PERSPECTIVES ON INFORMATION

INF 380E

#28485

Dr. Philip Doty
School of Information
University of Texas at Austin

Fall 2012

Class time:    Thursday, 3:00 - 6:00 PM
Place:         UTA 1.208
Office:        UTA 5.328
Office hours:  Monday 1:00 – 2:00 PM
                Thursday 10:00 – 11:00 AM
                By appointment other times
Telephone:     512.471.3746 – direct line
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Internet:      pdot@ischool.utexas.edu
Class URL:     http://courses.ischool.utexas.edu/Doty_Philip/2012/fall/INF_380E/
TA:            Chris Johnson
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                Office hours:       Wednesday 1:00 – 2:00 PM, UTA 5.518
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                Tuesday 1:00 – 2:00 PM
                By appointment other times
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INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

INF 380E, Perspectives on Information, is one of three core courses in the master’s program at the School of Information at the University of Texas at Austin. The course is intended to help introduce students to the field of information studies, to the MS program at the iSchool, to important concepts in the field and cognate disciplines, and to each other. Additionally, should time allow, the course will help students gain some familiarity with iSchool faculty members and PhD students.

More specifically, the course examines information as a fundamental concept in information studies as well as in other disciplines and literatures. Thus, the course will look at a wide variety of ways of operationalizing the concept of information, especially at different historical moments, in multiple research traditions, and in various kinds of ways. While most of the narratives we will examine extol the idea of information and, indeed, privilege it, others will undermine it, questioning its value and even its existence.

The course comprises four units that have some considerable overlap:

1. Introductory thoughts on information and information studies – classes 1-3
2. Information related to particular forms, functions, or concepts (information as . . .) – classes 4-9
3. Structures of information important to information studies – classes 10-13

Among the objectives of the course are these:

- To allow students to explore widely and across time how it is that disciplines such as our own and others have looked at “information as a primary and foundational concept” (iSchool course description)
- To encourage students to identify and engage questions related to the ideology of information
- To help students explore our field’s identity, whether called information studies, library and information studies, library and information science, information science, or any other number of names
- To introduce students to some important “classic” papers, thinkers, concepts, and research fronts in the field
- To engage a fundamental tension in our discipline about information. There is a strong and rich tradition of cognitivism, privileging the epistemological, and an emphasis on “information” as a concept and imperative. At the same time, however, there is an equally long-standing and rich counter-narrative emphasizing multiple forms of practice, materiality, and documents.

The two textbooks for the course, James Gleick’s The Information: A History, A Theory, A Flood (2011) and Bernie Frohmann’s Deflating Information: From Science Studies to Documentation (2004), illustrate this fundamental tension quite vividly, as do many other course readings. This topic, among many others, is one engaged in another of the MS core classes, INF 380C, Information in Social and Cultural Context, as well as throughout the iSchool curricula more generally. Engaging this tension in a fruitful and reflective way is important to academic study at the iSchool and to the practice of the many information professions that our graduates pursue.
EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS’ PERFORMANCE

Students are expected to be involved, creative, and vigorous participants in class discussions and in the overall conduct of the class. In addition, students are expected to:

- Attend all class sessions. If a student misses a class, it is her responsibility to arrange with another student to obtain all notes, handouts, and assignment sheets.

- Read all material prior to class. Students are expected to use the course readings to inform their classroom participation and their writing. Students must integrate what they read with what they say and write. This imperative is essential to the development of professional expertise and to the development of a collegial professional persona.

- Educate themselves and their peers. Successful completion of graduate programs and participation in professional life depend upon a willingness to demonstrate initiative and creativity. Participation in the professional and personal growth of colleagues is essential to one’s own success as well as theirs. Such collegiality is at the heart of scholarship, so some assignments are designed to encourage collaboration.

- Spend three to four (3-4) hours in preparation for each hour in the classroom. A three (3)-credit graduate hour course meeting once a week requires about 10-12 hours per week of work outside the classroom.

- Participate in all class discussions.

- Complete all assignments on time. Late assignments will not be accepted except in the limited circumstances noted below. Failure to complete any assignment on time will result in a failing grade for the course.

- Be responsible with collective property, especially books and other material on reserve.

- Ask for help from the instructor or the teaching assistant, either in class, during office hours, on the telephone, through email, or in any other appropriate way. Email is especially useful for information questions, but the instructor deliberately limits his access to email outside the office. Unless there are compelling privacy concerns, it is always wise to send a copy of any email intended for the instructor to the TA who has access to email more regularly.

Academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism, cheating, or academic fraud, is intolerable and will incur severe penalties, including failure for the course. If there is concern about behavior that may be academically dishonest, consult the instructor. Students should refer to the 2011-2012 edition of the UT General Information Bulletin (http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi11-12), Appendix C, Sections 11-402 and 11-505 and the Office of the Dean of Students Web site (http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php).

The instructor is happy to provide all appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities. The University’s Office of the Dean of Students (http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/) at 471.6259, 471.4641 TTY, can provide further information and referrals as necessary.
STANDARDS FOR WRITTEN WORK

You will meet professional standards of clarity, grammar, spelling, and organization in writing for this class. Review these standards before and after writing; I use them to evaluate your work.

Every writer is faced with the problem of not knowing what her audience knows; therefore, effective communication depends upon maximizing clarity. Wolcott in *Writing Up Qualitative Research* (1990, p. 47) reminds us: "Address . . . the many who do not know, not the few who do." Remember that clarity of ideas, of language, and of syntax are mutually reinforcing.

Good writing makes for good thinking and vice versa. Recall that writing is a form of inquiry, a way to think, not a reflection of some supposed static thought “in” the mind. Theodore Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie* shows how the interplay of composition and thought can work (1994, p. 144):

Hurstwood surprised himself with his fluency. By the natural law which governs all effort, what he wrote reacted upon him. He began to feel those subtleties which he could find words to express. With every word came increased conception. Those inmost breathings which thus found words took hold upon him.

We need not adopt the breathless metaphysics or literary naturalism to understand Dreiser’s point.

All written work for the class must be done on a word-processor and double-spaced, with 1" margins all the way around and in either 10 or 12 pt. font, in one of four font styles: Times, Times New Roman, Cambria, or Palatino. Please print on both sides of your paper.

Some writing assignments will demand the use of references, and some may require notes. It is particularly important in schools such as the School of Information that notes and references are impeccably done. Please use APA (American Psychological Association) standards. There are other standard bibliographic and note formats, for example, in engineering and law, but social scientists and a growing number of humanists and natural scientists use APA. Familiarity with standard formats is essential for understanding others’ work and for preparing submissions to journals, funding agencies, professional conferences, and the like. You may also want to consult the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2010, 6th ed.; http://apastyle.org/).

**Do not use a general dictionary or encyclopedia for defining terms in graduate school or in professional writing.** If you want to use a reference source to define a term, use a specialized dictionary such as *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* or subject-specific encyclopedia, e.g., the *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. The best alternative, however, is having an understanding of the literature(s) related to the term sufficient to provide a definition in the context of the literature(s).

Use a standard spell checker, but be aware that spell checking dictionaries have systematic weaknesses: they exclude most proper nouns, e.g., personal and place names; they omit most technical terms; they omit most foreign words and phrases; and they cannot identify the error in using homophones, e.g., writing "there" instead of "their," or in writing "the" instead of "them."

**Proofread your work thoroughly and be precise in editing it.** It is often helpful to have someone else read your writing, to eliminate errors and to increase clarity.

Finally, every assignment must include a title page with:

- The title of the assignment
• Your name
• The date
• The class number – INF 380E.

If you have any questions about these standards, I will be pleased to discuss them with you at any time.
Since the production of professional-level written work is one of the aims of the class and of the iSchool, I will read and edit your work as the editor of a professional journal or the moderator of a technical session at a professional conference would. The reminders below will help you prepare professional written work appropriate to any situation. Note the asterisked errors in #s 3, 4, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 19, 21, and 25 (some have more than one error):

1. Staple all papers for this class in the upper left-hand corner. Do not use covers, binders, or other means of keeping the pages together.

2. Number all pages after the title page. Notes and references do not count against page limits.

3. Use formal, academic prose. Avoid colloquial language, *you know?* It is essential in graduate work and in professional communication to avoid failures in diction. Be serious and academic when called for, be informal and relaxed when called for, and be everything in between as necessary. For this course, avoid words and phrases such as "agenda," "problem with," "deal with," "handle," "window of," "goes into," "broken down into," "viable," and "option." They are tired clichés as well as colloquial.

4. Avoid all clichés. They are vague, *fail to "push the envelope," and do not provide "relevant input."*

5. Avoid computer technospeak such as "input," "feedback," or "processing information" except when using such terms in specific technical ways or when quoting others.

6. **AVOID USING “CONTENT” AS A NOUN.** We will discuss this point at some length.

7. Do not use the term "relevant" except in its information retrieval sense. Ordinarily, it is a colloquial cliché, but it also has a strict technical meaning in information studies and computer science.

8. Do not use "quality" as an adjective; it is vague, cliché, and colloquial. Instead use "high-quality," "excellent," "superior," or whatever more formal phrase you deem appropriate.

9. Study the APA style convention for the proper use of ellipsis*. . . .*

10. Unless quoting others, avoid using the terms "objective" and "subjective" in their evidentiary senses; these terms entail major philosophical, epistemological controversy. Avoid terms such as "facts," "factual," "proven," and related constructions for similar reasons.

11. Avoid contractions. *Don’t* use them in formal writing.

12. Be circumspect in using the term "this," especially in the beginning of a sentence. *THIS* is often a problem because the referent is unclear. Pay strict attention to providing clear referents for all pronouns. Especially ensure that pronouns and their referents agree in number; e.g., "each person went to their home" is a poor construction because "each" is singular, as is the noun "person," while "their" is a plural form. Therefore, either the referent or the pronoun must change in number.

13. "If" ordinarily takes the subjunctive mood, e.g., "If he were [not "was"] only taller."

14. Put "only" in its appropriate place, near the word it modifies. For example, one might say in spoken English that "he only goes to Antone's" when one means that "the only place he frequents is Antone's." Better-written English, however, would read "he goes only to Antone's."

15. Do not confuse possessive, plural, or contracted forms, especially of pronouns. *Its* bad.
16. Do not confuse affect/effect, compliment/complement, or principle/principal. Readers will not *complement* your work or *it's* *principle* *affect* on them.
17. Avoid misplaced modifiers; e.g.: As someone interested in the history of Mesoamerica, it was important for me to attend the lecture. The modifier is misplaced because the phrase "As someone interested in the history of Mesoamerica" is meant to modify the next immediate word, which should then, obviously, be both a person and the subject of the sentence. In this case, it should modify the word "I" by preceding it immediately. One good alternative for the sentence is: As someone interested in the history of Mesoamerica, I was especially eager to attend the lecture.

18. Avoid use of "valid," "parameter," "bias," "reliability," and "paradigm," except in limited technical ways. These are important research terms and should be used with precision.

19. Remember that the words "data," "media," "criteria," "strata," and "phenomena" are all PLURAL forms. They *TAKE* plural verbs. If you use any of these plural forms in a singular construction, e.g., "the data is," you will make the instructor very unhappy :-(.

20. "Number," "many," and "fewer" are used with plural nouns (a number of horses, many horses, and fewer horses). "Amount," "much," and "less" are used with singular nouns (an amount of hydrogen, much hydrogen, and less hydrogen). Another useful way to make this distinction is to recall that "many" is used for countable nouns, while "much" is used for uncountable nouns.

21. *The passive voice should generally not be used.*

22. "Between" indicates two alternatives, while "among" signals three or more.

23. Generally avoid the use of honorifics such as Mister, Doctor, and Ms., and so on when referring to persons in writing, especially when citing their written work. Use the APA convention of last names and dates.

24. There is no generally accepted standard for citing electronic resources. If you cite them, give an indication, as specifically as possible, of:

- responsibility (who?)
- title (what?)
- date of creation (when?)
- date viewed (when?)
- place to find the source (where? how?).


25. *PROFREAD! PROOFREAD! PROOFREAD!*

26. Citation, quotation, and reference are nouns; cite, quote, and refer to are verbs.

27. Use double quotation marks ("abc.").), not single quotation marks ('xyz.'), as a matter of course. Single quotation marks indicate quotations within quotations.

28. Provide a specific page number for all direct quotations. If the quotation is from a Web page or other digital source, provide at least the paragraph number and/or other directional cues, e.g., "(Davis, 1993, section II, ¶ 4)."

29. In ordinary American English, as ≠ because.
30. Use "about" instead of the tortured locution "as to."

31. In much of social science and humanistic study, the term "issue" is used in a technical way to identify sources of public controversy or dissensus. Please use the term to refer to topics about which there is substantial public disagreement, NOT synonymously with general terms such as "area," "topic," or the like.

32. On a related note, avoid the locution of "public debate." Such a locution makes a series of faulty assumptions:

   - It presumes that a public policy issue has only two “sides.” There are usually three or four or more perspectives on any topic of public dissensus that merit consideration. “Debate” hides this complexity.
   - “Debate” implies that one “side” and only one “side” can be correct; that presumption ignores the fact that the many perspectives on a public policy issue have contributions to make to its resolution or to our understanding.
   - “Debate” implies that there can be and will be one and only one “winner.” This presumption naively ignores the fact that some public policy issues are intractable, that these issues are often emergent as are their resolutions, and that compromise is oftentimes a mark of success rather than of failure or “surrender.”

33. Please do not start a sentence or any independent clause with “however.”

34. Avoid the use of “etc.” – it is awkward, colloquial, and vague.

35. Do not use the term “subjects” to describe research participants. “Respondents,” “participants,” and “informants” are preferred terms and have been for decades.

36. Do not use notes unless absolutely necessary, but, if you must use them, use endnotes not footnotes.

37. Please adhere to these orthographic (spelling) conventions:

   - Web with a capital “W.”
   - Web site, two words, with a capital “W.”
   - Internet with a capital “I” to indicate the TCP/IP-compliant computer network with a shared address convention. Otherwise, internet with a lower-case “i” simply means any of the many millions of networks of networks.
### SOME EDITING CONVENTIONS FOR STUDENTS’ PAPERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>number OR insert a space; the context will help you decipher its meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWK</td>
<td>awkward and usually compromises clarity as well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLOCK</td>
<td>make into a block quotation without external quotation marks; do so with quotations ≥ 4 lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caps</td>
<td>capitalize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLLOQ</td>
<td>colloquial and to be avoided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dB</td>
<td>database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRAG</td>
<td>sentence fragment; often means that the verb or subject of the sentence is missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITAL</td>
<td>italicize</td>
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<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lc</td>
<td>make into lower case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lib'ship</td>
<td>librarianship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>org, org’l</td>
<td>organization, organizational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q’naire</td>
<td>questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REF?</td>
<td>what is the referent of this pronoun? to what or whom does it refer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ</td>
<td>research question</td>
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<tr>
<td>sp</td>
<td>spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SING</td>
<td>singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w/</td>
<td>with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w.c.?</td>
<td>word choice?</td>
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</table>

The instructor also uses **check marks** to indicate that the writer has made an especially good point. **Wavy lines** indicate that usage or reasoning is suspect.
GRADING

The faculty of the School of Information uses the following guidelines in grading:

A+ Superior achievement. An exceptionally high degree of mastery of the course material. Not recognized by the University.
A 4.00 Excellent. High degree of mastery of the course material.
A- 3.67 Very good.
B+ 3.33 More than satisfactory.
B 3.00 Satisfactory. Work consistent with academic expectations of graduate students.
B- 2.67 Less than satisfactory.
C+ 2.33 Unsatisfactory. May indicate the instructor's reservations about the student's ability to meet the iSchool's academic requirements.
C 2.00 Unsatisfactory. Indicates the instructor's reservations about the student's ability to meet the iSchool's academic requirements.
C- 1.67 Unsatisfactory. Indicates the instructor's strong reservations about the student's ability to meet the iSchool's academic requirements. Any course with a grade lower than C cannot be counted toward a student's degree.
D 1.00 Unacceptable. Indicates the instructor's very strong reservations about the student's ability to meet the iSchool's academic requirements and to earn a graduate degree. Any course with a grade lower than C cannot be counted toward a student's degree.
F 0.00 Failing.

