UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

INST802: Pragmatic and Methodological Foundations for Information Studies (Spring 2024)

Instructor

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Course Information

Course Term (Credits): Spring 2024 (3 credits)
Time: Mondays 11:00am - 1:45pm
Course Location: HBK 0302J
Last day to drop the course: Jan 30, 2024*
Last day to withdraw: Feb 6, 2024*
Please check the UMD registrar academic calendar to confirm

Course Description

As an increasingly multi/inter/trans/non-disciplinary intellectual community, Information Studies embraces a wide variety of conceptual frameworks, theories, methodological approaches, and intellectual traditions. There are many strengths and weaknesses due to the diverse nature of Information Studies. For instance, the field is able to bring many different intellectual perspectives to bear on the complex, nuanced, phenomena that are its focus. The variety in the intellectual toolbox of Information Studies is central to its ability to avoid reduction of its focal topics to trite, simplistic characterizations. But on the other hand, Information Studies' paradigmatic richness places particular burdens on the individual researcher. Framing research agendas, motivating research questions, conducting literature reviews, selecting methods, and even arguing for particular conclusions is complicated by the number of alternative approaches available to the Information Studies scholar.

The purpose of this seminar is to help you develop a reflective practice that you can rely on to turn your interests into valuable new insights in an interdisciplinary domain like Information Studies.

Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing this course, you will be able to:

1. Apply best practices in scholarly communication, including clear and succinct synthesis of prior literature, critical commentary, and compelling presentation of your own ideas.
2. Plan and propose novel research and scholarship on a significant problem in the information field.
3. Synthesize concepts, ideas, and literatures foundational to the study of information.
4. Critique empirical research articles and proposals, including writing solid reviews as well as engage in verbal discussions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of various types of scholarship.
5. Identify relevant literature and scholarship as well as evaluate the impact of professional journals and conferences.

Required Resources

- Course Website: elms.umd.edu
- Booth et al. The Craft of Research, Fourth Edition: Chicago Guide to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. (2016) ISBN-13:978-0226239736; ISBN-10: 022623973X
- Becker, H. Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, and Article. Third Edition. (2020). ISBN-13:978-0226643939; ISBN-10: 022664393X
- Mullaney, T. and Rea, C. Where Research Begins: Choosing a Research Project that matters to you (and the world). ISBN 13: 978-0226817446; ISBN 10: 022681744X
- Choosing and Using Sources. Download the book free: https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/choosingsources/

Course Outline[1]

Class	Topic	Readings	Due[2]
Module 1: Framing your research			
Jan 29 Week 1	Course overview and writing workshop, an intro. Why do we write...like this?	None	None
Feb 5 Week 2	Where to start? Discussion Lead: Kem Nguyen-Le	Mullaney & Rea - Chap. Intro, 1, 2 Choosing the Source - Chap. 1	Research Topic Ideas (in class)
Feb 12 Week 3	Defining your topic Discussion Lead: Nikki Pratt	Booth - Chap. 3, 4, & 5 Mullaney & Rea - Chap. 3 & 4	Writing check-in (in class)
Feb 19 Week 4	What's your angle? Discussion Lead: Do Won Kim	Mullaney & Rea - Chap. 5 & 6 Understanding interdisciplinarity	Statement of Research
Module 2: Crafting an argument			
Feb 26 Week 5	Academic writing 101 Discussion Lead: Marilyn	Becker - Chap. 1-3 Booth - Chap. 1	Proposal outline (in class)
Mar 4 Week 6	Understanding the Lit Discussion Lead: Miranda Downey	Becker Chap. 8 Choosing the Source - Chap. 2, 3, 8 Lit Review Sources	Writing check-in (in class)
Mar 11 Week 7	Writing workshop *Notetaking and peer review*	Booth - Chap. 16 Videos on lit review (1, 2)	Draft of intro and lit review
Mar 18 Week 8	**No Classes — Spring Break**		
Mar 25 Week 9	Academic writing 201 Discussion Lead: Abhinav	Booth - Chap. 6, 7, & 8 Choosing the Source - Chap. 7 & 9	Writing check-in (in class)
Module 3: Writing as a creative practice			
Apr 1 Week 10	Making the argument Discussion Lead: Miracle Etim-Andy	Becker - Chap. 5 & 6 Booth 12, 13, 14	Project Proposal - Version 1
Apr 8 Week 11	No class. Individual meetings.	No readings.	Peer Review
Apr 15 Week 12	Editing, clarity, and ethics. Discussion Lead: Elizabeth Pineo	Becker - Chap. 7 Booth - Chap. 15, 17, p, 269-275 Choosing the Source - Chap. 10	Writing check-in (in class)
Apr 22 Week 13	Writing workshop *Reflexivity and venue selection*	No readings.	Writing check-in (in class)
Apr 29 Week 14	Final presentations	No readings.	Final Project Presentation - includes self-reflection (in class)
May 6 Week 15	No class. Individual meetings as necessary.		Project Proposal - Version 2

