This is the syllabus for both sections of this course. Both sections meet in UTA 1.208. One section meets on Mondays, noon – 3:00 pm, the other section on Tuesdays, 3:00 – 6:00 pm. For the most part, the two sections will run in parallel throughout the semester.

**Formal Course Description:** A multi-disciplinary and historical examination of information as a primary and foundational concept. Contrasts key literature from information studies with perspectives from other fields.

**Implementation This Semester:** The course will have three interleaved lines of inquiry:

- The basic concepts of information as they are understood in information studies today – this will be accomplished through the reading and discussion of Floridi’s book
- The historical development of information concepts and use – this will be accomplished through the reading of the eight other assigned books
- The use of the information concept in various modern-day practices and in various sub-disciplines of information studies – this will be accomplished through student presentations

**Grading:**

Grades will be assigned by giving consideration holistically to all aspects of the student’s performance in the class, including discussion questions written for class each day, thoughtful and respectful participation in class discussion, the presentation made to the class, and the two in-class examinations.

**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](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.
Examinations:

Exam 1 will cover all assigned reading plus everything that has gone on in class through the week of March 3. The exam will be closed book, closed note (except for one piece of paper that you can make notes on both front and back). Answers will be handwritten and must fit in the allotted space on the handout exam sheets. The exam will be designed in a way that time to answer questions should not be a factor. Students who have problems writing by hand should contact the instructor in advance for accommodation.

Examination 2 will have emphasis on the material covered after Spring Break, but questions may address material from any week of the course. The exam will be closed book, closed note (except for the single sheet of notes for Exam 1 and one additional sheet of paper upon which you can make notes on both the front and back sides). Answers will be handwritten and must fit in the allotted space on the handout exam sheets. The exam will be designed in a way that time to answer questions should not be a factor. Students who have problems writing by hand should contact the instructor in advance for accommodation.

Discussion Questions: For every class meeting for which there is assigned reading, each student is responsible for writing two discussion questions about 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. Regular use of your questions by the instructor in class discussions can be taken as positive feedback that you are asking good questions.

Class Presentations: Students will make a presentation entitled “[topic]: Where’s the Information?” (e.g., “Information Retrieval: Where’s the Information?”). There are 12 presentations, so the number of students in each presenting group will depend on the enrollment in the course. The presentation will typically last 30 to 40 minutes and will be followed by a few minutes of question and answer discussion. The purpose of the presentation is to inform the class about the nature of the information and information-related concepts and questions that appear in the practical domain (e.g. brick-and-mortar libraries) or academic sub-discipline of information studies (e.g. information retrieval) that has been assigned. This is intended to be a substantial assignment. Students are expected to seek out appropriate literature or experts to inform themselves, come to a familiarity with the overall topic, tease out the nature of information as related to this topic, present the material in an effective way to the class, and answer questions from the instructor and classmates on this topic. Presentation assignments will be selected the first week of class.
Schedule:

**Week of January 13** Overview

The first part of class will be devoted to an overview of how the class will run. The second part of class will involve analysis of basic concepts such as the information life cycle and a comparison of the different emphases of the different schools of information. We will also select student presentation assignments.

Readings: none

**Week of January 20** Information Potpourri

This is the only week in which the two sections diverge. Monday, January 20 is a university holiday, so there is no class for the Monday section. The Tuesday section will meet as scheduled on January 21. Anyone from the Monday section is welcome this week to attend the Tuesday section.

Readings: none

**Week of January 27** Information in the Early Modern Era/The Information Revolution


**Week of February 3** Information in the Early Modern Era/The Language of Information


**Week of February 10** Organizing, Transforming, and Displaying Information 1700-1850/Mathematical Information


**Week of February 17** Storing and Communicating Information 1700-1850/Semantic Information

(pp. 142 – 220); Alfred D. Chandler, Jr. and James W. Cortada, eds. A Nation Transformed by Information (Oxford 2000), Chapter 1 (pp. 3-38).

Week of February 24 Information in America During the Colonial and Industrial Eras/Physical Information


Week of March 3 Information in America in the Information Age/Biological Information


In-class 90-minute examination

Week of March 10 Spring Break - no class meetings and no reading assignments for this week.

Week of March 17 The Rise of System in American Management/Economic Information


Student Presentation 1: Information Retrieval

Student Presentation 2: Archival Studies

Week of March 24 The Information Society (Bell, Regulation Theory, Castells)/Ethics of Information


Student Presentation 3: Information Architecture

Student Presentation 4: Information Management

Week of March 31 The Information Society (Schiller, Habermas, Giddens, and Postmodernity)
Reading: Frank Webster, *Theories of the Information Society* (3rd ed. Routledge 2006), Ch. 6-10 (pp. 124-273)

Student Presentation 5: Physical Libraries

Student Presentation 6: Digital Libraries

**Week of April 7** Global Spread and Management of Information

Reading: James Cortada, *How Societies Embrace Information Technology* (Wiley 2009), Ch. 1-5 (pp. 1-190)

Student Presentation 7: Knowledge Representation and Reasoning (including Semantic Network)

Student Presentation 8: Knowledge Management and Competitive Intelligence

**Week of April 14** Geoscience Information Before the World Wide Web

Reading: Paul Edwards, *A Vast Machine* (MIT 2010), Introduction and Chapters 1-8 (pp. xiii-228)

Student Presentation 9: Information Behavior (Information Seeking, Everyday Information Behavior, Information Avoidance, etc.)

Student Presentation 10: Computer-Supported Cooperative Work and Other Kinds of Information Work

**Week of April 21** Geoscience Information Since the World Wide Web

Reading: Paul Edwards, *A Vast Machine* (MIT 2010), Ch. 9-15 (pp. 229-430)

Student Presentation 11: Privacy and Security

Student Presentation 12: Health Informatics

**Week of April 28** Knowledge in the Internet Age

Reading: David Weinberger, *Too Big to Know* (Basic Books, 2012), entire book (pp. vii-196)

In-class 90-minute examination