See the memorandum from Associate Dean Philip Doty dated August 14, 2012, in the School of Information student orientation packet. Students may also wish to consult these UT Web sites for more information on standards of work:

- The Registrar – http://registrar.utexas.edu/students/grades
- The Graduate School Catalog – http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/grad11-13

As noted above, the University does not accept the grade of A+, but the instructor may assign the grade to students whose work is extraordinary.

The grade of B signals acceptable, satisfactory performance in graduate school. The instructor reserves the grade of A for students who demonstrate not only a command of the concepts and techniques discussed but also an ability to synthesize and integrate them in a professional manner and communicate them effectively, successfully informing the work of other students.

The grade of incomplete (X) is reserved for students in extraordinary circumstances and must be negotiated with the instructor before the end of the semester.

The instructor uses points to evaluate assignments, not letter grades. He uses an arithmetic – not a proportional – algorithm to determine points on any assignment. For example, 14/20 points on an assignment does NOT translate to 70% of the credit, or a D. Instead 14/20 points is roughly equivalent to a B. If any student's semester point total $\geq 90$ (is equal to or greater than 90), then s/he will have earned an A of some kind. If the semester point total $\geq 80$, then s/he will have earned at least a B of some kind. Whether these are A+, A, A-, B+, B, or B- depends upon the comparison of point totals for all students. For example, if a student earns a total of 90 points and the highest point total in the class is 98, the student...
would earn an A-. If, on the other hand, a student earns 90 points and the highest point total in the class is 91, then the student would earn an A. The instructor will explain this system throughout the semester.
TEXTS

There are two required texts for this class and 13 texts recommended for further study. Both required texts should be available at the Co-op (http://www.universitycoop.com/), although they will order enough copies of the required books for only about 2/3 of students in the class. I have asked them also to order a small subset of the recommended texts: Brown & Duguid (2002), Fidel (2012), and Floridi (2010). As usual, they will order only a few copies of each of these recommended texts. Please notify the instructor if you have trouble getting copies of the required books.

The REQUIRED texts are:


The RECOMMENDED texts are:


As many of the readings as possible will be on two-hour reserve at PCL, and students should supplement them by other material in print and online as their interests and professional ambitions dictate. Students should be aware of their classmates’ needs to see the reserve material.

Please remember that many of the terms, definitions, procedures, and epistemological and other assumptions discussed in the class, in the textbooks, and elsewhere are contentious. There are important differences between the instructor’s conventions and those of any particular source, as well as among the sources themselves. Learning to navigate this sea of uncertainty, but still adhere to rigorous standards for reading, evaluating, and doing work in information studies, should be one of your aims in the course.
and in the iSchool academic program.
ASSIGNMENTS

The instructor will provide additional information about each assignment in class and encourages students to see the assignment descriptions later in this syllabus.

Students must complete all assignments in order to pass the course. Students will complete the written assignments individually except for leading the in-class discussion designated as a group activity (GRP). All assignments must be consistent with the UT Honor Code (http://www.utexas.edu/about-ut/mission-core-purpose-honor-code) and with standards for first-rate professional-level work. All written assignments are to be double-spaced, printed on both sides of the paper, and submitted in class unless otherwise indicated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Date Due</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation and participation</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choice of dates for in-class discussion</td>
<td>MON, SEP 3</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading in-class discussion <strong>GRP</strong></td>
<td>SEP 13, 20, 27, OCT 4, 11, 18, 25, NOV 1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of book to review</td>
<td>OCT 4</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper on Gleick (2011) and Nunberg (1996 and 2011) (6 pp.)</td>
<td>OCT 11, in class</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book review (5 pp.)</td>
<td>NOV 15, in class</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper (8 pp.)</td>
<td>DEC 6, in class</td>
<td>30</td>
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All assignments must be handed in on time. The instructor reserves the right to issue a course grade of F if **ANY** assignment is not completed and will not accept late assignments unless three criteria are met:

1. At least 24 hours before the date due, the instructor gives explicit permission to the student to hand the assignment in late. This criterion can be met only in the most serious of health, family, or personal situations.

2. At the same time, a specific date and time are agreed upon for the late submission.

3. The assignment is submitted on or before the agreed-upon date and time.
# OUTLINE OF COURSE

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<td><strong>Unit 1: Foundational ideas and models of information</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>AUG 30</td>
<td>Introduction to the course – Review of the syllabus</td>
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<td>What is information studies?</td>
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<td>Some introductory thoughts on information (1)</td>
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<td>Questioning the presumed fact-data-information-knowledge-wisdom hierarchy</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SEP 6</td>
<td>Some introductory thoughts on information (2)</td>
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<td>Problematizing the information life cycle</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>SEP 13</td>
<td>Some introductory thoughts on information (3)</td>
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<td>Information, language, and cognition</td>
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<td><strong>Student-led discussion</strong> – Gleick (2011) Prologue and 1-4 (15%) GRP</td>
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<td><strong>Unit 2: Information as . . .</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>SEP 20</td>
<td>Information as collective memory</td>
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<td><strong>Student-led discussion</strong> – Gleick (2011) 5-6 (15%) GRP</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>SEP 27</td>
<td>Information as evidence</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Student-led discussion</strong> – Gleick (2011) 7-10 (15%) GRP</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>OCT 4</td>
<td>Information as property</td>
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<td><strong>Student-led discussion</strong> – Gleick (2011) 11-13 (15%) GRP</td>
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<td>Information as weapon, intelligence, or code</td>
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<td><strong>Student-led discussion</strong> – Gleick (2011) 14, 15, and Epilogue (15%) GRP</td>
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<td>• DUE: Paper on Gleick (2011) and Nunberg (1996 and 2011) (20%; 6 pp.)</td>
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<td><strong>Student-led discussion</strong> – Frohmann (2004) Introduction and 1-2 (15%) GRP</td>
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9 OCT 25 Information as quantity

