A. Instructor, Office Hours, & Contact Information
James Donaldson, MLS
Adjunct Professor, Acting Assistant Director for Collection & Technology, Montgomery County Public Libraries
Office hours: Available upon request
Via email jdonald3@umd.edu

Please allow for email responses within 24-hours Mon-Fri and 48 hours on weekends and holidays.

B. Description of Course
This capstone course of the MLS core requires student to integrate all their previous coursework and apply it the design of future information systems and services. This course focuses on the critical analysis of the roles of information professions and institutions in integrating theory, methods, practice, policies, and values of the field. This course is open to students who have successfully completed 24 credit hours of their MLS program.

C. Goals and Outcomes of Course
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:
• Define relationships between the theory, methodology, and practice of information professions and disciplines;
• Apply professional ethics and values to their work in information environments;
• Identify and critique social, public, information, economic, and cultural policies and trends of significance to the information professions;
• Apply principles of equity, inclusion, rights, and justice to information contexts;
• Understand ethics, values, and foundational principles of the information professions;
• Understand laws, legal frameworks, political contexts, and policies within which libraries and information agencies operate;
• Identify and evaluate challenges and opportunities for information professions or professionals from emerging technologies and innovations;
• Apply theoretical and research approaches in the context of information institutions; and
• Demonstrate skills in using methods of inquiry to obtain support for library programs

D. Course Approach and Expectations of Student Participation
This course meets once a week on Wednesdays from 6-8:45 in HBK 2119. The course will be conducted as a seminar, employing a variety of interactive methods to engage students, including but not limited to:
• Instructor-guided discussions
• Small group discussions
• Student-led discussions
• Guest speakers
• Case study analyses
• Sharing and debriefing of assignments

Lectures will be provided by the instructor only to introduce topics and begin discussions.

It is essential that every student participates in the discussions of course materials. Participation means active involvement in class discussions. **Students must read the assigned readings for each week PRIOR TO THAT WEEK.** The students are expected to question, challenge, argue, and discuss issues and topics related to that session’s readings. Failure to participate in the course will result in a letter grade of F for this component.

**E. Classroom Environment**
As a graduate seminar, the classroom environment should be professional and respectful. Discussions should be based on course readings and critical thinking. Some of the issues discussed in this course can involve strongly held beliefs and current political controversies. Remember – your classmates may have different perspectives on issues than you, but they still deserve your respect. As another aspect of respect in the classroom environment, turn off or mute all phones and other communication devices during each class session. If you use your laptop or mobile device in the classroom, limit the usage to course-related reasons (i.e., taking notes).

**F. Students with Disabilities**
Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Disability Support Services office, and (2) discuss any necessary academic accommodation with their teachers. This should be done **at the beginning** of the semester.

**G. Extensions**
Timeliness is an essential component of graduate work, and extensions will only be available during personal emergencies. Students who need to request an extension should discuss the matter in advance with the professor. If an extension is granted, the work must be submitted within the extension period to avoid grade penalties. Unexcused delays in submission will receive an automatic 10% deduction for every day late.

**H. Academic Honesty**
Work submitted in this course will be individual and original, in line with the University’s Academic Honor Code and Honor Pledge. Engaging in any academic dishonesty will result in consequences in line with university policies. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to plagiarism, cheating, buying work, multiple submissions of the same paper, submitting fraudulent documents, and facilitating the academic dishonesty of others. When writing papers, be sure to carefully and thoroughly cite all materials you use in writing your paper and make sure all ideas and quotations are properly acknowledged.
I. Syllabus Change Policy
This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

J. CourseEvalUM
Participation in the evaluation of courses through CourseEvalUM is a responsibility that students hold as members of our academic community. Student feedback is confidential and important to the improvement of teaching and learning at the University. Please use http://www.courseevalum.umd.edu to complete course evaluations at the end of the semester.

K. Course Materials
There is no required text for the course. All readings will be available to students online or in another accessible format. Nearly all the required journal article readings are accessible through the University’s library e-journal/database holdings accessible at http://www.lib.umd.edu.

L. Assignments and Grading
Your grade in this course will be based on four items:
- Participation (20%)
- Elevator pitch (5%)
- Problem Statement (10%)
- White Paper (15%)
- Advocacy Brief (20%)
- Mini Grant Proposal (20%)
- Grant Proposal Presentation (10%)

Guidelines for written materials for the course include:
- Full name and paper title at the top of the paper
- Single-spaced
- 12-point standard font
- 1-inch margins
- In-text citations and references section in APA style
- Numbered pages should be numbered
- Consistent formatting
- Free of grammatical errors and typos

All papers are due via electronic submission to Professor Donaldson at jdonald3@umd.edu by the end of the day on which they are due. Late submissions will receive an automatic 10% deduction for every day late.

