INF 385T - SPECIAL TOPICS IN INFORMATION SCIENCE: PETS AND EVERYDAY INFORMATION BEHAVIOR

Hayley and Malcolm searching for information about their evening treats.

Summer Session 1, 2013

Class meetings: M, Tu, Th 9am - 12pm and F 9am - 1pm. June 10-28.

Classroom: UTA 1.504

Instructor: William Aspray, office UTA 5.432, email bill@ischool.utexas.edu, office phone 512 471 3877

Teaching Assistant: Melissa Ocepek, office UTA 5.346, email mgocepek@utexas.edu, office phone 512 471 5268

Course description: The principle goal of the course is to learn about the field of information studies known as everyday information behavior. This field studies information use, sharing, seeking, and environment in everyday contexts such as finding a job, selecting a college, gathering information about sports, carrying out a hobby, buying a car, etc. The literature in this field includes behavioral models, empirical field studies, and theoretical accounts of the everyday. We will illustrate the results of the research papers we read by applying them to one particular example - namely pets and the related information issues (how to choose one, where to buy one, how to take care of one, etc.). We will also spend a small amount of time in the class in looking at the theoretical literature about what a pet is. Class involves reading journal articles, discussing them in class, class presentations, some in-class exercises, and an in-class examination.

Grading: Grades will be assigned by giving consideration to all aspects of the student’s performance in the class, including discussion questions written for class each day, thoughtful and respectful participation is class discussion, presentations made to the class, and the in-class examination.
Academy Integrity: I take academic integrity seriously and enforce it in my classes. I follow the University of Texas policies, which can be found at http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php and on webpages that are linked to from this page. If you have any questions about academic integrity, please ask me in advance of any questionable action.

Requirements

- Required Readings – All readings listed in the schedule are expected to be completed before the start of class. They should be read carefully enough that you can participate in a detailed and thoughtful discussion of them. There is no textbook for this course and all assigned readings will be posted on Blackboard or be available as ebooks through the University’s Library Catalog. If you have any trouble accessing class materials, please contact the TA.

- Discussion Questions – For every class meeting other than the first and last class meetings, you are responsible to write two discussion questions – one on each of two of the readings for that day. These questions should be emailed to bill@ischool.utexas.edu no later than 6 am on class day. No late questions will be accepted. The questions are a way of sharpening the class discussion and customizing the course to your interests. The questions should address an issue stimulated by the reading that you are interested in and that is likely to generate productive discussion among your classmates. We will discuss many of the questions in class, but there probably will not be time to discuss them all.

- Active, thoughtful, respectful participation in the class discussion throughout the course.

- Class Presentations – You will get a chance to select one of the pre-determined topics, in almost all cases a paper or chapter. You should make a presentation that clearly presents the material to the other members of the class. In some cases, it may be appropriate for you to offer criticism of the work you are presenting (after you have made a fair presentation of it) or provide some context for the material, such as biographical information about the author or the context under which the paper was originally written. This might require a small amount of research. Your talk should be between 10 and 20 minutes in duration and should be effectively presented (with slides if appropriate).

- Model Discussion – You will get a chance to choose one of the pre-determined information models (or sometimes they are information theories). It is your task to explain the model and motivate it. This might require your figuring out an example of its application. However, if you are giving an application in your presentation, select a topics that is not about pets since the class will be given an exercise to try to apply the model to pets. In most cases your presentation of the information model should not require more than 10 minutes. You will be provided with a summary of the model in
a brief chapter (typically 3 pp.) from Karen E. Fisher, Sandra Erdelez, and Lynne McKechnie, eds. Theories of Information Behavior (Information Today, 2005). In some cases, this will be sufficient information for preparing your presentation; in other cases you may need to go back and read one or more original papers or other background material. You should prepare a one-page summary of the model and bring enough copies to class to hand out to every student in the class. You will be the “local expert” for the rest of the semester on this particular theory – the person we will go to when questions arise about this topic.

- Final examination – There will be a closed book, closed computer, two-hour final examination during the second half of the last class day. You may prepare a single piece of paper, written on both sides, with any notes that you might want to consult during the exam. The exam may cover any of the assigned readings, class presentations, model discussions, or material covered by the instructor or the teaching assistant in class.

Jake seeks more information about this new environment he finds himself in.

