

**INLS 690-Information Services in a Diverse Society**

**Instructor:** Sandra Hughes Hassell, Ph.D., Professor

Email: [smhughes@email.unc.edu](mailto:smhughes@email.unc.edu)

Twitter: @Bridge2lit

Telephone: 919-843-5276

Office: Manning Hall, Room 203

Office Hours: F: 2:00-3:00 and by appointment

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**SYLLABUS****COURSE OVERVIEW**

The purpose of this course is to prepare students to work as Information and Library Science (ILS) professionals in today's increasingly diverse society. Students will develop a theoretical base in critical race theory (CRT) and other cross-disciplinary theories and conceptual frameworks, while they explore issues relevant to working as a LIS professional with populations that have historically experienced challenges and marginalization in the United States. In particular, the course will consider how issues related to class, race, gender, culture, language, and sexuality operate in and exert an influence on the provision of information services. It is expected that at the conclusion of this course, you have a more comprehensive and complex understanding of the intersectionality of sociocultural factors to use to both analyze and conduct research and to develop programs and services, involving issues of social justice, equity, identity, and diversity in LIS.

**PREREQUISITES FOR THIS COURSE** (Adapted from Fleming, Crystal M. *How to be Less Stupid About Race*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2018.

1. Critical thinking – the ability to challenge what you think may be common sense; to ask questions and seek empirical evidence
2. Reflexivity – the ability to look at your own experiences, beliefs, and behaviors
3. Compassion – for others and for yourself
4. Willingness to experience and sit with discomfort

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

This course seeks:

- To introduce students to the societal issues facing communities engaged with LIS institutions, and challenge or problematize conceptions of what it means to be neutral or value-free from multiple perspectives: societal, professional, and personal.
- To introduce students to the concepts of diversity, cultural competency, power, privilege,

and intersectionality and to identify ways in which each presents opportunities and challenges for the different information professions and the communities they serve.

- To familiarize students with the theory and implementation of Critical Race Theory and its offshoots as it relates to information services and community building.
- To provide students with the opportunity to identify, address, and reflect upon the information needs and practices of underserved and marginalized groups in the United States, as well as the power inequities involved in information work.
- To provide students with the opportunity to develop racial and cultural identity on a personal level and understand it on a societal level.
- To examine critically the role of professional activism and social justice within different information fields.

## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

As an instructor, I believe that effective learning happens in a community of learners which prioritizes exchange, inquiry, reflection, creation, and growth. This type of learning requires an environment which stretches beyond the classroom into the community. It is the responsibility of institutions of higher education to learn, certainly, but also to create and share research based resources. Inquiry-focused learning is more effectively achieved in a dynamic environment where there are opportunities for interactive study and application of theory to real practice. I use some of the following strategies to foster this type of learning:

- Class discussions of varying formats and structures
- Assignments which require application of theory to real world problems
- Demonstration of knowledge and understanding through the creation of real world products
- Instruction that moves from the “What?” and “How?” to the “Why” and “So What”

## COURSE MATERIALS

### *Required Books*

Cooke, Nicole. (2016). *Information Services to Diverse Populations: Developing Culturally Competent Library Professionals*. Libraries Unlimited. (on reserve in SILS library)

### *Additional Materials*

- Articles & book chapters on reserve, in Sakai, and available from UNC libraries
- Multimedia Resources
- Web Resources

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

### **Assignment 1: Critical Reflections (20%)**

Working effectively with diverse communities, demands critical reflection on one's own position and the complex interactions between different aspects of identity. As Nicole Cooke (2016) explains, critical self-reflection leads to a readiness to engage with cultural competence. By

critically examining our own value system we situate ourselves in regards to our own intersectionality, privilege, and marginality. “Only then can the circumstances of others be understood and fully appreciated.”

This assignment has two components, each submitted at different points in the course. In the first component you will write a positionality paper (due February 26th; See directions below). In the second component, you will write a post-class reflection (due April 23rd; See directions below).