1. Classroom participation (20% of final grade). This seminar is a discussion-based course. Students are expected to complete all readings, to think through the issues raised in the readings, and to articulate thoughts on the materials in class. Clearly, you need to attend class to participate in the discussions. Attendance will be taken every week, with absences being excused in cases of illness, religious observances, and other reasons in line with university policies, or if the university is closed due to inclement weather.
In order to receive an excused absence, you must notify the instructor *in advance* of the class meeting.

Assessment: Your classroom participation will be graded based on the insightfulness of your comments; your careful consideration of other students’ comments; and your ability to draw on the course readings, external resources, and personal experiences to justify and support your claims.

2. The remaining assignments for this class are designed to build upon one another. As an initial matter, you will each identify a problem faced by an information institution – both the problem and the information institution should be of particular interest to you. Through these assignments, you will have the opportunity to examine this problem from different angles – developing an in-depth understanding of the issues and stakeholders, identifying potential solutions, explaining the issues to different audiences, and laying out the details of your proposed project to potential funders.

   A. *Elevator Pitch* (5% of final grade, due September 12 by midnight). The ability to explain the importance of a program or an institution in clear and concise language can be extremely important when advocating for support or funding. Getting the attention of the audience is a key first step in getting support. An elevator pitch is a term that means you can state your case in a very short time – the duration of an elevator ride. For this assignment, you will write a single paragraph of no more than 150 words explaining the importance of the information institution you have selected. You must be very selective in the word chose and messages that you emphasize; you cannot cover every contribution, so you will need to focus on the most significant and unique impacts.

      Assessment: Your Elevator Pitch will be graded based on your appropriate selection of an information institution; the effectiveness of the message; your adherence to the length requirement; and clarity and precision of thought in your writing. Your paper should follow the guidelines for written materials provided above.

   B. *Problem Statement* (10% of final grade, due September 26 by midnight). The Problem Statement – approximately 500 words in length – should select a specific information organization (e.g., public library, archive, school media center, academic library, business, government agency, etc.) and a problem it faces. This problem can relate to any aspect of funding, staffing, services, operations, management, or another aspect of the activities of the information organization. It can be anything from an archive needing increased funding to a public library determining how to provide services to homeless populations. Building on the readings for the first three weeks of the class and outside readings from the literature, you are expected to 1) provide a concise statement of the problem and its significance, 2) suggest research methods that could be employed to examine the problem; and 3) identify the stakeholders impacted.

      Assessment: Your Problem Statement will be graded based on your appropriate selection of a problem; your adherence to the length requirement; evidence of critical thinking; and
clarity and precision of thought in your writing. Your paper should follow the guidelines for written materials provided above.

C. White Paper (15% of final grade, due October 10 by midnight). The White Paper – 1,500-2,000 words in length – provides you with the opportunity to offer solutions to an issue faced by an information institution or information profession. Taking the problem you originally examined in your Problem Statement assignment, you will draft a White Paper that presents recommendations on how to address the problem to the directors of the organization. Building on your Problem Statement assignment, the readings for the first six weeks of the class, and outside readings from the literature, the White Paper should: 1) demonstrate a problem; 2) list the options to solving the problem; and 3) propose a best solution to address the problem.

Assessment: Your White Paper will be graded based on your completion of the three requirements listed above; your appropriate selection of options and solutions; your adherence to the length requirement; your adherence to the formatting and citation requirements; evidence of critical thinking; and clarity and precision of thought in your writing. Your paper should follow the guidelines for written materials provided above.

D. Advocacy Brief (20% of final grade, due November 7 in class). When advocating for support of anything, including an information institution, one does not have much time to get and keep the attention of the audience. Using the key elements of your previous two assignments, the Advocacy Brief is a single side of one sheet of paper including whatever content you deem appropriate in any mix of text and graphics that you think best conveys your argument. It should be clear about the problem, the solution being sought, and the impacts of that solution. It can be a flyer, brochure, or other similar object. Some free tools are available online – such as Piktochart – to help with design and layout.

Assessment: Your Advocacy Brief will be graded on your completion of the requirements listed above; the methods employed to convey the content; the timeliness of your submission; and the clarity and precision of your writing. Writing should be succinct yet explanatory, free of typos and grammatical errors, and should cite works appropriately.

E. Mini Grant Proposal (proposal: 20%; presentation: 10%) due November 28, 2018.

1. Building on all of the previous assignments, you will draft a sketch of a grant proposal to fund a research, demonstration, or educational project to support your ideas outlined in your previous assignments. You should identify a realistic problem and a government agency or foundation appropriate for that problem.

Your proposal will include:
- Type of institution you are seeking funding for
- The funding program and track within the funding program (if applicable)
- Topic of the grant and how it connects to the goals of the funder
- Why it is important to fund/what needs it would fulfill
- What needed to accomplish the project
- How you will accomplish it - personnel, time, equipment, travel, etc.
• A reasonable estimation of cost and what the budget would need to cover

We will further discuss in class what the miniature version of the grant proposal will need to contain. The Mini Grant Proposal will only be 3-5 pages in length - you will not have to write the entire proposal. No panicking. The written grant proposal is worth 20% of your final grade and is due November 28 by midnight.