**Student-led discussion** – Frohmann (2004) 3-5 (15%) GRP

Unit 3: Structures of information important to information studies

10 NOV 1 Books and journal papers

**Student-led discussion** – Frohmann (2004) 6-7 (15%) GRP

11 NOV 8 Computing and databases

12 NOV 15 Search

- DUE: Book review (25%; 5 pp.)

13 NOV 29 Digital networks

14 DEC 6 Course evaluation
Engaging information once more
Conclusions and summary

- DUE: Final paper (30%; 8 pp.)

NOV 22 HAPPY THANKSGIVING — NO CLASS!
This schedule may be adjusted as the class progresses. **GRP** indicates a group assignment, **AS** additional sources, and **CD** a source in Course Documents in Blackboard. Please recall that the additional sources (AS) are only suggested.

### DATE          TOPICS, ASSIGNMENTS, AND REQUIRED READINGS

**Unit 1: Foundational ideas and models of information**

**AUG 30**

Introduction to the course -- Review of the syllabus
What is information studies?
Some introductory thoughts on information (1)
Questioning the presumed fact-data-information-knowledge-wisdom hierarchy

**READ:** Floridi (2010), 2-5 **CD**
Frické (2009) **online**
Harmon (1987) **CD**
Hartel (2012) **online**
Nunberg (1996) **CD**
Zins (2007) **online**

**AS:** Bates (1999b)
Schiller (1988)
Taylor (1991)

**SEP 6**

Some introductory thoughts on information (2)
Problematizing the information life-cycle

**READ:** Bawden & Robinson (2009) **online**
Borgmann (1999a, b, c, and e) **CD**
Capurro & Hjørland (2002) **CD**
Cornelius (2002) **CD**
Losee (1997) **online**

**AS:** Furner (2010)

**SEP 13**

Some introductory thoughts on information (3)
Information, language, and cognition

**Student-led discussion** – Gleick (2011) Prologue and 1-4 (15%) **GRP**

**READ:** Gleick (2011), Prologue and 1-4
Buckland (1991) **online**
Merleau-Ponty (1964) **CD**
Nunberg (2011) **online**
Reddy (1993) **CD**
Winograd & Flores (1987) **CD**
AS: Veinot & Williams (2012)
Unit 2: Information as . . .

SEP 20  Information as collective memory

**Student-led discussion** – Gleick (2011) 5-6 (15%) GRP

READ:  Gleick (2011), 5-6  
Basso (1996a) CD  
Borgman (2012) online  
McGann (2001) CD  
Orr (1996a, b, and c) CD  
Terras (2011) online  
Walsh (2012) online

AS:  Bruner (1990) *passim*

SEP 27  Information as evidence

**Student-led discussion** – Gleick (2011) 7-10 (15%) GRP

READ:  Gleick (2011), 7-10  
Bearman & Lytle (1986) online  
Lemieux (2002) online  
MacNeil (2002) online

AS:

OCT 4  Information as property

**Student-led discussion** – Gleick (2011) 11-13 (15%) GRP

READ:  Gleick (2011), 11-13  
American Library Association (ALA) (2012), *passim* online  
Copyright Advisory Network (2008) online  
Doty (2011) Handout from Copyright Seminar CD  
Title 17 U.S. Code 102, 106-110 online

AS:  Copyright Advisory Network (2012) online

OCT 11  Information as weapon, intelligence, or code

**Student-led discussion** – Gleick (2011) 14, 15, and Epilogue (15%) GRP

READ:  Gleick (2011), 14, 15, and Epilogue  
Gleick (2010) online  
Nunberg (2011), online (reprise)  
Proffitt (2012) online  
Chen & Xu (2006) CD  
Jin & Bouthillier (2012) online
OCT 18  Information as location

Student-led discussion – Frohmann (2004) Introduction and 1-2 (15%) GRP

READ: Frohmann (2004), Introduction and 1-2
     Bishop (2012) online
     Gazni et al. (2012) online
     Huang, Tsai, & Huang (2012) online
     Ramchurn et al. (2012)
     South Africa (2009) online
     USGS (2007) online
     Zook (2007) CD

AS:      Basso (1996b)

OCT 25  Information as quantity

Student-led discussion – Frohmann (2004) 3-5 (15%) GRP

READ: Frohmann (2004), 3 and 5, skim 4
       Hobart & Schiffman (1998a and c) CD
       Kline (2011a) CD
       Weaver (1949) CD

AS:      Kline (2011c), 3 (“The Mathematization of Science”)

Unit 3: Structures of information important to information studies

NOV 1  Books and journal papers

Student-led discussion – Frohmann (2004) 6-7 (15%) GRP

READ: Frohmann (2004), 6-7
       Alzahrami et al. (2012) online
       Duguid (1996) CD
       Franceschet (2012) online
       Zhang (2012) online

AS:      Bishop (1999)
       Chartier (2004)
Computing and databases

READ: Cooper (2012) online
       Englebart (1962) online
       Licklider (1990) online

AS: Marchionini (2008)
NOV 15

Search

READ: Berriman & Groom (2011) online
Buckland (1997) online
Cleverdon (1967/1997) CD
Croft et al. (2009) CD
Evangelopoulos & Visinescu (2012) online
Gross & Latham (2012) online
Taylor (1968) CD
Van der Veer Martens & Van Fleet (2012) online

AS: Bates (2005a)
Kuhlthau (1991)

• DUE: Book review (25%; 5 pp.)