**Positionality Statement Directions:** (Due February 1 by beginning of class) **(10%)**

This short paper (2-3 papers single-spaced) asks you to understand your own relationship to the topic of this course. The purpose of this assignment is to heighten your awareness of your positionality as a step in better understanding members of your organization and community who come from different backgrounds. One of the assumptions underlying this assignment is that things don't simply happen to us, we are active in interpreting and assigning meaning to experiences in our lives. These experiences in turn influence the way we see the world and what we value.

In this paper, please answer this question: What are your experiences with the topics to be covered in this course? Think about (1) your own personal history with issues related to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, language, religion, sexual orientation, gender identification, and/or ability or disability in your past; and 2) how these experiences impact the current journey you are on.

**Post-class Critical Reflection:** (due April 29 by 12:59pm; See directions below). **(10%)**

For this component of this assignment, I would like you to write a short paper (2-3 page single-spaced) paper in which you reflect on the course – essentially you will be writing a post-script to the positionality statement you submitted on February 1. As noted above, one of the assumptions underlying this assignment is that things don't simply happen to us, we are active in interpreting and assigning meaning to experiences in our lives. These experiences – including this course - in turn influence the way we see the world and what we value. We have discussed and explored many issues this semester. I would like you to now take time to reflect, as Nicole Cooke does in the final chapter of *Information Services to Diverse Populations: Developing Culturally Competent Library Professionals*, on what you have learned (both about yourself and about theory/practice) and how it has changed your perceptions of working with/for diverse, often marginalized, communities as an ILS professional.

**Assignment 2: SILS Symposium for Social Good (30%)**

Discussing diversity issues in academic isolation will become an echo chamber if you don't have a place to actively apply your learning. For that reason, students in INLS 690-197 (Information Services in a Diverse Society), INLS 584 (Information Ethics), INLS 690-230 (Disability Informatics and Information), and INLS 384 (Information and Computer Ethics – undergraduate

level), will host the 3rd SILS Symposium for Social Good on Friday April 26<sup>th</sup> from 8:00am-1:00 pm. This year's theme will be Reflect. Reimagine. Rebuild.

This year the symposium has been expanded to include the Kilgour Lecture which will be given by [Dr. Meredith Clarke](#), a professor in the Department of Media Studies at UVA. Dr. Clarke's research focuses on the intersections of race, media, and power. Dr. Clarke's talk will take place at 11:00. SILS will provide lunch from 12:00-1:00. Student presentations will take place from 8:00-11:00. **Students are required to attend the entire 3-hour student section of the symposium.** Students are strongly encouraged to attend the entire symposium.

Each student in INLS 690 will be expected to make a scholarly contribution to this event, in the form of a panel about a social justice problem related to information science. Presentations should be of professional quality. Members of the SILS community, including faculty, current students, and alumni, will be invited to attend. Undergraduate students will prepare posters about ethical issues impacting ILS.

**The symposium will be held on Friday, April 26<sup>th</sup> from 8:00am – 1:00 pm. Any student who is unable to arrange to be available for the student portion of the symposium should consult the instructor for specific instructions regarding additional assignment requirements. Grade adjustments/make-up assignments will not be made based on failure to communicate and plan appropriately.**

**Content:** Panel presentations will be 45 minutes long, and should include an interactive or audience discussion component.

While there are many ways to present your work, panels should do the following, at a minimum:

1. Address a specific, population that has historically experienced challenges and marginalization in the United States or a current social justice issue that you believe libraries should respond to
2. Outline relevant inequities and social justice issues
3. Identify the stakeholders involved
4. Outline possible courses of action
5. Suggest implications of courses of action

To view the abstracts from previous symposium presentations go to:

<http://info4socialgood2018.web.unc.edu/> and <http://info4socialgood.web.unc.edu/>. You can also view videos from previous symposiums at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vXsqfrTMV70> and [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ab5VsX\\_JkUE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ab5VsX_JkUE)

**Group participation/selection:** Panels will comprise 4 group members each. You are responsible for ensuring that your collaboration is fruitful, and that your presentation fulfills the assignment as given in this course. [NOTE: The specific requirements for student presentations may vary across the 4 courses.]