Assessment: Your paper will be graded based on your inclusion of the elements provided; your appropriate selection of a problem and funding agency; your use of research and professional resources to justify the elements of your plan; your adherence to the length requirement; your adherence to the formatting and citation requirements; evidence of critical thinking; and clarity and precision of thought in your writing.

2. You will also do a presentation of your mini grant proposal. The presentation is worth 10% of your final grade and will occur on December 5. Your presentation should be 3-5 minutes.

Assessment: Your presentation will be graded based on the quality of the presentation (e.g., organization, delivery, and time management) and your coverage of all main elements of the grant proposal.

M. Letter Grades
A+ 97-100
A 93-96
A- 90-92
B+ 87-89
B 83-86
B- 80-82
C+ 77-79
C 73-76
C- 70-72
D+ 67-69
D 63-66
D- 60-62
F 0-59
N. Course Schedule and Readings

AUGUST 29: INFORMATION INSTITUTIONS IN SOCIETY
Key topics:
- Types of information institutions
- Histories of information institutions
- Values of information institutions (equity, memory, access, education)
Readings:
- Search for – and be ready to share and discuss – a definition of each of the following kinds of information institutions:
  - Academic libraries,
  - Archives,
  - Law Libraries,
  - Museums,
  - Public libraries, and
  - Special libraries.
Consider both the definitions and the sources of the definitions.

SEPTEMBER 5: INCLUSION AND INFORMATION
Key topics:
- Different populations served by information institutions
- Provision of inclusive services and resources
- Diversity in the information professions
- Human rights and social justice as part of information
Readings:

SEPTEMBER 12: ETHICS, VALUES, AND INFORMATION PROFESSIONS
- Elevator Pitch due
Key topics:
- Sources of ethics and values
• Cultural, personal, and professional ethics and values
• Intellectual Freedom in context
• Historical and shifting values of the information professions

Readings:

**SEPTEMBER 19: WORKSHOP: CAREER STRATEGIES, RESUMES AND COVER LETTERS**

- *Bring draft cover letter and resume to class*

  Key topics:
  - Crafting and executing a personal career strategy
  - Writing successful cover letters and resumes

  Readings:

**SEPTEMBER 26: INTERVIEWING WORKSHOP**

- *Problem Statement due*

  Key topics:
  - Guest speakers
  - Practice interviews

**OCTOBER 3: APPROACHES TO INQUIRY**

Key topics:
- Examples of theories and methods for studying information
- Relationships between theory, method, and practice in the information professions
- Stakeholders

Readings:


OCTOBER 10: ACTING ON INQUIRY

• White Paper due

Key topics:
• The process of designing inquiry
• The process of designing action
• Disseminating findings
• Incorporating inquiry into organizational operation

Readings:
• Find three annual reports from information institutions of your choice and be ready to discuss them

OCTOBER 17: ADVOCACY AND MARKETING

Guest speaker – Natalie Edington

Key topics:
• Advocating
• Marketing
• Engaging stakeholders and funders

Readings:

OCTOBER 24: LEGAL CONTEXTS OF INFORMATION PROFESSIONS

Key topics:
• Laws and legal frameworks for the information professions
• Sources of laws related to the information professions
• Professional practice within legal contexts

Readings:

**OCTOBER 31: GRANT WRITING AND ADMINISTRATION**
*Remote Activity – No in class meeting*

**Key topics:**
- Key funding sources
- Guidelines and principles
- Goals of grant writing
- Administering grants

**Readings:**
- Review the websites of IMLS, NSF, NIH, and the Department of Education for grants information

**NOVEMBER 7: POLICY AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS OF INFORMATION PROFESSIONS**
*Advocacy Brief Due in Class*

**Key topics:**
- How information policy is made and enacted
- How information policy is inspired by information ethics, values, and technology
- How information ethics and professional norms challenge laws and policy

**Readings:**

**NOVEMBER 14: TRANSFORMATION, NOT TRANSACTION**

**Key topics:**
- Social, technological, legal, and professional influences on the future of the information professions
- Perceptions of the information professions in media and politics

**Readings:**


NOVEMBER 21: THANKSGIVING

NOVEMBER 28: FUTURE TRENDS, CHANGING SERVICE MODELS

- *Mini Grant Proposal due*

Key Topics:

- Trends affecting society and the information professions
- How information institutions can adapt to changing societal needs and expectations

Readings:


DECEMBER 5: PRESENTATIONS AND COURSE WRAP-UP

- *Presentations of Mini Grant Proposals*
- Final thoughts
- Final grades