

**INLS 621-001**  
**Personal Information Management (PIM)**  
**Fall 2014**

**Section:** Tuesdays, 6:00-8:45pm, Manning 208

**Instructor:** Name: Kristina Spurgin  
Office: Davis Library  
Office Hours: By appointment  
Email: k<lastname> at email dot unc dot edu

**Textbook:** No required text. Some helpful texts are on reserve in the SILS library, or are available online. Details via Sakai.

**Course Webpage:** <http://sakai.unc.edu> >> INLS621.001.FA14

**Grade weighting:**

Participation (online and in class)	30%
“A Day in My PIM Life” presentation	15%
PIM tool critique & presentation	15%
Semester project & presentation	40%

## **Course description**

### ***From SILS Course List***

This course focuses on issues in PIM research and practice, including information organization, human cognition and memory, task continuity across devices, preservation, usability, and the role of technology in PIM.

### ***Expanded***

Personal Information Management (PIM) refers to practices people use to organize and manage information—such as (but not limited to) appointments, task reminders, emails, contacts, documents/files—in their daily lives. While PIM is increasingly handled via electronic devices (computers, smartphones, etc.), most of us still also manage information in physical space.

This course focuses on major issues in PIM research, including: human cognition and memory; mental models of information; information organization; the importance of context; fragmentation vs. unification; the role of technology; and tool/interface design and usability.

The course is structured as a readings-and-discussion seminar with a semester-long project.

## Course objectives

The main goal of this course is to build your capacity for thinking critically about PIM practice and research. To meet this goal, we will:

- Become familiar with the PIM literature, to build a shared understanding of:
  - How PIM has been conceptualized
  - How PIM has been studied
- Explore PIM tools and strategies, and the motivations behind these practices
- Identify and examine PIM challenges
- Consider how tools could be developed/improved to better support PIM

## Course materials

There is no required textbook for this course. There are required readings for all course sessions except for the first and last. Most readings are available online, but some are on reserve at the SILS Library. See Sakai for details.

## How you will be evaluated

Your final grade will be based on a number of factors, activities, and deliverables. These are summarized on the first page of this document, and detailed below.

### ***Participation (30%)***

You are expected to do the course readings; however, I have no way of directly measuring whether you have done so. Your participation is your chance to demonstrate that you have read and thought about the assigned readings.

Both online (Sakai discussion forum) and in-class participation are required.

### **Sakai discussion forum (2/3 participation grade, 20% overall)**

This is your main opportunity to clearly demonstrate that you have read and thought about each assigned reading.

You are expected to write a course discussion forum post for each assigned reading. You may (1) write an original post consisting of a critique of the reading, or your own original reflection(s) on the reading; or (2) make substantial followup contributions to a post written by another student (responding to points made or questions asked).

Posting to the forum is graded work and counts as part of your participation grade. Evaluation will be based on:

- Your clear demonstration that you have read and thought about the reading. (TIP: reference specific parts of and concepts from the reading to make this clear to the instructor!)
- Timeliness. To get any credit for a post, it must be made no later than 48 hours before the class session for which that reading was assigned (i.e. your main/initial contributions for each reading should be made before 6pm Sunday)

Further follow-up discussion until (and after) class is encouraged, but will not be graded. The instructor will be reading the forum discussions, but will not be an active participant in the discussions.

Because things come up in life from time to time that may prevent you from fully preparing for a class session, you can skip posting on up to five readings over the course of the semester without a grade penalty. You do not need to notify me that you are opting to skip a reading; I will assume you intend to use up one of your skips if you have not posted on a reading by 6pm Sunday.

Because your fellow students' in-class discussion leadership (see below) depends upon your online discussion activity, there is no "making-up" or partial credit for late online participation.

### **In-class discussion leadership (1/3 participation grade, 10% overall)**

Much of our classroom time will be spent discussing the assigned readings. Each student will sign up to lead class discussion during one class session.

The discussion leader will be responsible for collecting the initial input and questions posted on the discussion forum for the class session, and facilitating class discussion in that session. When you are discussion leader, it is important to be prepared, but your job is to foster and encourage discussion, not give a lecture.