**Time:** **Students are required to attend the entire 3-hour student section of the symposium.** Students are strongly encouraged to attend the entire symposium. Approximately

one hour should be spent presenting, and the other two hours should be spent attending other students' presentations, including the undergraduate poster session.

**Deliverables:**

1. Proposals (Open in Sakai February 8 – February 22): Proposals should be related to the general topic of Information for Social Good, and should address social justice issues related to information and library science broadly. Proposals should focus on a population that has historically experienced challenges and marginalization in the United States or a current social justice issue that you believe libraries should respond to.
2. Format: Proposals should take the form of a presentation abstract (300-500 words) describing the issues to be addressed by the symposium presentation. Submissions should include the following metadata:
  - Full names, email addresses, for each group member.
  - Title of the presentation.
  - Full abstract for the presentation (300-500 words).
  - Short abstract (50-100 words) for use on the symposium website.

Each group must submit a copy of the proposal document by the due date.

Presentation slots will be filled on a first come, first serve basis. I reserve the right to reject or modify proposals in consultation with students.

3. Symposium outline/preliminary research (Due March 29): Students must submit an outline of the presentation content (not just a plan for what you will talk about, but the actual information you will use to construct your presentation). While this does not have to be polished, it should be well-organized into topic areas, or headings that are indicative of the conceptual organization of your presentation. This should include a 15-20 item bibliography, and should cover the content areas described in "Content" above.
4. Symposium Participation (April 26th): Students will participate in the student presentation section of the symposium, and attend at least two other student presentations, including the undergraduate poster session.

**Assignment 3: Book Study and Presentation (20%)**

Students will work in groups of 3 to read and discuss a book written by a "public intellectual" for the broader public about a topic related to the course. The group will provide an overview of the key takeaways from this book to the class in two ways: 1) by contributing to a Group Journal, and 2) by giving a brief (30 minutes maximum) presentation to the class. These presentations will take place during Weeks 6-10. A sign-up sheet will be available the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of class.

The following is a list of potential titles. Students may select from this list or may propose another title. Titles must be approved by the instructor.

"The New Jim Crow" by Michelle Alexander

“Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People” by Mahzarin R. Banaji & Anthony G. Greenwald  
“Between the World and Me” by Ta-Nehisi Coates  
“White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism” by Robin DiAngelo  
"Doing Harm" by Maya Dusenbery  
"Tears We Cannot Stop" by Michael Eric Dyson  
“How to Be Less Stupid About Race” by Crystal M. Fleming  
“Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools” by Monique W. Morris  
"Thick" by Tressie McMillan Cottam  
“Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism” by Safiya Umoia Noble  
“So You Want to Talk About Race” by Ijeoma Oluo  
"Good and Mad" by Rebecca Traister  
“Twitter and Tear Gas: How Social Media Changed Protest Forever” by Zeynep Tufekci  
"Resistance and Hope: Essays by Disabled People" edited by Alice Wong

#### **Assignment 4: Class Participation (30%)**

Items that will contribute to your class participation grade include:

1. Completion of all reading prior to coming to class.
2. *Reflective journaling*: You will be asked to journal each week about the course readings and the class discussions. The journals will be private to only you and me. The journal entries should be printed and brought to class. Use the attached journaling template.
3. *Weekly “Hot Topics”*: Each week we will discuss some of the current events and media moments that have occurred in the last week in regards to the topics of the course. CRT has a commitment to praxis and making theory applicable to the real world and communities, so this is a chance to apply CRT lenses to an analysis of current events. As class is beginning each week, students can write topics on the board for discussion.
4. In Class Participation: 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, the instructor should be notified in advance of the class meeting.

