBD