



Course Syllabus – INST 201 Section 101

Introduction to Information Science

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Examining effects of new information technologies on how we conduct business, interact with friends, and go through our daily lives. Understanding how technical and social factors have influenced evolution of information society. Evaluating the transformative power of information in education, policy, and entertainment—and the dark side of these changes.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

We live in an increasingly networked information society, characterized by a complex relationship between information & communication technologies (ICT) and the people who use them. While most individuals, organizations, and governments are quick to adopt new technologies, they rarely take the time to consider how that technology is shaping their behaviors and, conversely, how users shape the development of future technologies.

This course will provide you with the foundational knowledge needed to begin addressing key issues associated with the rise of the Information Society. Issues will range from the theoretical (what is information and how do humans construct it?), to the cultural (how are newer communication technologies different from earlier distance-shrinking and knowledge-building technologies such as telephones?), to the technical (what are the basic architectures of computing networks?).

Successful completion of this course will give you the conceptual tools necessary to understand the social, political, and economic factors associated with a networked society. As a core course in the Bachelor of Science in Information Science (BSIS), this class will also provide you a knowledge-based foundation for future courses in information, technology, and policy.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After successfully completing this course you will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of fundamental concepts and ideas around the rise of the information society.
- Demonstrate critical thinking in evaluating causal arguments regarding the relationship between technology and society, including analyzing major assertions, background assumptions, and explanatory evidence.
- Explain how information & communication technologies (ICTs) shape national and global events.
- Use information technologies to conduct research and to communicate effectively about

Instructor

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Class Meets

Tu/Th 12:30pm – 1:45pm
SQH 1120

Office Hours

M 10am – noon
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Or by appointment

TA

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ICTs.

- Articulate how the historical events leading to the information society have shaped our modern-day use of ICTs.
- Articulate ways technology use can be problematic, and how to harness technology for positive change.
- Work collaboratively to create and disseminate information content broadly.

REQUIRED CLASS MATERIALS

There is no textbook for this course. Course readings are located on ELMS and are a mix of academic articles and journalism. Course readings are subject to change, so make sure you check ELMS for any updates before you dig into a given week's readings.

CLASS STRUCTURE

This course involves lectures, hands-on activities, exams, and small group projects. You should complete the assigned readings/videos/audio **before** class (see syllabus and ELMS for reading assignments). The syllabus is a living document and changes may be made to meet certain class needs or respond to current events relevant to class. Changes will be announced ahead of time. The most current syllabus is always the one on ELMS.

CLASS ETIQUETTE

Laptops are allowed in this class; however, because [the science is pretty clear](#) that not only do laptops impede individual learning, but there's a second-hand smoke effect where they hurt others opportunity to learn as well, please consider using paper/pen to take notes instead. On occasion laptops will be helpful to class work. On those occasions I will make an announcement in advance of the relevant class.

In general, be aware of the people around you and avoid doing things that will disturb them or otherwise prevent them from fully engaging with the content. Put your phones on silent before the start of class. If you need to make/take a phone call, leave the classroom before doing so. When engaging in a class discussion, be respectful of others in the room.

ASSIGNMENTS AND LEARNING ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	#	Points Each	Total Value	Submission due date
Syllabus quiz (individual)	1	5	5%	August 29
In-class clicker quizzes (individual)	20-ish	1	15%	Almost every class
Wikipedia article evaluation	2	5/10	15%	Part 1: Sept. 03 Part 2: Sept. 12
Activities				
• A day in airplane mode (individual)				October 1
• A day in the life of a content moderator	4	5	20%	October 29
• Identifying online extremism				November 5
• Privacy by Design game				November 12
Midterm exam (individual)	1	15	15%	October 10

Create a meme	1	10	10%	October 22
Final Exam (individual)	1	20	20%	December 16
Total		100	100%	

- **Syllabus quiz (5% total, to be completed individually).** The syllabus contains a lot of highly valuable information that often gets overlooked. To encourage you to read the syllabus in full, you will be quizzed on it. This quiz will be open note, but timed – so read the syllabus through before starting the quiz.
- **In-class clicker quizzes (15% total, to be completed individually).** To help evaluate how well you comprehend the lectures, there will be a short quiz during every class to assess your knowledge. As missing class is sometimes inevitable, only **15 quizzes** will be graded. If something arises that leads you to miss more than 5 classes, please let me know as soon as possible. There are no quizzes on activity days, the day of the midterm exam, or on Module 5 content (the last quiz will be on November 26).
- **Wikipedia article evaluation (15% total, to be completed in groups).** We all rely on Wikipedia to help us quickly get answers to our information needs. Some people generally distrust the accuracy of content on Wikipedia because it is generated by a community of anonymous contributors; however, a lot of research suggests popular Wikipedia pages are very reliable.