**GRADING AND DUE DATES**

Assignment	Weight	Due Date
Critical Reflections	20%	Component 1: February 1 Component 2: April 29; by 11:59pm
Book Study & Presentation	20%	Weeks 6-10
Symposium	35%	Will take place on April 26 ** NOTE: this is a Friday; make arrangements now to be able to participate
Course Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completing Readings</li> <li>• Reflective Journaling</li> <li>• Weekly Hot Topics</li> <li>• Active Engagement in Class Discussions</li> </ul>	35%	Ongoing

**GRADING SCALE**

H	(95-100) “clear excellence”, above and beyond what is
P	(85-90) all requirements satisfied at entirely acceptable
L	(70-79) low passing
F	(<70) failed

**NAMES AND PRONOUNS**

If you go by a different name or gender pronoun than the one under which you are officially enrolled, please inform me. Students are expected to respectfully refer to each other by preferred names and pronouns during class discussions.

**CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT**

Our overarching goal is to build a professional community in which an exchange of ideas and opinions is respected and welcome. Discussions should be professionally conducted and should be based on course readings and critical thinking. Because the course is founded on a critical sociocultural framework, the material will include diverse perspectives, not necessarily aligning with traditional or dominant views. The purpose is to expand the parameters of your thinking. Additionally, issues related to diversity and social justice may involve strongly held beliefs and may include current political and social controversies. At times, the discussion might be uncomfortable. Remember – your classmates (and the instructor) 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 or looking up resources).

### **SILS DIVERSITY STATEMENT**

In support of the University's diversity goals and the mission of the School of Information and Library Science, SILS embraces diversity as an ethical and societal value. We broadly define diversity to include race, gender, national origin, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation and physical and learning ability. As an academic community committed to preparing our graduates to be leaders in an increasingly multicultural and global society we strive to:

- Ensure inclusive leadership, policies and practices;
- Integrate diversity into the curriculum and research;
- Foster a mutually respectful intellectual environment in which diverse opinions are valued;
- Recruit traditionally underrepresented groups of students, faculty and staff; and
- Participate in outreach to underserved groups in the State.

The statement represents a commitment of resources to the development and maintenance of an academic environment that is open, representative, reflective and committed to the concepts of equity and fairness.

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

“The Department of Disability Services (DDS), a part of the Division of Student Affairs, works with departments throughout the University to assure that the programs and facilities of the University are accessible to every student in the University community. Additionally, DDS provides reasonable accommodations so students with disabilities who are otherwise qualified may, as independently as possible, meet the demands of University life.” Visit their website at <http://disabilityservices.unc.edu/> for more information.

**OBSERVANCE OF RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL HOLIDAYS/EVENTS**

If you need to miss class to observe a religious or spiritual holiday/event, please submit the dates of your absence to me in writing by the end of the second full week of classes. You will be permitted to make up work within a mutually agreed-upon time.

**BASIC NEEDS SECURITY**

Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Also, please me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources that I may possess.

**UNIVERSITY HONOR SYSTEM**

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has had a student-administered honor system and judicial system for over 100 years. Because academic honesty and the development and nurturing of trust and trustworthiness are important to all of us as individuals, and are encouraged and promoted by the honor system, this is a most significant University tradition. More information is available at <http://www.unc.edu/depts/honor/honor.html>. The system is the responsibility of students and is regulated and governed by them, but faculty share the responsibility and readily commit to its ideals. If students in this class have questions about their responsibility under the honor code, please bring them to me or consult with the Office of the Dean of Students. The web site identified above contains all policies and procedures pertaining to the student honor system. We encourage your full participation and observance of this important aspect of the University.

**JOURNALING TEMPLATE**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

<b>READING REFLECTION – To be completed before class</b>	Date
What stood out for me in the readings:	
Some connections I am making:	
One or two questions I have now and would like to discuss in class:	

REFLECTIONS	Date
How I would sketch the ideas discussed in the readings:	
Some possible applications to my life as an ILS professional:	