

Revision: August 4, 2020 – start of semester

Day/Time: Online. No set meeting times. New lessons will be available Friday afternoons.

Email: ebailey@unc.edu

Office hours: By appointment. Please contact me by email to arrange a specific time to set up a Zoom meeting.

Course Description

Brief description: The behavioral and cognitive activities of those who interact with information, with emphasis on the role of information mediators; how information needs are recognized and resolved; and the use and dissemination of information.

Rationale and relationship to the current curriculum: This course undergirds much of our curriculum, because it introduces the students to core concepts that have implications for the practice of information science and librarianship. While it is a formal prerequisite only for INLS 780, Research Methods, it is expected that it will be taken early in the student's career at SILS.

Objectives for the Course

Students completing this course will:

- be familiar with the empirical and theoretical literature related to information seeking, including the recognition of information needs, actions taken to resolve those needs, the roles of intermediaries (both human and machine), and the retrieval and use of information;
- understand key concepts related to the ways in which information is created, structured, disseminated and used, with particular emphasis on scholarly information behaviors;
- be able to identify the ways in which the context of an information interaction can affect the process and outcomes of that interaction;
- explore the impact of technology on human information interactions; and
- critically apply theories and empirical findings to the definition and solution of problems related to human information interactions, as encountered in the information professions.

Readings for the Course

Since this is a "survey" course, students will be expected to complete several readings in preparation for each week's lesson. The assigned readings are listed on the course schedule and will be made available electronically online or through the Sakai site for the course. No textbook is required.

How to Succeed in this Course

Honor Code

It is expected that all students will comply with the University honor code as set forth at: <http://instrument.unc.edu/> The work you turn in for this course should be yours alone, except when working on group assignments. Written work used from other sources should be quoted and cited. I expect and encourage students to discuss the class and the assignments with one another, but take care that what you turn in to me for grading is yours alone.

Critical Analysis

Throughout this course I will be asking you for your critical analysis of the topics and readings. This course focuses on the human part of information interactions, and I expect you to examine and analyze your own experiences and behaviors. Focus on reflection and analysis in all assignments for this course.

Participation

Each student is expected to read the assigned readings and watch the assigned videos for the week. Participation for this class includes watching the posted lessons each week as well. See the Participation/Weekly Forum Post assignment for more details.

Communication and Feedback:

Communication is a key part of education. Email is the best way for you to ask me questions about your assignments and to inform me of conflicts or other situations. Normally you should expect a response within 24 hours. Discussion of grades and other issues will be done by appointment on Zoom or by telephone. Feedback is always welcome!

When bad things happen to good people:

First of all, don't wait to tell me of any potential issues or conflicts! Early communication is key!

All work should be completed on time. **Posting in the forums is especially time sensitive**, since other students will be moving on to the next lesson after that week – these postings **cannot be made up** after the current week. Each student will have the opportunity to drop one weekly forum grade to allow for situations such as illness.

Missing assignment due dates is a serious issue as it is expected that you are working on these well before the date due. However, I do realize that sometimes circumstances beyond your control make it impossible for you to turn in an assignment on time. Please contact me to discuss your situation. Unless you are given a rare extension, your grade for that assignment will be lowered by one point per day the assignment is late.

Grading

The grading system for graduate students at UNC makes grades much less important than before. Getting a P means that you have done what I asked for in the assignment. Most students should expect to get a P for their work in this class. Grading is as follows for graduate students:

- H (95-100) – clearly surpassed requirements
- P (80-94) – fully met requirements
- L (70-79) – barely met requirements, need more work
- F (69 and below) - failing

Assignments

I am happy to discuss assignments with you either in person or through email. I am also happy to look at drafts of assignments to give feedback on direction. Of course, I will be able to help the most if you give me time before the assignment is due! Assignments will be submitted electronically via the Sakai website using either Word or PDF files, although Word is preferred.

Assignments for this class are **informal**, meaning you are expected and encouraged to include your own thoughts and perspectives and experiences. Your writing should be focused on telling the reader something and moving the reader from one point to another. Have a story to tell or a point to make! I expect your final version of any assignment to be well formatted and free of any errors in spelling or grammar. All assignments with references should use the APA (American Psychological Association) guidelines. Page lengths for all assignments assume 1 inch margins and double-spaced lines.

I do not offer individual extra credit; however, each student may resubmit one graded assignment to earn up to half the points you lost (the Diary and Presentation are the eligible assignments).