For this assignment you will work with a classmate to find two Wikipedia articles, one that you both think is controversial or needs work, and one that you think is an example of a well-written and reliable article. Together you will write a short evaluation of each of the articles (between 500-750 words each or 1000-1500 words total), taking into consideration things like discussions on the talk pages, citations, and warnings (or lack thereof), and propose changes you would make to the article.

Part 1: Complete Wikipedia Training modules (5 points, completed individually)

Part 2: Evaluation (15 points, completed with a partner)

Extra Credit: Make the changes in Wikipedia and everyone in your group will each receive 2 extra points.

- **Activities (20% total, to be completed in groups except “A day in airplane mode”)*** I have created four activities designed to give you the opportunity to grapple with problems and decisions that reflect real issues relevant to information science. Most of these activities will be completed during class time, with due dates the following class day to give you a bit of time to complete post-activity reflections if needed. If you cannot attend the class the day an activity is scheduled, please let me know as soon as possible so that you can be assigned a 750 word essay on the same topic. If you do not let me know that you are unable to attend an activity day class

* Some of these activities will have you engaging with material that you may find disturbing. If you think this may be an issue for you, please contact me as soon as possible.

before it starts, the essay will not be available to you and you will receive a 0/5 on the assignment.

- **A day in airplane mode (5% total, to be completed individually).** Mobile phone use is increasingly ubiquitous. In many cases, we may not be aware of how often we use our phone, when we use it, and how that use affects how we interact with the world. This assignment will ask you to disconnect your phone from the Internet for a day and write a short (500 words) reflective essay on the experience.
 - **A day in the life of a content moderator (5% total, to be completed in class).** Big tech companies, such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter are facing increasing scrutiny over the content they both allow and remove from their websites. However, these decisions are rarely as easy as they might seem. This activity will ask you to apply the community guidelines of a social media company to a corpus of potentially objectionable material. You will work with your group to decide what stays and what goes.
 - **Identifying online extremism – a mini ethnography (5% total, to be completed in class).** Recent terrorist acts by organized groups and lone wolves have highlighted the extent to which the Internet plays a role in exposing people to extremist content, some of whom may become radicalized. In this activity, your group will be assigned an online community where radicalization may occur. Your group will be tasked with identifying signs of potential radicalization and suggesting a solution for how you think it may be most effectively addressed.
 - **Privacy by Design game (5% total, to be completed in class).** Researchers here at the College of Information Studies have designed a game based on real-life ethical decisions that web-developers face during the design process. You and your group will play the game and then respond to questions about your experience.
- **Create a meme (10% total, to be completed in groups).** Understanding how information is created, distributed, and consumed is a critical component of nearly any job in the information sector. In your future classes and careers, you'll likely be creating and consuming content, searching for and sharing information, and trying to predict what will happen tomorrow.

For this project you will conduct some background research to learn about what makes a meme successful and why some go viral and others do not. Using this knowledge, you will create your own meme based on a topic we have covered in class. On the due date, all memes will be posted to ELMS and each class member will vote for their favorite meme. The meme with the most votes will receive extra credit (2 points). Extra credit may also be earned by sharing your meme on a social media platform and sending me the link (1 point).

Note: Memes should not include content that is profane, disparaging, or inflammatory. Your content must be original and must be created for this class; do not use content that has previously gone viral or memes you have previously designed.

GRADES AND EVALUATION

Grades are not given, but earned. Your grade is determined by your performance on the learning assessments in the course. 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. I am happy to discuss 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.