Good discussion leadership is a learned skill. Evaluation will focus on your preparation and attempts, not on your fellow students' response or the perceived quality of any given discussion.

You will have signed up to give lead course discussion on a specific day. If you must miss class on the day you are scheduled to lead discussion, switch your session to one not yet claimed by another student (see the Sign-up section on Sakai) at least 48 hours before the course session you will miss. If this is not possible, inform the instructor via email before 12pm on the day of the class. To avoid a 10% (of points earned) rescheduling penalty, provide written documentation of the reason for your absence (doctor's note, towing receipt, etc.).

### ***"A Day in My PIM Life" Presentation (15%)***

Over the course of the semester, each student will give a 15-20 minute presentation sharing their own PIM practices, as a way to explore the concepts we are learning about in class, and to stimulate class discussion.

Because 15-20 minutes is not long enough for you to share your entire PIM strategy, consider sharing PIM practices:

- In or for some specific/unusual/interesting context(s) or information type(s)
- You've devised that you think are particularly creative/ingenious
- You feel work particularly well
- You find consistently or particularly challenging

This presentation should go beyond a simple run-down of the tools you use. To receive full credit, discuss your practices critically and in reference to what we are reading about and discussing in class. For example, you might:

- Speculate on why some practices work/flow better than others (is the problem easier, the tool better? What affordances/features of the information and the tool(s) contribute?)
- Explain/analyze your organization scheme (or lack thereof). What context/task/document cues affect how you organize (and/or attempt to re-find) this information?
- Analyze/discuss your criteria/requirements for PIM strategy/tools in a certain context
- Discuss why certain practices/tools work well and others don't

You are encouraged to include pictures, screen shots, and physical objects in your presentation as appropriate, but please keep in mind the privacy of your communications with others as you present your personal information (e.g. you may wish to blur identifying information about other people on your screen shots).

You will have signed up to give your presentation on a specific day. If you must miss class on the day you are scheduled to give your presentation, switch your presentation date to one not yet claimed by another student (see the Sign-up section on Sakai) at least 48 hours before the course session you will miss. If this is not possible, inform the instructor via email before 12pm on the day of the class. To avoid a 10% (of points earned) rescheduling penalty, provide written documentation of the reason for your absence (doctor's note, towing receipt, etc.).

### ***PIM Tool Walkthrough and Critique (15%)***

Over the course of the semester, each student will give a 15-20 minute in-depth presentation on one PIM tool. You may choose a tool you already use, or one you'd like to learn more about. Each student will present on a different tool.

You aren't limited to digital PIM tools. Digital PIM tools are not limited to either desktop computer, mobile, online/cloud based apps. The tool you choose may have social features, but make sure its main functions are PIM-specific (or that there are enough PIM-specific features to fill out your presentation). Please discuss your choice of PIM tool with the instructor if you have questions about whether it is appropriate for this assignment.

You will give a detailed walk-through of the tool's features and affordances, as well as a critique of the tool. By this, I simply mean that you will discuss the tool in relation to the concepts we are reading about and discussing in this class. You will go beyond your personal opinion or feelings about the tool, and analyze why it works (or doesn't).

You will have signed up to give your presentation on a specific day. If you must miss class on the day you are scheduled to give your presentation, switch your presentation date to one not yet claimed by another student (see the Sign-up section on Sakai) at least 48 hours before the course session you will miss. If this is not possible, inform the instructor via email before 12pm on the day of the class. To avoid a 10% (of points earned) rescheduling penalty, provide written documentation of the reason for your absence (doctor's note, towing receipt, etc.).