Schedule
Monday, June 10

Introduction – no required reading, no class presentations, no model presentations

Discussion of the purpose and organization of the course; student exercise on everyday information behavior related to pets; selection of class presentations; presentation on the history of information behavior as an academic discipline and four approaches to everyday information behavior (theorizing the everyday, empirical studies in laboratory and natural settings, model building, historical approach)
Tuesday, June 11

Theorizing Pets; Information Behavior as an Academic Discipline

Required reading:

  - Responses:
    - Marion W. Copeland, “The Defining Difference”
    - Lynette A. Hart, “Pets Along a Continuum”
    - Elizabeth A. Lawrence, “Some Observations”
    - Bernard E. Rollin and Linda Rollin, “Response”
    - Clinton R. Sanders, “Whose Pet?”
  - Response to Responses:
    - Timothy J. Eddy, “The Challenge”
- “Information Behavior: an Introduction” (pp. 3-10); “Information Needs and Information Seeking” (pp. 77-93); and “Related Concepts” (pp. 95-130) – all in Donald O. Case, Looking for Information (3rd ed., Emerald, 2012)

Class presentations:

- The Historical Approach to Everyday Information Behavior [William Aspray]

Thursday, June 13

Everyday Information Behavior as an Academic Discipline, History of Pets in America; Anthrozoology

Required Reading:

- “Practice and Information Practice” (pp. 15-36) and “Conceptualizing Everyday Information Practices” (pp. 37-76) – both in Reijo Savolainen, Everyday Information Practices (Scarecrow, 2008)

Class Presentations:

- “Of Pigs and Pets” pp. 3-16 and “Substitutes for People” pp. 19-33 in James Serpell, In the Company of Animals (Basil Blackwell 1986) [  ]
**Friday, June 14**

History of Pets in America; Anthrozoology; Animal Selves

Required Reading:


Class Presentations:

- “A Cuckoo in the Nest” pp. 59-70 and “Pets as Panacea” pp. 73-86 in James Serpell, *In the Company of Animals* (Basil Blackwell 1986) [  ]

**Monday, June 17**

Theorizing the Everyday; History of Pets in America; Anthrozoology; Gatekeeping

Required Reading:

- Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City” (pp. 91-110) in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (University of California Press, reprint 2011) [Ebook available through University Library]

Class Presentation:


Model Discussion:

- Ellis’s model of information-seeking behavior [  ]
- Kulthau’s information search process [  ]
Tuesday, June 18

History of Pets in America; General Everyday Information Behavior at Home

Required Reading:


Class Presentations:


Model Discussion:

- Berrypicking
- Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS)
- Ecological theory of human information behavior

Thursday, June 20

History of Pets in America; Information Behavior in the Age of the Internet

Required Readings:

• Maria Bakardjieva, “Networking Knowledge and Skills: The Warm Expert” section, (98-103) in Internet Society: The Internet in Everyday Life. [Ebook available through University Library]

Class Presentations:


Model Discussions:

• Dervin’s Sense-Making [ ]
• Nonlinear information seeking [ ]
• Principle of least effort (Zipf’s Law) [ ]

Friday, June 21

Theorizing About Pets, Health Information Seeking

Required Readings:


Class presentations:


Model Discussions:

• Elicitation as micro-level information seeking [ ]
• Communities of practice [ ]
• Strength of weak ties [ ]
Monday, June 24

The Impact of Pets on Health and Aging; Health Information Seeking

Required Readings:


Class Presentations:


Model Discussions:

- Chatman’s information poverty
- Chatman’s Life in the Round
- Information grounds

Tuesday, June 25

Virtual Pets; Information Behavior Related to Hobbies

Required Readings:


Class Presentations:


Model Discussions:

• Serious leisure

• Women’s Way of Knowing

• Information encountering

Thursday, June 27

Human-Animal Boundaries; Information Behavior Related to Travel, Grocery Shopping, Education, and Philanthropy


• Rachel D. Little et al. Airline Travel: A History of Information-Seeking By Leisure and Business Travelers,” (pp. 121-156) in William Aspray and Barbara M. Hayes, eds. Everyday Information (MIT Press, 2011)


Class Presentations:

• Donna Haraway, The Companion Species Manifestor: Dogs, People and Significant Otherness (Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003) [Melissa Ocepek]

• “The Question of Human-Animal Continuity” pp. 80-125 in Barbara Noske, Beyond Boundaries: Humans and Animals (Black Rose Books, 1997)

Model Discussions:
- Information horizons
- Monitoring and blunting
- Rounding and dissonant grounds

Friday, June 28

In-class EXAM; Critical Pet Studies

Class Presentations:

Peewee and Zanie sharing with Melissa that it is naptime and growing kittens need to sleep 16-20 hours a day.

Bibliography on Critiquing Everyday Life


Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life (California, reprint 2011).


8 May 2013