Final letter grades are assigned based on the total points earned. To be fair to everyone I have to establish clear, consistent standards, so please understand that being close to a cutoff is not the same as making the cut (i.e., $89.99 \neq 90.00$). It would be unethical to make exceptions for some and not others. I do not round grades up. **I will not respond to email requests for a grade bump at the end of the semester.** The cutoffs are as follows:

Final Grade Cutoffs									
+	97%	+	87%	+	77%	+	67%		
A	94%	B	84%	C	74%	D	64%	F	<60%
-	90%	-	80%	-	70%	-	60		

In this class, an "A" denotes full achievement of the goals of the class, a "B" denotes good progress towards the learning objectives, and a "C" indicates that you were able to comprehend the concepts involved but were unable to effectively apply that knowledge. Since the grading is based on a point-based system, an F is not the same thing as a zero. **Failing work still earns *some* points.** You are always better off to turn something in and get feedback on what you were able to complete. The point-based system also means that you can keep track of your progress and always know what your current grade is in the course. You are encouraged to monitor your own performance.

Missed Deadlines. If you will not be able to meet an assignment deadline, contact Dr. Gilbert **before** the due date to explain why you will need to submit the assignment late and what your plan is; these will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

If you need to miss the final exam because of outside circumstances (e.g., a religious holiday, military duties, work/athletic team travel), you must email me **before** the exam to reschedule your exam time. If you are sick on an exam day, you must provide me with a doctor's note to be excused (see the UMD Health Center's [policy on medical excuse notes](#)) and should email me before the exam time to let me know you're sick.

Late Assignments Policy. Unless prior permission has been granted, no late work is accepted. This policy is in place to ensure all students have their work returned to them in a timely fashion. Please prepare in advance so that you will not encounter technical difficulties that may prevent submission of a given assignment. Should you encounter technical difficulties with ELMS, please email me the assignment and upload the same version to ELMS as soon as you are able. If you have a conflict with the due date, assignments can always be submitted early. Generally speaking, illnesses are not an excuse for late assignments because you will receive the assignments at least one week before they are due.

POLICY ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Cases of academic misconduct will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct irrespective of scope and circumstances, as required by university rules and regulations. It is crucial to understand that the instructors do not have a choice of following other courses of actions in handling these cases. There are severe consequences of academic misconduct, some of which are permanent and

reflected on the student's transcript. For details about procedures governing such referrals and possible consequences for the student please visit <http://osc.umd.edu/OSC/Default.aspx>

It is very important that you complete your own assignments, and do not share any files or other work. The best course of action to take when a student is having problems with an assignment question is to contact the instructor. The instructor will be happy to work with students while they work on the assignments.

University of Maryland Code of Academic Integrity. The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit <http://shc.umd.edu/SHC/Default.aspx>. As this policy is incredibly important, I know that you didn't skip reading it! To show me that you did, email me your favorite cute animal picture by August 30 for one extra credit point.

Students have a responsibility to familiarize themselves with violations of the Code of Academic Integrity. Among these include:

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

ACCOMMODATIONS

Students with disabilities should inform me of their needs at the beginning of the semester. Please also contact the Disability Support Services (301-314-7682 or <https://www.counseling.umd.edu/ads/>). DSS will make arrangements with you and me to determine and implement appropriate academic accommodations. Inclusion is one of the iSchool's core values; if there is something else I can do to make the class more accessible please schedule a time to come talk to me. This will benefit not only yourself but also my future students.

GET SOME HELP!

You are expected to take personal responsibility for your own learning. This includes acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. Everyone can benefit from some expert guidance on time management, note taking, and exam preparation, so I encourage you to consider visiting <http://ter.ps/learn> to schedule an appointment with an academic coach. Sharpen your communication skills (and improve your grade) by visiting <http://ter.ps/writing> and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center. Finally, if you just need someone to talk to, visit <http://www.counseling.umd.edu/>

Everything is 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 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.