### ***Semester project (40%)***

You will conduct a semester-long project that will culminate in:

- a written paper or report (about 15-20 11 or 12 pt type, double spaced pages); and
- a 10-15 minute presentation to the class

Because the course is open to undergraduate, masters, and doctoral students, the type and scope of projects undertaken by you and your classmates may vary. Ideas for projects may include:

- Research paper or literature review in some aspect of PIM. You could identify aspects of PIM not studied to date, synthesize and/or expand on ideas that have been studied, or explore how theories and ideas from other disciplines relate to PIM
- In-depth critical comparative review of PIM tools for a certain type of information or a particular context. For example, you might be interested in bookmarks/favorites/web information PIM tools. You could compare the features, affordances, and weaknesses of

- Firefox bookmarks, Chrome favorites, PearlTrees, Pinterest, and SemanticScuttle for this purpose.
- Design a PIM tool with input from potential users (your classmates or others). Your end product would not be an actual implementation, but a design prototype realized in sketches, wireframes, Visio, or even (if it made sense) PowerPoint. You should follow a formal design process. The process and decisions should be documented in your final report. (Appropriate for students familiar with tool design/development; this process will not be covered in this course.)
  - Design a study to investigate some aspect of PIM. You would not conduct the study in this course, but your final product would be a well-developed research proposal including research questions, literature review, methods, instruments (if appropriate), and draft IRB application/materials (Appropriate for doctoral students and advanced masters students).
  - Your own great idea... 😊

You may work individually or in pairs. If you want to work in a pair, the scope of your project will need to be broader than what one person could reasonably complete in a semester.

Your specific project will need to be approved by the instructor, and there will be an interim status report. Due dates and grade weights of the deliverables are detailed below.

Any request for an extension must be made, preferably by email, at least 24 hours prior to the due date. Only one extension will be granted per student, per semester. If you have not requested an extension, a late penalty of 10% per day will be applied.

### **Project proposal (2014-09-09, 2%)**

2-3 pages (11 or 12 pt type, double spaced) maximum. Due by the beginning of class 2014-09-09. Turn it in earlier if you can, in order to get a head start. Proposal must include:

- Project title
- Project team (may just be you)
- Brief project description – what you plan to do and how you plan to do it
- Brief project rationale – why is this topic important or interesting, and why are you planning to do it this way?
- Project plan – set major project milestones and target dates

### **Interim status report (2014-10-21, 3%)**

4-6 pages (11 or 12 pt type, double spaced) maximum. Due at the beginning of class 2014-10-21. Status report must include:

- Restatement of initial project proposal, incorporating in changes made (whether based upon instructor feedback or not)
- Summary of changes made to project topic, scope, or plan
- Status report on each milestone in your initial project plan

### **Class presentation (2014-12-02, 15%)**

10-15 minute presentation made during the final class session.

### **Final paper/report (2014-12-09, 20%)**

Due by 7pm Tuesday, December 9.

## Grading policies

**I do not grade on a curve.** You earn the points you earn based upon the work you complete and its quality. The following grade scale will be used to convert your accumulated points to a letter grade:

100 pts		UNDERGRAD			GRAD	
Low	High	Grade	QualityPt	Description	Grade	Description
95.00	100.00	A	4.0	Highest level of attainment	H	Clear excellence
90.00	94.99	A-	3.7		High level of attainment	P
86.99	89.99	B+	3.3			
82.98	86.98	B	3.0			
80.00	82.97	B-	2.7			
76.99	79.99	C+	2.3	Adequate level of attainment		L
72.98	76.98	C	2.0			
70.00	72.97	C-	1.7		Minimal passing level of attainment	F
65.00	69.99	D+	1.3			
60.00	64.99	D	1.0	Failed--unacceptable performance		
0.00	59.99	F	0.0			

**Due dates, extensions, late work, etc.:** Please see the specific policies in effect for each assignment above.

**Extra credit:** There is no extra credit available in this course.

**Statute of limitations:** Any questions or complaints regarding the grading of an assignment must be raised within one week after the score or graded assignment is made available by the instructor (not when you pick it up/view it).

## Course communication

We will use Sakai for managing assignments, delivery of grades, and the online forum. Timely announcements/information may be distributed via email. Please whitelist the following addresses to ensure receipt:

pim2014@sakai.unc.edu      pimfa14@sakai.unc.edu

## Expectations and Honor Code

- Do the readings, come to class, and participate in the discussions
- All the work you submit should be your own original work. The work that you submit for this course should be substantially new or different from work that you do (or have done) for other courses
- In your papers and presentations, be careful to properly cite and reference the work of others
- The UNC Honor Code is in effect for all work in this course

## Special accommodations

If you need special accommodations, please contact the instructor during the first week of classes.