[1] Note: This is a tentative schedule, and subject to change as necessary – monitor the syllabus and the course ELMS page for updates. In the unlikely event of a prolonged university closing, or an extended absence from the university, adjustments to the course schedule, deadlines, and assignments will be made based on the duration of the closing and the specific dates missed.
[2] All submissions are due the night BEFORE class at 11:59pm on ELMS unless otherwise noted in the table.

Assignments

1. **Participation and reading reflections.** Attendance and participation in class is required and will be evaluated weekly. This includes 1-1 meetings with the instructor. Students will be expected to engage in weekly reflection about the readings, which will be reflected in their verbal responses. This will be graded as either complete or not.

2. **Discussion Lead.** Each student will lead on discussion about a topic and the readings on the syllabus. This is not teaching – it is preparing to lead a discussion and having an interactive activity (e.g., video to watch, game to play) for us to dive more deeply into the conversation about the week's topic(s). This will be graded based on a rubric.

3. **Writing check-in.** Students are expected to make progress even if things are not submitted. These are verbal check-in and reflections about the writing process that we'll engage in. Please be prepared to reflect. This will be graded as either complete or not.

4. **Research Topic Idea.** Students will verbally share potential topics for their course proposals during class based on a criteria. This will be graded as either complete or not.

5. **Draft of intro + lit review**. To demonstrate incremental progress on their writing, students will bring paper copies of their introductions and literature reviews to share and get feedback. This will be graded as either complete or not.

6. **Proposal—Version 1.** Students will submit several drafts of their papers that will then be peer reviewed and iterated upon. This will be evaluated based on a rubric.

7. **Peer Review and Feedback on Peer Review.** Students will read each other's work and give peer feedback, which will be evaluated on the quality and substance of the feedback by each other. This will give everyone practice writing a paper review, a skill that is required in the Ph.D. program. This will be graded as either complete or not.

8. **Final Presentation with reflection.** Towards the end of the course, students will create a final presentation of their topic, as another method of sharing and communicating their ideas. This will include a reflection about the process of writing. This will be evaluated using a rubric.

9. **Proposal—Version 2.** Students will submit a final paper or proposal. This will be evaluated using a rubric.

Grading Structure

Assignment	Percentage %
Participation and reading reflections	10%
Discussion Lead	5%
Writing check-ins (5)	5%
Statement of Research	5%
Draft of intro + lit review	5%
Proposal–Version 1	20%
Peer Review	10%
Feedback for Paper Review	5%
Final Presentation with self-reflection	10%
Proposal–Version 2	25%
Total	**100%**

Course Structure

This course is a discussion-intensive seminar, where we will read, discuss, and apply concepts from readings, both in whole-class discussions and in small group activities. The format of this course is designed such that we will learn from each other. That means that everyone will have the opportunity to lead a discussion and you'll need to actively engage and respond to your peers. Every class will consist of interactive class activities designed to help you think through, discuss, and apply the concepts that are critical for achieving the learning objectives. As such,

you are expected to actively engage in the course, rather than passively "watch and listen."