STUDENTS IN NEED

Students encountering psychological problems that hamper their course work are referred to the Counseling Center (301-314-7651 or <https://www.counseling.umd.edu/>) for expert help. For more information on UMD's Student Services, see <http://www.studentaffairs.umd.edu/student-life>. If you or someone you know feels unsafe, the university has resources (see list below). Read more about hate-based crimes here: https://ocrsm.umd.edu/files/Hate_Bias_FAQs_final.pdf

Name	Phone	Website
University Counseling Center	301-314-7651	https://www.counseling.umd.edu/
University Health Center and Mental Health Services	301-314-8180	https://www.health.umd.edu/
University of Maryland Chaplains		https://thestamp.umd.edu/memorial_chapel/chaplains
Office of Civil Rights and Sexual Misconduct	301-405-1142	www.ocrsm.umd.edu

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SEMESTER

1. Come to class prepared. This includes completing any assignments and readings **before** class. This also includes preparing effectively for the exams.
2. Take the content quizzes seriously. They aren't worth many points but they are excellent practice for the exams.
3. Struggling to keep up with all the reading? Check out [How to Read a Book](#), which provides highly useful advice on reading quickly without losing comprehension.
4. Struggling with classes in general? Talk to me, friends, family, and/or the counseling center. I will work with you to help you succeed.
5. Engage in class discussions. Ask questions. Share your opinions. Be open to others' viewpoints, even if they're different than your own.

6. Have a question? Email me anytime. Make sure to include the course number (INST201) in the subject line to ensure I see it. I will respond within 48 hours (not counting weekends). Do **not** email me multiple times if I have not responded and fewer than 48 hours have passed. After that time, please send me a reminder email.
7. Know your rights as an undergraduate student at UMD: [University of Maryland Policies for Undergraduate Students](#)
8. Have fun!

Please see next page for schedule of content

SCHEDULE OF CONTENT

Note: This is a preliminary list of readings and schedule. An announcement will be made prior to any changes and the most recent syllabus will be posted on ELMS.

Module 1 Information Basics		
Date	Lecture	Readings
Tu 08/27	Introduction to Introduction to Information Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The syllabus
Th 08/29	Information literacy Syllabus Quiz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> June Lester and Wallace C. Koehler (2007) “Fundamental concepts of information” (ELMS) danah boyd (2017) “Did information literacy backfire?” https://points.datasociety.net/did-media-literacy-backfire-7418c084d88d
Tu 09/03	History of the internet Wiki assignment Pt. 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Timeline of computer history: networking and the web” https://www.computerhistory.org/timeline/networking-the-web/
Th 09/05	Information seeking behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donald Case (2012) “Looking for information” (ELMS)
Tu 09/10	Classification & consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Larry Smith (2018) “Former Baltimore police officer criticizes the department’s gang database” https://theappeal.org/former-baltimore-police-officer-unloads-on-departments-gang-database/
Th 09/12	Web-based organization Wiki assignment Pt. 2 due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chris Andreson (20014) “The long tail” https://www.wired.com/2004/10/tail/
Module 2 Social and Mobile Media		
Date	Lecture	Readings
Tu 09/17	Social network theories	None. Enjoy a short break after the assignment! (or use this time to catch up on readings you missed)
Th 09/19	Social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> danah boyd & Nicole Ellison (2007) “Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship” (ELMS) Aaron Smith & Monica Anderson (2018) “Social Media Use in 2018” http://www.pewinternet.org/2018/03/01/social-media-use-in-2018/
Tu 09/24	Mobile media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adam Greenfield (2017). “A sociology of the smart phone” https://longreads.com/2017/06/13/a-sociology-of-the-smartphone/ Jean Twenge (2017). “Have smart phones destroyed a generation?”

