Introduction to Information Studies
Syllabus - *ENTER COURSE CODE NUMBER – HOURS – NUMBER OF Credit* - January 2009
Insert Day Class Meets M/W or T/Th - *Insert Time Class Starts* - Two Hours Fifty Five Minutes

Instructor Name:
Department: The Lloyd Sealy Library
Phone:
Email:
Website:
Office Hours: Available by Appointment as well as before and after classes

Description

The course is an introduction to issues and skills in research and information with a specific focus on how information is produced, organized, and disseminated. Students will be introduced to several issues that effect information and knowledge production including cultural, political, and economic perspectives. The core aim of this course will be for students to develop strong Information Literacy skills that include being able to locate, retrieve, assess, and comment on information in terms of its relevance, validity, and reliability. The course will make use of a variety of resources including but not limited to subscription databases, Internet search engines, web 2.0 technologies, mass media resources and other forms of scholarly communication.

Objectives

Students will exit this course having successfully mastered specific abilities and understandings involving information.

They will be able to:

- Examine information critically and determine its authenticity, credibility, content, bias, etc.
- Determine the proper tool needed to locate desired information
- Use print, electronic, and Internet indexes in various academic disciplines to obtain information.
- Use and understand reference tools and classification systems

They will understand how:

- Knowledge is produced and organized in society
- Information and knowledge are affected by cultural, political and economic factors
- Understand issues related to copyright, intellectual freedom, and the public vs. private ownership of information

Requirements

The following section lists course policy on readings and grading including specific elements used to determine a grade for students. The contents of this syllabus may be amended by the Instructor at any time, including supplemental readings, etc. - anything the instructor believes is necessary to fulfill the objectives of this course.

    Pre-requisites: This class requires no pre-requisites.

    Grade Criteria: Grades for Introduction to Information Studies will be evaluated based on the following:

Attendance	25%
In-Class Participation and Exercises	30%
Required Readings	15%
Final Exam	30%

    Attendance: Given that this class is offered during the intersession and is extremely intensive, attendance makes up a large part of the grade. Attendance at all classes is mandatory. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. Attendance makes up 25% of your grade.

    Lateness: Being late to class is not allowed. Excessive lateness will result in a lowering of your overall grade.

    In-Class Participation and Exercises: This is a class designed to aid students in developing not just a practical method of accessing and using information for their own academic benefit but also in understanding the basic philosophy behind the creation, use and preservation of information in general. As such, this course requires that students consistently participate in all class discussions. Furthermore, besides discussions, each class will contain a specific exercise to be completed before the end of the class period. These exercises will relate to issues and ideas that have been discussed during the class period as well as in previous class periods. Full participation is required; spending that time checking e-mail or surfing non-related websites is not allowed. In-Class Participation and Exercises make up 30% of your grade.

    Required Readings: In order to fully participate in the class discussions, students are required to complete all assigned readings. There will be readings given for every single class period.

    Final Exam Project: The final exam is worth 30% of your final grade. The final exam is a take-home project which consists of two parts – a short 1-3 page paper and a one page handout. The goal of this project will be for the student to demonstrate a strong grasp of the objectives and resources covered overall in the class. Here are the details concerning the specific parts of this assignment:

- A 1-3 page paper that will focus on the following: why you picked your topic, why it interests you, how you set about doing the research (i.e. what information literacy and research methods you used to complete the project, including web, book and database resources) and the final results of your research (i.e. what was available, what were you able to put together, and what you learned from doing this project).

- Creation of a handout that would aid anyone doing research in that subject (i.e. if your subject was "how to cite and download materials from Calisphere and the online archives of California" then your handout would be a listing of various

resources and suggestions on how to do this research.) The Instructor will bring in a sample for the class.
- Topic must be submitted to the Instructor for approval

Textbooks: There are two required texts for this course as well as a variety of readings that will be made available from a variety of sources including e-Reserve. The texts are:

Badke, W.B. (2008). Research Strategies: Finding your Way through the Information Fog. iUniverse, Inc. 3rd Edition (Available on Amazon.com; 2nd edition available abridged and online at http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/preface.htm)

Stebbins, L. F. (2005). Student guide to Research in the Digital Age: How to locate and evaluate information sources. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited (Available on Amazon.com but expensive.)