In addition, there will be extensive reading and writing outside of class (expect roughly 9-12 hours). To be clear, I do not give busy work. Everything that I ask you to do, there is a reason that is related to something you need to know in the future. It is imperative that you **come to every class prepared** to discuss the reading and with the items that are due for the day. By coming prepared, it will demonstrate that you are taking an active role in your learning process, which is required for this type of course.

In-person attendance is expected; however, if you experience an emergency and are unable to attend in-person, please let me know prior to class and I will try to make the class hybrid. Please DO NOT come to class sick. Communication is key so please email me immediately if you have any questions or if you can not attend class in-person.

Below are some tips to be successful in this course:

1. **Participate.** You must be actively engaged in your own learning and absorbing the materials for this course. Graduate work requires your full attention and the skills that you will gain in this course are required if you hope to be successful in the Ph.D. program. Thus, every week you must be ready to engage deeply, ask questions, and talk about the course content with your classmates. You can learn a great deal from discussing ideas and perspectives with your peers and me. Participation can also help you articulate your thoughts and develop critical thinking skills.

2. **Manage your time.** Students are often very busy, and I understand that you have obligations outside of this class. However, students do best when they plan adequate time that is devoted to course work. Block your schedule and set aside plenty of time to complete assignments including extra time to handle any technology related problems. To be clear, writing can not be done in one draft. You should complete your assignment with enough time for you to edit it significantly prior to submitting it. Manage your time and plan to have your work done early.

3. **Login regularly.** I recommend that you log in to ELMS-Canvas several times a week to view announcements, discussion posts and replies to your posts. Expect that things may change from the original syllabus and those changes will be reflected on ELMS.

4. **Do not fall behind.** This class moves at a quick pace and each week builds on the previous content. If you feel you are starting to fall behind, check in with me as soon as possible so we can troubleshoot together. It will be hard to keep up with the course content if you fall behind.

5. **Use ELMS-Canvas notification settings.** Pro tip! Canvas ELMS-Canvas can ensure you receive timely notifications in your email or via text. Be sure to enable announcements to be sent instantly or daily.

6. **Ask for help if needed.** If you need help with ELMS-Canvas or other technology, contact IT Support. If you are struggling with a course concept, reach out to me (and/or your classmates) for support.

Policies and Resources for Graduate Courses

It is our shared responsibility to know and abide by the University of Maryland's policies that relate to all courses, which include topics like:

- Academic integrity
- Student and instructor conduct
- Accessibility and accommodations
- Attendance and excused absences
- Grades and appeals
- Copyright and intellectual property

Please see the University's website for graduate course-related policies at: https://gradschool.umd.edu/course-related-policies

Course Guidelines

Communication with Instructor:

If you need to reach out and communicate with me, please email me at serete@umd.edu. Please read the syllabus or ELMS if you have questions about the course (i.e. When is this assignment due? How much is it worth? etc.). If you still have questions after checking

the syllabus, please reach out to me as soon as possible. Please allow up to 24 hours for a response on a weekday or 48 hours for a response on a weekend or holiday before sending a follow-up email.

Note: I receive a ton of email. In fact, I typically receive hundreds of messages per day. I will try to get to it as soon as possible but please note that I (try to) work bank hours (i.e., 9am - 5pm M-F). If you sent an email outside of those times, please wait until the next business day for a response. To help expedite a response, please **include specific class number details in the title of all email correspondences (i.e., "[INST802] Title of Email").** In the spirit of practicing professional communication, make an effort to write email messages in a formal, professional tone (e.g., proper greeting, correct spelling, etc.). Please remember to check email and ELMS for announcements daily.

Communication to you about the Course:
ELMS: I will send IMPORTANT announcements via ELMS messaging. You must make sure that your email & announcement notifications (including changes in assignments and/or due dates) are enabled in ELMS so you do not miss any messages. You are responsible for checking your email and Canvas/ELMS inbox with regular frequency.