- Participation/Weekly Forum Posts (30%) - Each student is expected to participate in online class discussions each week **by the following Sunday (9 days later) at midnight**.
- Information Seeking Diary (20%) – Each student will keep a diary or journal of a personal information-seeking event and analyze the event in terms of the concepts and ideas discussed in the course. To be completed by **November 15th**.
- Presentation (30%) – Each student will select 1 topic from the schedule and submit a presentation about some aspect of that topic. Presentation topics are due on **Sunday August 30th** - I will limit the number of presentations per topic as needed. **The presentations are due on Sunday October 18th**. Presentations will be made available to the entire class.
- Final Reflection Paper (20%) - Each student will sum up their entire class experience using class notes, readings, and discussions. Papers are **informal** and should be 7-10 pages long. **Due during the final exam period (TBD)**. This assignment takes the place of a final exam.

Participation/Weekly Forum Posts (30%)

Each student is expected to read the assigned readings and watch the assigned videos for the week. Participation for this class includes watching the posted lessons each week as well. Students are also expected to participate in online class discussions on the Sakai forums each week. This class is a cooperative venture toward which you are encouraged and expected to contribute. Online discussions should be used to help you to think critically about research and theory and the implications of research and theory for the practice of the information professions. The more you put into the discussions, the more you will get out of the class topics.

I expect all students to view and listen to the lessons, then respond to them in the forums on Sakai. **The lessons will be made available on Friday afternoons.** The schedule will list readings for the lessons, and I expect you to have completed the readings before watching the lesson. Forum posts will be evaluated the following Sunday (in 9 days). Evaluation of the posts will include the number of substantive posts you make, the number of different threads you post on, and the number of different sessions you post during the week. The number of sessions is important because this is meant to be a discussion where you respond to other posts. Do not wait until the last minute on Sunday to write a bunch of posts that no one will likely see!

The schedule will list readings and videos for the lessons, and I expect you to have completed them before watching the lesson. **Forum posts will be evaluated as of midnight on the Sunday 9 days after the lesson is officially posted.** This will result in a small overlap between forums but also give everyone a chance to post and reply. Grading for forums should generally be posted on the Monday 10 days after the lesson. As noted, I consider your own critical analysis of the readings and the topics to be an important part of this class, and your grade will be based upon your discussion of both the lessons and the assigned readings.

Also note that the final for this course is a paper detailing your thoughts about course topics (see below) and that your forum entries will give you starting material for that final paper.

Good forum discussion includes:

- demonstrating familiarity with the readings for that session;
- sharing your analysis and opinions related to the readings and the session topic in the forums;
- relating the current materials and topic with past topics;
- relating the current materials and topic to your own experiences;
- sharing and discussing related material;
- reacting to the analysis and opinions of your classmates; and
- civil debate when disagreements occur.

There are a variety of ways in which you can contribute to the online discussion of the weekly topics. These could include:

- **Answering:** Answer some of the questions I posed in the lesson.
- **Juxtaposing:** Use an experience, or ideas in another reading to complements the ideas in the reading.
- **Contradiction and reconciliation:** Examine differences from your experience or other readings and the possible ways that they might be explained.
- **Extension:** Your experience or ideas might suggest an extension of the ideas presented in a reading, or you might see limitations in the applicability of those ideas. Critically examine those possible extensions or limitations.
- **Connection:** Connect the current topic to prior class topics in a meaningful way.

Remember that this class is not about finding right answers – it is about the process of finding answers. Discussion and debate over the way to accomplish this is not only expected but also encouraged. It is expected that each student will make several posts each week that engage and interact with other students. Posting in the forums is especially time sensitive, since other students will be moving on to the next lesson after that week – these postings cannot be made up after the current week.

Hints for successful participation:

- Stop thinking about grades and think instead about learning from other students.
- Participate as much as possible. This will make the conversation better!
- Be thoughtful and deliberate in your posts – “Me too” kinds of posts should add something more.
- Check back on threads you have posted in to respond further.
- Pose questions to everyone, not just to me. I will try not to jump in with my own answers because this tends to stifle discussion. I will be reading the postings on the forums and responding where needed or desired, but I intend to give space for your discussion and ideas here.

