

INLS 520: Organization of Information

Course Acknowledgements

The design, materials, and implementation of this version of INLS 520 is the product of a collaborative effort of SILS instructors: Samantha Kaplan, Melanie Feinberg, Ryan Shaw Jane Greenberg, and Grace Shin.

Instructor Information

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Course Description

In this version of INLS 520, we will focus on fundamental concepts of organizing systems that transcend implementations or professional contexts. We will not restrict ourselves to the traditional concerns of information science, narrowly defined, because organizing systems are not so restricted.

You will be able to use what you learn in INLS 520 in all information professions. INLS 520 will help you to understand, use, explain, create, assess, and interrogate any organizing system.

Although organizing systems are simple in the abstract, they become incredibly complex in practice. This is because organizing systems attempt to make an unruly, messy, and ambiguous world appear systematic and orderly—and, often, the world isn’t having it. For INLS 520, this means that easy answers are impossible, and you cannot find refuge in following rules. But this is what makes organizing information fun—and fascinating.

Goals & Objectives

This course is designed to teach you:

- Basic elements that constitute the structure and arrangement of organizing systems:
 - Things (entities, resources, items, phenomena...).
 - Categories (attributes, dimensions, properties, elements, fields...).
 - Values (terms, tags, descriptors, categories...).
 - Relationships (between things, between categories, between values).
- The role of categorization
- The ubiquity of organizing systems and categorization processes and their complex integration throughout our forms of life—social, cultural, scientific, technical.
- The inherent instability, ambiguity, and arbitrariness of any organizing system
- The power and potential for misuse of organizing systems

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Design an organizing system.
- Implement an organizing system: Explain how others should implement it. Assess an organizing system.
- Explain an organizing system.

Required Textbook

There is one required textbook for this class:

The Discipline of Organizing, edited by Robert J. Glushko. O’Reilly, 2014.

You can read it from ProQuest ebrary.

<http://site.ebrary.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/lib/uncch/reader.action?docID=10841924>

Course Requirements

Discussion participations – 10 points

4 Virtual presentations – 20 points (5 points each)

4 Assignments – 40 points (10 points each)

Final Exam – 30 points

Grading

Based on current UNC grading scales, the following grades and corresponding numeric ranges are applicable:

Grad Grade	Range	Definitions*
H	95-100	High Pass
P	80-94	Pass
L	79-79	Low Pass
F	69 or Below	Fail

*Definitions are from: <http://registrar.unc.edu/academic-services/grades/explanation-of-grading-system/>

Penalty for Late Assignments

Assignments are expected to be submitted on time. This is important for at least two reasons:

1. the need to meet deadlines is a reality of professional life, and
2. giving some people more time for an assignment than others in the class is not equitable.

However, life happens to all of us at one time or another. If you cannot meet an assignment deadline, please tell us why prior to the due date. We will negotiate a new deadline with anyone who has a valid reason for needing this (i.e., not “I just did not get it done.”). Otherwise, late assignments will drop 10% for each day late.

Policies on Academic Integrity and Diversity

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://studentconduct.unc.edu/honor-system>.

The UNC Honor Code is in effect for all work in this course. Section II. B. of the “Instrument of Student Judicial Governance” gives examples of actions that constitute academic dishonesty: <https://studentconduct.unc.edu/sites/studentconduct.unc.edu/files/documents/Instrument.pdf>.

Instructional Methods

This course heavily relies on the UNC Sakai online course management system (<https://sakai.unc.edu>). All materials can be found in Sakai. The course syllabus, schedule, slides, videos, assignments, and other resources will be there.

Readings. A list of readings organized in recommended order is provided for each class. Do not be overwhelmed by the length of some lists – most readings are only a few pages long and/or only select pages from each reading are required (details will be listed in each course module). Readings should be completed prior to the beginning of each week so you are prepared to engage in class discussion.

Discussion. We will be using the **discussion forum** as the main form of course interaction. You are expected to visit the course site at least **2-3 days out of each week** to post your responses to offer thoughtful replies to your classmates’ posts. The course is short, so your active engagement in forum discussions is the best way to get the most out of the course!

Four Assignments. There are four main assignments for this course. The assignment description will be posted in the Assignment tool.

1. Scoping and Identifying Resources Assignment
2. Creating a Vocabulary & Descriptions Assignment
3. Building a Taxonomy Assignment
4. Classifying with Facets Assignment

Four Virtual Presentations. The purpose of these assignments is to allow students to explore a topic of their choice in more detail for each module and to share the results with classmates. You are required to provide a short report in the form of a slide presentation (10 slides) on a topic relevant to each of the 4 course modules. A list of suggested topics will be provided in the course site but feel free to choose other topics of interest (pending instructor approval). The presentations should be based on scholarly information sources (make sure to include a proper list of references). Try to use non-textual materials in your presentation (online videos or examples, tables, charts, diagrams) to synthesize and present the key ideas and themes. If some text is necessary, please limit it to very short paragraphs and bulleted lists. Please include voice narration with your presentation. All presentations will be posted on the course website for comments from other class participants. The author is expected to respond to any questions posted by classmates.

Final Exam. The purpose of the final exam is to assess the knowledge gained from the course. As such, it will be based on assigned readings, lectures, and assignments. The exam which is essentially ‘open book’ will

require your responses to a series of short essay questions. The time limit for the exam is approximately **3 hours**. The questions will require that you integrate and summarize what has been covered in the course. Pre-exam review suggestions will be provided.

Communication Guidelines for Course Participants

Communication with instructors

The primary mode of communication with me will be through the Sakai messaging tool or email (reema@unc.edu), which I check frequently throughout the day. You should expect a reply in less than 24 hours. If for any reason I will be away from email for more than 24 hours, I will let you know in advance. Email messages can be sent to me via the course website or directly using your preferred email client.

Communication with your classmates

In addition to classroom discussion, there is a “Student Lounge” forum section. Please use this section for any topics that do not directly relate to the content of the course, but relate to your course experience. You can also contact each other via email using either the message feature of Sakai or your preferred email client. Please use common email etiquette norms when corresponding with each other.

Course participation

It is very important that you take charge of your own learning and participate actively in the course activities.

Forum Posts

In terms of tone and style for forum posts, please use the following rule of thumb “what and how would I have said this if I were in a small seminar class face-to-face with this group of people”. Keep your forum posts compact and to the point (these are not mini-essays). The goal is to actively exchange ideas, so following up and responding to your classmates is much more important than perfect grammar or style. Complete sentences and overall academically-appropriate tone are expected. Also, if you are referencing a source make the reference explicit (e.g., provide a link in your post). A formal citation that adheres to a citation style is not necessary, but sources of information should be clearly identified.