		https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/09/has-the-smartphone-destroyed-a-generation/534198/
Th 09/26	Challenges & benefits of living in a social media age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sherry Turkle (2015). “Stop Googling. Let’s Talk” https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/27/opinion/sunday/stop-googling-lets-talk.html • Clay Shirky (2010) “How cognitive surplus will change the world” https://www.ted.com/talks/clay_shirky_how_cognitive_surplus_will_change_the_world
Tu 10/01	Online communities A day in airplane mode reflection due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nancy Baym (2004). “Communities and Networks” (ELMS)
Tu 10/03	Memes & virality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jason Silverman (2015) “The viral dream” (ELMS) • James Gleick (2011) “Into the meme pool” (ELMS)
Th 10/08	Activism & political movements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malcolm Gladwell (2010). “Why the revolution will not be tweeted” https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/10/04/sm-all-change-malcolm-gladwell • Deen Freelon, Charlton D. McIlwain, and Meredith D. Clark (2016) “Beyond the hashtags: #Ferguson, #Blacklivesmatter, and the online struggle for offline justice” Introduction and Conclusion. (ELMS)
Th 10/10	Midterm Exam	N/A
Module 3: Issues in Online Governance		
Date	Lecture	Readings
Tu 10/15	Online civility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vitak et al. (2017) “Identifying women’s experiences with and strategies for mitigating negative effects of online harassment” (ELMS) • Nathan Matias (2017) “The real name fallacy” https://coralproject.net/blog/the-real-name-fallacy/
Th 10/17	Content moderation: Rules & regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tarleton Gillespie (2018) “How social networks set the limits of what we can say online.” https://www.wired.com/story/how-social-networks-set-the-limits-of-what-we-can-say-online/
Tu 10/22	Content moderation: The enforcers Create a meme due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarah Gilbert (2018). “The visible and invisible work of AskHistorians moderators (and why they do it)” https://www.reddit.com/r/AskHistorians/comments/a5j123/meta_im_back_with_the_final_post_summarizing_my/ • Casey Newton (2019) “The trauma floor: The Secret lives of Facebook moderators in America” https://www.theverge.com/2019/2/25/18229714/cognizant-facebook-content-moderator-interviews-trauma-working-conditions-arizona

Th 10/24	In class activity – A day in the life of a content moderator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Tu 10/29	Online radicalization Moderation reflection due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jessica Roy (2016) “How 'Pepe the Frog' went from harmless to hate symbol” https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-pepe-the-frog-hate-symbol-20161011-snap-htmlstory.html • Jon Marcus (2019) “When you see me on the news, you’ll know who I am” https://nimanreports.org/articles/when-you-see-me-on-the-news-youll-know-who-i-am/
Th 10/31	In class activity - Identifying online extremism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Module 4: Privacy, Security, and Ethics		
Date	Lecture	Readings
Tu 11/05	Privacy Extremism Reflection Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helen Nissenbaum (2011) “A contextual approach to privacy online.” https://www.amacad.org/publications/daedalus/11_fall_nissenbaum.pdf
Th 11/07	In class activity - Privacy by Design – the game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Tu 11/12	Security Privacy by Design Reflection Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jennifer Goldbeck (2013) “What your data reveals about you.” https://www.ted.com/talks/jennifer_golbeck_the_curly_fry_conundrum_why_social_media_likes_say_more_than_you_might_think?referrer=playlist-what_your_data_reveals_about_y • Kevin Granville (2018) “Facebook and Cambridge Analytica: What you need to know as fallout widens” https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/19/technology/facebook-cambridge-analytica-explained.html
Th 11/14	Surveillance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice (2016). “State of Surveillance.” https://news.vice.com/en_us/article/9kj785/state-of-surveillance-with-edward-snowden-and-shane-smith • Glen Greenwald (2014) “Why privacy matters” https://www.ted.com/talks/glenn_greenwald_why_privacy_matters?language=en
Tu 11/19	Big data & ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cathy O’Neil (2017) “The era of blind faith in big data must end” https://www.ted.com/talks/cathy_o_neil_the_era_of_blind_faith_in_big_data_must_end?language=en
Th 11/21	Algorithms, AI & ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Crash course computer science: Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-EtmaFJieY

- Andreas Ekström (2015) “The moral bias behind your search results”
https://www.ted.com/talks/andreas_ekstrom_the_moral_bias_behind_your_search_results

Module 5: Course wrap up

Date	Lecture	Reading
Tu 11/26	The future of information communication technology	Choose your own adventure! Read/watch at least one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johanna Skibsrud (2017) “The rememberer” https://www.macleans.ca/culture/books/the-rememberer-a-short-story-by-johanna-skibsrud/ • “Nosedive” (2016). Black Mirror episode. (Netflix) • Kurt Vonnegut (1961) “Harrison Bergeron” https://archive.org/stream/HarrisonBergeron/Harrison%20Bergeron_djvu.txt • Isaac Asimov (1958). All the troubles of the world. (ELMS)
Th 11/28	Thanksgiving – no class	N/A
Tu 12/03	Flex Day	None
Th 12/05	Exam Review	None
Final Exam		
M 12/16	1:30-3:30pm	