Evaluation criteria

Forum participation will be graded based upon a ten-point scale. Receiving an 8 on the week's forum participation indicates that you have satisfied the requirements for that week. Note that this is more like cooking than baking – it is not a recipe to follow but rather a measure of thoughtfulness and effort. **However, it is expected that each student would be posting at least four times each week in at least two or three separate sessions.** Some of those posts will be the starting points for discussion and others should be responses to your classmates.

Each student will have the opportunity to drop one weekly forum grade to allow for situations such as illness. There's no need to tell me you plan to drop a particular week – this will happen automatically. The final grade will be based upon a tally of the remaining weekly grades.

Presentation (30%)

Each student will select 1 topic from the schedule and submit a presentation about some aspect or extension of that topic. This could be examination of the topic in a specific field, such as examining ELIS with senior citizens or new immigrants. It could also be extension of the topic into a subfield or new field of study. Be creative and find a topic that matches your interests! The presentations can be in the same style as the course lessons, with voice over other materials such as slides, or they can be lecture style, or they can be something creative. SILS has video resources that can be used for this if needed – contact the office. Presentations will be made available to the entire class.

Presentation topics are due on **Sunday August 30^a**. When you submit your topic, you should tell me the general idea you have and how it fits with the class. You should also tell me the major topic that you feel it belongs with. **I will give you feedback on your topic and some guidance on narrowing or extending it.**

I will limit the number of presentations per topic as needed. **The presentations are due on Sunday October 18^a.** Presentations will be made available to the entire class.

This presentation is a chance for you to share something related to class topics of interest to you – make it count! You will also be sharing this with the class, so make good use of your time.

Topic

The choice of topic is critical for this assignment and should be something that allows for your thoughtful analysis and connection to the class topics – especially the specific topic that it extends. Keep in mind that the topic doesn't have to be in any particular field or genre – be creative and find something that interests you! It could be related to your job or your hobbies or something you have wanted to explore. The only requirement is that it is related to a class topic and fits the overall class (Human Information Interactions).

Remember that you are acting as a guide to this topic area. Your presentation should include enough information to familiarize others with the topic. It should also focus on your own analysis and synthesis of the resources you used to create your presentation. Tell a story! Make an argument! Discuss why this topic is important! **Have something to say!**

You will need to have accurate, reliable sources for the information about your topic. The number and type of sources will vary by topic, but it is expected for you to minimally have at least 3 independent sources to use as the basis for your presentation. These sources should ideally be more than opinions – look for actual research or statistics. Use that information to support your presentation. The sources should also have a strong connection to class topics – perhaps citing them. Don't simply describe what the sources say – use them to build your own story or argument.

Presentation

There is no set way to do this presentation. Perhaps you might want to stand in front of a camera as if we were all in a classroom. Perhaps you might use slides or visual aids while you speak. Perhaps you might mix the two or mix in other kinds of shots. What works for your topic? Be sure that you include plenty of thoughtful analysis no matter what style you chose. Also make good use of your time – **presentations should be between 10 and 15 minutes long.**

Reactions

The weekly forums will have a topic for the presentations that week and your reactions should be posted there. Reactions need not be critical, but if they are critical they should remain respectful to the other students. Reactions could include places where you see the topic interacting with other ideas or topics from the course, places where you see potential issues or differences from course materials or ideas, or even connections to your own topic.

Evaluation Criteria

- (30 points) Description of the topic area – How well do you describe the topic area? Did you include the important parts of it?
- (20 points) Quality of Sources and Topic – Are your sources reasonable and reliable? Do they meet academic standards? If not, do they represent the best choice for this topic area? Do they support your story or argument?
- (20 points) Organization of Content – How well did your presentation move through your argument? Did you present the needed information in a reasonable way?
- (15 points) Connection to the Class – How well did you connect your presentation to class topics or ideas? Did you use any ideas from class in your descriptions or arguments?
- (15 points) Delivery and Clarity of the Message – Did your presentation flow well verbally and mechanically? Did you successfully create interest in your topic? Was your message or argument easy to understand? Did you stay within the time limit?

Information Seeking Diary (20%)

[Based on an assignment prepared by Dr. Verna Pungitore, SLIS, Indiana University, with modifications by Dr. Deborah Barreau and Barbara Wildemuth]

As information professionals, we are concerned with designing systems and services that help our clients. For this assignment, you are the client. You will keep a short diary or journal over a period of hours or days that covers an information-seeking experience with an identifiable beginning and end. It does not have to be a unique event and it may or may not have been resolved. You will write up what you thought, felt, and did, and how you understand the experience based upon our readings and discussions in class. The two deliverables for this assignment are (1) the diary itself, and (2) your analysis of the event described in the diary. Both deliverables are due on **November 15th**.