Required readings and the specific class they will be used for are listed in the Schedule section of this syllabus. These are the readings that students will be commenting on in class discussions and on their blogs. If no reading is listed for a specific class then the students should complete whatever assignment is announced in class by the instructor or should alternately comment on the material that was covered in class.

Required Readings: This is a listing of all required readings and other sources for the semester. This list may be amended by the Instructor during the course of the term depending on need. If any changes are made, they will be announced in class.

Articles:
Williams, Martha E. "Databases, Electronic" (available on e-Reserve)
Censorship by Google (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Censorship_by_Google)
Google Defends Censorship of Web Sites http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/Business/story?id=1540568
The Invisible Web http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/InvisibleWeb.html
Fool's Gold (TimesOnline September 10 2004)
Wikipedia Entry: Science by Press Conference
My Rules of Information by Marylaine Block *http://www.infotoday.com/searcher/jan02/block.htm*
Think Like a Web Page: Five Tips for Smarter Search Engine Searching by Rita Vine http://www.workingfaster.com/think_like_a_web_page.htm

Audio/Video:
http://mediatedcultures.net/mediatedculture.htm - The Machine is US/ing Us and Information R/evolution
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SyUvNnmFtgI Swiss Spaghetti Harvest

Book Chapters:
Stebbins, L. F. (2005). Student guide to Research in the Digital Age: How to locate and evaluate information sources. Chapter 07
Stebbins, L. F. (2005). Student guide to Research in the Digital Age: How to locate and evaluate information sources. Chapter 08

Badke, W.B. (2008). Research Strategies: Finding your Way through the Information Fog. Chapter 10 (Abridged version available at: http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/chapter10.htm)

Statement of the College Policy on Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's ideas, words, or artistic, scientific or technical work as one's own creation. Using the ideas of work of another is permissible only when the original author is identified. Paraphrasing and summarizing, as well as direct quotations require citations to the original source.

Plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional. Lack of dishonest intent does not necessarily absolve a student of responsibility for plagiarism.

It is the student's responsibility to recognize the difference between statements that are common knowledge (which do not require documentation) and restatements of the ideas of others. Paraphrase, summary, and direct quotation are acceptable forms of restatement, as long as the source is cited.

Students who are unsure how and when to provide documentation are advised to consult with their instructors. The Library has free guides designed to help students with problems of documentation.

(From the John Jay College of Criminal Justice Undergraduate Bulletin, p. 36)

Course Topics
Day 01: The Philosophy of Information and Technology
- Overview and Introduction
- Defining Data Information and Knowledge
- The role of Libraries and Technology
- Politics of Preservation
- Blogs, Wikis and Web 2.0 (Blogger, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter)

Day 02: Thinking about the World Wide Web and Research Resources
- The Internet and Boolean Search, Search Engines, Invisible Web, Google, Wikipedia
- CUNY+ and Databases

Day 03:   Quality of Information
- Special and Government Resources
- Sources and Critical Evaluation

Day 04:   The Research Process
- Citing Sources
- Intellectual Property and Copyright Laws
- Plagiarism and Academic Integrity
- Research Strategies
- Building Research Questions

Class Schedule:

January __
Topic: The Philosophy of Information and Technology
Assignment:
1. Pick Final Exam topic to work on.
2. Watch all four videos at http://mediatedcultures.net/mediatedculture.htm, particularly The Machine is US/ing Us and Information R/evolution. Type not more than one page commenting on the videos and about your impressions of the class material.
   (Questions to Keep in Mind While Reading: What do you think of the videos? How has technology changed your life? Does it help you learn? Does it help you expand your horizons? Are you better or worse off for having it?)