Communication with Peers:
With a diversity of perspectives and experience, we may find ourselves in disagreement and/or debate with one another. As such, it is important that we agree to conduct ourselves in a professional manner and that we work together to foster and preserve a virtual classroom environment in which we can respectfully discuss and deliberate controversial questions. I encourage you to confidently exercise your right to free speech—bearing in mind, of course, that you will be expected to craft and defend arguments that support your position. Keep in mind, that free speech has its limit and this course is NOT the space for hate speech, harassment, and derogatory language. I will make every reasonable attempt to create an atmosphere in which each student feels comfortable voicing their argument without fear of being personally attacked, mocked, demeaned, or devalued.

Any behavior (including harassment, sexual harassment, and racially and/or culturally derogatory language) that threatens this atmosphere will not be tolerated. Please alert me immediately if you feel threatened, dismissed, or silenced at any point during our semester together and/or if your engagement in discussion has been in some way hindered by the learning environment.

Names/Pronouns and Self-Identifications:
The University of Maryland recognizes the importance of a diverse student body, and we are committed to fostering inclusive and equitable classroom environments. I invite you, if you wish, to tell us how you want to be referred to in this class, both in terms of your name and your pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, etc.). Keep in mind that the pronouns someone uses are not necessarily indicative of their gender identity. Visit trans.umd.edu to learn more. Additionally, it is your choice whether to disclose how you identify in terms of your gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity (e.g., should it come up in classroom conversation about our experiences and perspectives) and should be self-identified, not presumed or imposed. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly, and I ask you to do the same for all of your fellow Terps.

Academic Integrity
For this course, some of your assignments will be collected via Turnitin on our course ELMS page. I have chosen to use this tool because it can help you improve your scholarly writing and help me verify the integrity of student work. For information about Turnitin, how it works, and the feedback reports you may have access to, visit Turnitin Originality Checker for Students

The University's Code of Academic Integrity is designed to ensure that the principles of academic honesty and integrity are upheld. In accordance with this code, the University of Maryland does not tolerate academic dishonesty. Please ensure that you fully understand this code and its implications because all acts of academic dishonesty will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of this code. All students are expected to adhere to this Code. It is your responsibility to read it and know what it says, so you can start your professional life on the right path. As future professionals, your commitment to high ethical

standards and honesty begins with your time at the University of Maryland.

It is important to note that course assistance websites, such as CourseHero, or AI-generated content are not permitted sources, unless the instructor explicitly gives permission. Material taken or copied from these sites can be deemed unauthorized material and a violation of academic integrity. These sites offer information that might be inaccurate or biased and most importantly, relying on restricted sources will hamper your learning process, particularly the critical thinking steps necessary for college-level assignments.

Finally, on **each major assignment (i.e., Draft of Intro and Lit, Proposal-Version1, Proposal-Version 2), you must write out and sign the following pledge:** *"I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment."* If you ever feel pressured to comply with someone else's academic integrity violation, please reach out to me straight away. Each assignment will contain more specific information regarding acceptable levels of collaboration. Also, *if you are ever unclear* about acceptable levels of collaboration, *please ask*!

Grades

Developmental feedback will be provided through peer feedback exercises, discussion of your work, and written feedback. While it should not be a primary focus of your efforts in this course, your final grade for the semester will be calculated based on the weights for each graded assignment for the course. The weighted average of your grades on all of the assignments will be converted to a letter grade according to the following table:

Letter Grade	Weighted Average	
A+	97%	Excellent/Outstanding Effort
A	94%	
A-	90%	Very Good
B+	88%	
B	84%	Good
B-	80%	
C+	77%	
C	74%	Satisfactory
C-	70%	
D+	67%	
D	64%	
D-	61%	
F	60% and below	

Grading Policy

All work will be required to be submitted through our ELMS course page.

All assessment scores will be posted on the course ELMS page. Any formal grade disputes must be submitted in writing and within one week of receiving the grade. Final letter grades are assigned based on the percentage of total assessment points earned. To be fair to everyone, I establish clear standards and apply them consistently, so please understand that being close to a cutoff is not the same as making the cut (89.99 ≠ 90.00). It would be unethical to make exceptions for some and not others.

If you would like to review any of your grades (including the exams), or have questions about how something was scored, please email me to schedule a time for us to meet and discuss.