NOV 22

HAPPY THANKSGIVING — NO CLASS!

NOV 29

Digital networks

READ: Bush (1948) online
Davies (2007) online
Doty (2009) Handout on History of National Digital Networks CD
Licklider & Taylor (1990) online
Rayward (1994) online

AS:

Unit 4: Conclusions

DEC 6

Course evaluation
Engaging information once more
Conclusions and summary

READ: Buckland (1991) online (reprise)
Buckland (1997) online (reprise)
Floridi (2002) online
Halfaker & Riedl (2012) online
Ma (2012) online
Mak (2011a and b) CD

AS: Black (2006) CD
Buckland (2002)
Deacon (2010) CD

• DUE: Final paper (30%; 8 pp.)
Leading In-class Discussion (15%)

SEP 13 (11), SEP 20 (18), SEP 27 (25), OCT 4 (2), OCT 11 (9)
OCT 18 (16), OCT 25 (23), NOV 1 (OCT 30)

Each student will self-select into one group to lead class discussions of our two main textbooks: James Gleick’s *The Information: A History, A Theory, A Flood* (2011) and Bernie Frohmann’s *Deflating Information: From Science Studies to Documentation* (2004). Each group will have three or four members and will lead discussions on these dates:

- **September 13**  
  Gleick (2001), Prologue and chapters 1-4 [first facilitated discussion]
- September 20  
  Gleick (2011), 5-6
- September 27  
  Gleick (2011), 7-10
- October 4  
  Gleick (2011), 11-13
- **October 11**  
  Gleick (2011), 14, 15, and Epilogue [first paper due].

- October 18  
  Frohmann (2004), Introduction and 1-2
- October 25  
  Frohmann (2004), 3-5
  The discussion leaders should read all three chapters; the rest of the class should read chapters 3 and 5 but can skim chapter 4.
- **November 1**  

There are several elements of this assignment:

- Students will notify the instructor by email of who the members of their groups are no later than 12:00 N (12:00 noon) MON, September 3. There will be an extended break in the first class session to allow students to begin to form their self-selected groups.

- The members of each group will indicate in that same message their preferences for three dates for leading the in-class discussion. These dates should be in descending order, i.e., the most preferred date will be first, the second second, and the last third.

- The instructor will assign the dates for presentations on a first come, first served basis, trying to accommodate as many groups’ preferences as possible.

- If any date does not have any group list it as a first preference, the instructor will then rely on second and third preferences. Should there still be no preferences for that particular date, the instructor will determine the assignment by lot.

- Be aware that few students will wish to choose September 13 since it is the first date to lead discussion. Similarly, few may wish to choose October 11 since the first formal written assignment is due that day. Students should talk about those dates explicitly within their groups and the possibilities of their being assigned those dates by lot.

- Each team will prepare four or five questions to help facilitate the classroom discussion and should post them in a message in the appropriate Blackboard forum no later than 12:00 N the Tuesday before class, i.e., September 11, September 18, September 25, October 2, and October 9 for Gleick (2011), and October 16, October 23, and October 30 for Frohmann (2004).
• Each team should work as a group to develop these questions, and the other members of the class should check the forum before class to prepare for the discussion.

• The discussion leaders should prepare a handout with the questions to distribute in class, along with any other materials they determine are useful, e.g., a list of important and/or confusing terms, a glossary for such terms, a short APA-formatted bibliography of related material, names and contributions of important persons and groups discussed in the readings, and the like. These are only illustrative of possibilities – they are not required. If the group prepares materials besides the discussion questions, they should post the material in the same message two days before the class meeting.

• The discussions will take place in the second half of class, i.e., from about 4:30 to 5:30 PM. The instructor will make a few comments lasting 10 minutes or less before turning the class over to each team to lead the discussion for 60 minutes. Each member of the team should assume roughly the same amount of leadership in the class; no one should dominate the conversation.

• Among the things to consider in leading the discussion are the many relations among the parts of the book in question as well as the relations between the book and other material we have read for the course and beyond. See the bullet above with the suggestions for additional material to prepare in a handout.

• Be prepared to run class for an hour. The instructor will use the last few minutes of the class period to make some summary remarks.

Team members should bring about 30 print copies of their handouts to class, one for each member of the class and TWO for the instructor. The copies for the instructor should be double-spaced.

The depth and value of the discussion questions and any additional material will be worth 10% of the semester grade, and facilitating the discussion will be worth 5%. All members of the group will receive the same grade for both elements of the assignment. The most important word of advice to offer is the need to facilitate the discussion, not monopolize it. Get all of the students involved, and be responsive to their questions and comments.
PAPER ON GLEICK (2011) AND NUNBERG (1996 and 2011)
Due Thursday, October 11, 2012 (20%)

All students will write a paper six (6) double-spaced pp. long discussing the relations among three of the readings for the course:

1. The first textbook for the course, James Gleick’s *The Information: A History, A Theory, A Flood* (2011)

The paper must address all three works.

