

What is Information
INLS 490(40), Spring 2013
MW 9:30-10:45, Room 214
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This course will focus on *information* as a phenomenon, with applications to computation, language, knowledge, and the value of information.

Readings should be completed **before** the class on the date indicated. Most will be from a book, [Information From Processes](#), that is available electronically through the UNC Library System

The class schedule (<http://ils.unc.edu/~losee/infoschedule2013.pdf>) contains a list of topics to be covered. While it may be updated as the course progresses, any changes will be minor and will be discussed in class before changes take effect.

“Reading assignments” #1 and #2, as indicated on the schedule, are simple. Each class member must select a paper (or book) by each of two authors that address “information” for each assignment (a total of 4 authors for the semester.) Each student is expected to read (initially skim) their selected works and to be prepared to discuss throughout the semester how their authors might contribute to our discussions about information. Because of the placement of the assignments in the overall schedule, it is recommended that students select authors writing in the area of the sciences, math, or computation for the first assignment, and for the second assignment, authors in the areas of philosophy, language, or economics. Writings by UNC faculty and by Shannon are excluded. Some possible names that students might consider include R. Hartley, H. Nyquist, Kenneth Arrow, G. Chaitin, N. Ahituv, Y. Bar Hillel, C. Bennett, R. Landauer, T. Lee, L. Floridi, J. D. Peters, J. Traub, L. Valiant, V. Vedral, J. Wheeler, Bates, Bateson, Hjørland, and M. Buckland.

Grading will be largely based on class participation and knowledge about information, as well as on the final presentation or project: (1) one article from among the articles on “what is information” from within the ILS literature. Any article addressing this topic in *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* or *Information, Processing, and Management* (or their predecessors) is acceptable, but students should check with the instructor if they wish to use an article from other journals. The presenter will take 8 to 12 minutes to present the ideas in the article (no slides, but handouts will be acceptable), OR (2) a simulation that will be presented of a real-world information system, modeled with the programming language CHIPL, available at CHIPL.org.