Late Submissions:
Typically, I do not accept late work. However, given the pandemic (and the rest of the woos of life), I realize that things happen that we can not avoid. I will accept late work if 1) you let me know at least 24 hours in advance that you are requesting to submit the work late (you have to receive my written approval) and 2) you submit a version within 72 hours of the original deadline. Please note: **Each day that the work is submitted late,** there will be a 10% penalty (unless I say otherwise in writing). There are exceptions but that is my discretion.

If you feel behind with the course material, please talk to me as soon as possible so that we can figure out how to get you caught up. One of the reasons why there should be no late submissions is that there is a tendency for us to want to submit "perfect" work, especially in this class. But it is important that you learn time management in this course and that you learn the importance of staying on schedule. So please aim to have things completed far before the deadline.

The last day to submit late work for partial credit is May 6, 2024 at 5:00PM. Late work for the final submission cannot be accepted, because I have to turn in your grades on time. However, we live in

exceptional times. If you need an extension on the final submission, I will try to work with you to figure out an arrangement that works for both and that aligns with the university policy.

Resources & Accommodations
Accessibility and Disability Services

The University of Maryland is committed to creating and maintaining a welcoming and inclusive educational, working, and living environment for people of all abilities. The University of Maryland is also committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of the University, or be subjected to discrimination. The Accessibility & Disability Service (ADS) provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals to provide equal access to services, programs and activities. ADS cannot assist retroactively, so it is generally best to request accommodations several weeks before the semester begins or as soon as a disability becomes known. Any student who needs accommodations should contact me as soon as possible so that I have sufficient time to make arrangements.

For assistance in obtaining an accommodation, contact Accessibility and Disability Service at 301-314-7682, or email them at adsfrontdesk@umd.edu. Information about sharing your accommodations with instructors, note taking assistance and more is available from the Counseling Center.

Student Resources and Services

Taking personal responsibility for your own learning means acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. I hope you will come talk to me so that I can help you find the right approach to success in this course, and I encourage you to visit UMD's Student Academic Support Services website to learn more about the wide range of campus resources available to you.

In particular, everyone can use some help sharpening their communication skills (and improving their grade) by visiting UMD's Writing Center and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center.

You should also know there are a wide range of resources to support you with whatever you might need (UMD's Student Resources and Services website may help). If you feel it would be helpful to have someone to talk to, visit UMD's Counseling Center or one of the many other mental health resources on campus.

Notice of Mandatory Reporting

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking: As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Responsible University Employee," and I must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to UMD's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy on Sexual Harassment and Other Sexual Misconduct.

If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of UMD's confidential resources, such as CARE to Stop Violence (located on the Ground Floor of the Health Center) at 301-741-3442 or the Counseling Center (located at the Shoemaker Building) at 301-314-7651.

You may also seek assistance or supportive measures from UMD's Title IX Coordinator, Angela Nastase, by calling 301-405-1142, or emailing titleIXcoordinator@umd.edu.

To view further information on the above, please visit the Office of Civil Rights and Sexual Misconduct's website at ocrsm.umd.edu.

Basic Needs Security

If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or lack a safe and stable place to live, please visit UMD's Division of Student Affairs website for information about resources the campus offers you and let me know if I can help in any way.

Veteran Resources

UMD provides some additional supports to our student veterans. You can access those resources at the office of Veteran Student life and the Counseling Center. Veterans and active duty military personnel with special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployments, drill requirements, disabilities) are welcome and encouraged to communicate these, in advance if possible, to the instructor.

Course Evaluation

I encourage you to send me any feedback you have about the course via email or in-person. If you have additional feedback, please submit a course evaluation through Student Feedback on Course Experiences in order to help faculty and administrators improve teaching and learning at Maryland. All information submitted to Course Experiences is confidential. Campus will notify you when Student Feedback on Course Experiences is open for you to complete your evaluations at the end of the semester. Please go directly to the Student Feedback on Course Experiences to complete your evaluations. By

completing all of your evaluations each semester, you will have the privilege of accessing through Testudo the evaluation reports for the thousands of courses for which 70% or more students submitted their evaluations.

Copyright Notice

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