Gleick’s book is long, and Nunberg’s review of it, while much shorter, addresses many of the strengths and weaknesses of the book. Nunberg’s chapter “Farewell to the Information Age” also is relatively long and conceptually dense. Thus, students must be quite selective in choosing which elements of the three works to write about.

Students should feel free to write about the works from any perspective or perspectives that seem fruitful. Here are some questions that may help students get started:

- What do you think are the most important relations among the three works?
- Is Nunberg’s review of Gleick’s book accurate and fair? Why or why not?
- How do you think Gleick would address some of Nunberg’s most trenchant critiques, e.g., concerns about technological determinism, “semantic slippage” about meanings of “information” (Nunberg, 20011, p. 10, column d), meaning, and the lack of sufficient social context for information?
- How does “Farewell to the Information Age” figure in the conversation between Gleick’s book and Nunberg’s review of it?
- Does “Farewell” address important elements of Gleick’s book that the review does not? Why are these elements important?
- How are the three works similar? What are their most important dissimilarities?

These questions are meant to serve only as catalysts for students’ thinking. Students must make their own original and engaging arguments.

Please hand in two copies of your full paper, **printed on both sides of the paper** and adhering to the Standards for Written Work in this syllabus. The instructor will grade and return one and keep the other for his files. Adhere to the page limits, writing a paper that is neither too short nor too long. This assignment is worth 20% of your semester grade.

Late assignments will not be accepted.
BOOK REVIEW

Due Thursday, November 15, 2012 (25%)

Students will write a well-integrated review of five (5) double-spaced pages of one of the books in the list below. The instructor will limit the number of students who can write about any particular book, so students must make their choices by email no later than Thursday, October 4. Students should send an email message to the instructor with at least three choices from the list below, ranked from highest to lowest. APA citations for these books are in Part I of the References. While students are able to suggest alternative monographs for review, the instructor must approve them in advance.

The TA and the instructor will attempt to have copies of all of the books on reserve at PCL, but that may not be possible. Students should recall that multiple students will be reviewing each book.

Generally speaking, the review should be for a specialist in our discipline or a related field with an interest in information as a concept. It should explain and clarify all technical ideas, acronyms, organizations, and so on; this requirement is an important responsibility of writers and information professionals addressing complex topics. Students may want to look at a few models of book reviews, and I expect that the reviews will meet the standards of the best general interest or academic journals. Students should be especially careful to avoid plagiarism.

Borgmann, Holding on to Reality: The Nature of Information at the Turn of the Millennium (1999d)
Heim, Electric Language: A Philosophical Study of Word Processing (1987)
Hobart & Schiffman, Information Ages: Literacy, Numeracy, and the Computer Revolution (1998b)
Lessig, Code (2006, version 2.0)
Mosco, The Political Economy of Communication (2009, 2nd ed.)
Smith & Kollock (Eds.), Communities in Cyberspace (1999)

- Students who review the edited collections (Bishop et al., 2003; Smith & Kollock, 1999), Borgman (2007), Borgmann (1999d), Fidel (2012), Lessig (2006), and Mosco (2009) must read eight (8) chapters or the entire book, whichever is less.
- Students should be sure to review the book that was written, not the book that was not; to be evaluative, but not dismissive.
- The review should identify specific strengths and weaknesses of the book being reviewed and state explicitly why they are strengths and weaknesses.
- Students should always feel free to refer to any other material with which they are familiar, whether read for this course or not. Students should be sure to document and cite this other material fully and formally.
The review should put the book in the context of its importance and connection to perspectives on information and to the course as a whole. It needs to be specific and explicit about these connections. This section is the most important and should be the longest part of the review.

Simple summaries are not sufficient to meet the requirements of this assignment. The review must be analytic, evaluative, and, to the extent appropriate, comparative.
FINAL PAPER

Due Thursday, December 6, 2012 (30%)

Students should choose one of the topics below to address in the final paper for the course. This paper should be eight (8) double-spaced pp. long and should address both questions below, giving each question about half of the paper’s length, no matter which of the topics the student chooses:

1. How does the material the paper discusses give us insight into perspectives on information? (4 pp.)
2. How do these perspectives give us guidance about the design and implementation of information services? (4 pp.)

Please be as specific as possible in answering these questions. The specificity and clarity of the paper’s argument, and its explicit grounding in the sources identified and discussed, will be major criteria in evaluating the paper.

Topic 1


What do you think of these three documents – Gleick’s blog entry, the considerably expanded definition and history of “information” in the OED, and Proffitt’s announcement? How do they engage the two questions above: (1) how do they give us insight into perspectives on information, and (2) how might we use them to think about the design, deployment, and evaluation of information services?

Topic 2

An important topic to our field, to others, and to society as a whole, is what some term “information literacy.” Commentators have generated a large and growing literature about many kinds of literacy, e.g., media literacy, numeracy (being “literate” about numbers, computation, and mathematical reasoning and concepts), computer literacy, and so on. In your opinion, what are the relations among “information literacy,” perspectives on information, and designing and implementing information services?

Topic 3

There are many public policy questions and areas of contention that “information” implicates. While we have looked at some this semester, e.g., information as property, there are many, many others. Please choose one of these public policy areas to answer the two questions above:

- Digital government/e-government
- Privacy and Surveillance
- Open government
- Media regulation
- Information infrastructure.