This assignment requires you to note your thoughts over time! Do not wait until the last minute! **Also, do not use an information need based upon a class you are taking – this should be something else.**

The Diary/Journal

Start by describing your information need. For example, my home computer died suddenly, and I needed to buy a new computer as soon as possible. I did some preliminary shopping (both online and in a Best Buy store) and also consulted with IT support. Through an iterative process, in which additional focus was gained with each iteration, I eventually settled on a particular computer and the other peripherals I would need to accompany it. This process occurred over several weeks. For your assignment, you should choose an information need that is occurring during the period in which you're working on the assignment.

In most cases your problem should be more complex than finding a fact, but there are situations when that type of problem is appropriate. For example, "When did Americans first land on the moon?" is a straightforward question that can be answered easily and it doesn't offer much of a challenge for deciding where and how to look. However, "When were the plans and strategy for America's Apollo missions to the moon finalized?" is a more difficult question for most people. It requires some knowledge of NASA's planning and approval process as well as a slightly broader understanding of the space program. For NASA historians and people who follow the space program closely, the second question may be as straightforward as the first one, but for most people, it will require more preparation.

Take notes or record your experience in some way. How did you know when you needed to look for information? What steps did you take and what motivated you along the way? Did you make any incidental discoveries that influenced your behavior? When and why did you finally stop looking (or are you still looking)? How did your emotions affect the search process? The diary does not need to be neat and orderly. It's more important that you record what's happening and what you're thinking/feeling as it's happening than that you present it neatly. It only needs to be neat enough so that you can interpret and remember what happened for your later analysis of the event. **While the diary is a necessary deliverable for this assignment, it will play only a minor role in the grading.** I will refer to it, as needed, to understand and evaluate your analysis.

The analysis

Assess which (if any) of the information seeking and use models we have discussed in class apply to your situation - as motivation, as information-seeking process, or as use. Write a brief report (6-8 double-spaced pages) that interprets the experience. Concentrate on analyzing what happened instead of recounting each step. For example, it is more important to hear your reactions to what you did than to hear what you did - how important was the information to you? What sources were consulted? What barriers or surprises did you experience? If you consulted systems or online sources, describe the interaction and why it worked, or did not. If you consulted other people, describe the interaction and how you were able to convey your need to this person. Why do you think your experience was a successful (or unsuccessful) one? What did you learn that you did not know beforehand? What would you do differently if a similar problem arises in the future? **Be sure to relate your observations to readings and discussions from class.** Cite them as appropriate.

Evaluation criteria

Grades will be based upon the quality and depth of your analysis of the experience. A description of the need and what motivated it, any obstacles you experienced, sources used, tasks performed, and results obtained along with your evaluation of those results should be included in the paper. While this paper is relatively informal in style, it should be formatted using a standard publication style ([APA Style](#)) and should include citations to the literature as appropriate. **Note that the analysis is worth half of the total points.** Be sure to be thoughtful! Analyze more than you describe.

Diary	(10 points)
Suitability of Information Need	(10 points)
Spelling and Grammar of paper	(15 points)
Structure of paper	(15 points)
Analysis	(50 points)

Final Reflections Papers (20%)

Each student will sum up their entire class experience using class notes, readings, and discussions. Papers are **informal** and should be 7-10 pages long. **Due during the final exam period (tbd).** This assignment takes the place of a final exam.

The final reflection papers are both a summary of your experience in the class, but also serve as your analysis of the topics presented throughout the semester. The paper should tie it all together into a distinct narrative. This should not be a simple recap of each week's topic or theme presented in chronological order, but should instead organize the information into a whole that is meaningful for you as a participant in the class. Not all topics covered in the course need to be discussed, but it is expected that most of them will be mentioned. Remember that you are writing about the topics in a way that means something to you – be thoughtful about how you organize them! Relating the topics to your own interests is encouraged.

Remember that you are not just describing what we did. You are discussing and analyzing.

Evaluation criteria

The final reflections papers will be graded based upon the quality of your organization of class topics and themes and your analysis of them. Inclusion of class readings, notes, and discussions is encouraged.

- (20 points) Overall Structure of Narrative
- (30 points) Flow and Grammar
- (30 points) Discussion of Topics/Themes
- (20 points) Use of Readings and Class Discussions