How do the literatures about the chosen topic help us understand perspectives on information and how to design and implement information services?
Topic 4

Use at least two chapters we have not read from the Annual Review of Information Science & Technology, as well as any of those ARIST chapters we have read and other materials you find pertinent, to address the two questions above: (1) how do the chapters help us understand perspectives on information, and (2) how do the chapters help in the design and implementation of information services?
REFERENCES

I. Readings from the class schedule and assignments

CD means that a document is in the Course Documents section in Blackboard.


Borgmann, Albert. (1999b). The decline of meaning and the rise of information. In *Holding on to reality: The nature of information at the turn of the millennium* (pp. 9-16 and 235-236). Chicago: University of Chicago. CD


Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. (1964). Eye and mind (trans. Carleton Dallery). In James M. Edie (ed.), *The primacy of perception and other essays on phenomenological psychology, the philosophy of art, history, and politics* (pp. 159-190). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University. CD


United States Code. Title 17. Copyright [Chapter 1, Subject Matter and Scope of Copyright]. Available at http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/17


II. Selected ARIST chapters 1966 - 2011


Schumaker, Robert, Solieman, Osama, & Chen, Hsinchun. (2010). Sports knowledge management and


III. Selected additional sources


Copyright Advisory Network. (2012). *Consult the copyright genie*. Available at http://librarycopyright.net/resources/genie/

Deacon, Terrence W. (2010). What is missing from theories of information? In Paul Davies & Niels Henrik Gregersen (Eds.), *Information and the nature of reality: From physics to metaphysics* (pp. 146-169). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University. CD


Marchionini, Gary. (2008). Human-information interaction research and development. *Library & Information Science Research, 30*(3), 165-174. Also available at http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?ob=PublicationURL&_tockey=%23TOC%236577%2322008%2399969996%23698481%23FLA%23&cd=6577&pubType=j&_auth=y&_acct=C000059713&_version=1&urlVersion=0&userid=108429&md5=0e728297f25f6d50f3cb0e9625d9b6


IV. Useful serial sources

Advances in Librarianship

http://www.emeraldinsight.com/products/books/series.htm?id=0065-2830

Annual Review of Information Science and Technology (ARIST)

http://www.asis.org/Publications/ARIST/volumes.php

Journals

Most journals available online are available for only part of their publication run. Further, UT often has more than one subscription to make these journals available online, so there may be more than one URL for each journal.

Administrative Science Quarterly

http://www.johnson.cornell.edu/publications/asq/

American Anthropologist
Information, Communication, and Society

http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/1369118x.asp

Information Processing & Management (IP&M)

http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/03064573

The Information Society

http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/01972243.asp

Information Systems Research (ISR)

http://isr.journal.informs.org/

Information Technology and Libraries

http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=periodicals&template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=78982

Journal of Academic Librarianship (JAL)

http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/620207/description#description

Journal of Communication

http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=0021-9916&site=1

Journal of Documentation (JDoC)

http://www.emeraldinsight.com/Insight/viewContainer.do?containerType=JOURNAL&containerId=1298

Journal of Education for Library and Information Science (JELIS)

http://www.alise.org/mc/page.do?sitePageId=55627


http://www.lib.auburn.edu/madd/docs/jgi/contents.html

Now merged with Government Information Quarterly

Journal of Information Ethics


Journal of Information Science

http://jis.sagepub.com/
Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association (JAMIA)

Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology (JASIST)
http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/117946195/group/home.html

Formerly the Journal of the American Society for Information Science (JASIS)

Knowledge, Technology & Policy (formerly Knowledge in Society)
http://www.springer.com/social+sciences/social+sciences,+general/journal/12130

Library and Information Science
http://www.soc.nii.ac.jp/mslis/journal-e.html

Library & Information Science Research (LISR)
http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/07408188

Library Quarterly (LQ)
http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/toc/lq/current

Library Resources & Technical Services (LRTS)
http://www.ala.org/ala/alcts/pubs/librestechsvc/lrts_home.cfm

Library Trends
http://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/library_trends/

Libri
http://www.librijournal.org/

Minerva: A Review of Science, Learning and Policy
http://www.springerlink.com/content/102961/

MIS Quarterly (MISQ)
http://www.misq.org/

Organization Science
http://orgsci.journal.informs.org/

Restaurator
http://www.degruyter.de/journals/restaur/detailEn.cfm

Science
http://www.jstor.org/journals/00368075.html
http://www.sciencemag.org/current.dtl

Scientific American
http://www.sciam.com/

Scientometrics
http://www.springerlink.com/content/101080/

Science, Technology, & Human Values
http://www.jstor.org/journals/01622439.html

Social Epistemology
http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/02691728.asp

Social Science Information
http://www.sagepub.com/journalsProdDesc.nav?prodId=Journal200955&

Technology Review
http://www.techreview.com/

Telecommunications Policy
http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/30471/description#description

Wired
http://www.wired.com/wired/index.html

Electronic journals

D-Lib Magazine – http://www.dlib.org/

First Monday – http://www.firstmonday.dk/


Journal of Information Technology and Politics – http://www.jitp.net/
Proceedings of important meetings

CoLIS – International Conference on Conceptions of Library and Information Science


ISIC – Conferences on Information Seeking in Context


JCDL – Joint Conferences on Digital Libraries

http://www.jcdl.org/

Proceedings of the American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIST Annual Meeting)

http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/%28ISSN%291550-8390