January __
Topic: Thinking about the World Wide Web and Research Resources
Assignment:
1. Read Censorship by Google (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Censorship_by_Google), Google Defends Censorship of Web Sites (http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/Business/story?id=1540568) and The Invisible Web (http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/InvisibleWeb.html) and "Databases, Electronic" by Martha E. Williams. Type at least one page commenting on the articles and about your impressions of the class material.
   (Questions to Keep in Mind While Reading: How secure and accurate do you think information is after reading these articles? Is Google really all there is to available information? Are you more or less skeptical about how you find information after reading these articles? Have you ever used a database before taking this class? How does your experience with databases compare to using Google? Which do you honestly prefer using: Google or CUNY+ and various databases?)
2. Deadline to submit Presentation topic to Instructor for approval.

January __
Topic: Quality of Information
Assignment:
1. Read Student guide to Research in the Digital Age by L.F. Stebbins Chapter 07 (available on e-Reserve). Watch Swiss Spaghetti Harvest (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SyUvNnmFtgI), also read Fool's Gold (TimesOnline September 10 2004), and Wikipedia Entry: Science by Press Conference. Type at least one page commenting on the articles and about your impressions of the class material.
   (Questions to Keep in Mind While Reading: How useful do you consider Government sources to be? Do you think that Government resources are trustworthy? How easy do you trust the information that is front of you? Do you believe everything you see on television and read on the Internet? Why or why not? How can you trust information? What steps do you take when you approach information to figure out if it is believable or not?)

January __
Topic: The Research Process
Assignment:

1. Read Student guide to Research in the Digital Age by L.F. Stebbins Chapter 08 (Available on e-Reserve). Read Research Strategies Chapter 10 by William Badke (http://www.acts.twu.ca/lbr/chapter10.htm) My Rules of Information by Marylaine Block (*http://www.infotoday.com/searcher/jan02/block.htm*) and *Think Like a Web Page: Five Tips for Smarter Search Engine Searching by Rita Vine (http://www.workingfaster.com/think_like_a_web_page.htm)* Type at least one page commenting on the articles and about your impressions of the class material. This should be submitted together with your Final Exam project
(Questions to Keep in Mind While Reading: Do you think that someone can own an idea? When writing a paper, are you careful to keep track of all your sources? Are the temporary gains of plagiarism worth the penalty if you get caught? Questions to Keep in Mind While Reading: When writing a research topic, how do you begin to look for information? Do you outline the topic and what you want to write about or do you just start looking for general information on the Internet? How important is Thesis/Anti-Thesis/Synthesis concept which we discussed in class in your research writing? Check out http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thesis,_antithesis,_synthesis if you really want to be confused about the entire topic. ☺)

January __
Topic: Final Exam
Assignment:

1. Final Exam Project Due. No Late Projects will be accepted under any but the most extreme of circumstances.

Notes and Comments on Classes for Instruction Staff

The following is a brief look at what each class mentioned on the syllabus should touch. Lessons 1 covers the cultural, political, and economic outlook of information. Lesson 1-4 cover how information is produced, organized, and circulated as well as basic information literacy skills including being able to locate material and comment on information in terms of relevance, strength, and dependability. Lessons 1-4 all use a variety of resources including but not limited to subscription databases, internet search engines, web 2.0 technologies, mass media resources and other forms of scholarly communication.

Class 01:
The Philosophy of Information and Technology
- This class will focus on the following:
  - A review of the syllabus
  - Presenting an introduction to the philosophy of information
  - A look at how the philosophy of information has been affected by technology as well as a practical look at the various technologies that currently dominate the flow of personal information today. (Basically an overview of Web 2.0)
- Philosophy of Information concepts to touch upon:
  - Go over every point of the syllabus; outline class requirements, intended method of instruction and expectations for the students
  - What is a philosophy of information? Why is it necessary to understand it? Why study information as opposed to a specific subject; what is the use of bothering with it?
  - What skills would a person who is literate in dealing with information have? What is the role of libraries and of technology in the development of those skills?
  - Where does information originate? How does information originate? (Focus on concepts such as government and news sources, social networking, scholarly communication, etc.) Does the origin of researched information have any bearing on the use of that information? (Focus on guiding students to understand the importance of the source of information in guiding their selection of relevant and appropriate sources.)
  - What is Information? What is Knowledge? Why is it necessary to know the difference?
  - Why is it necessary to preserve knowledge? What use does this have in information literacy? What are the politics behind the preservation of information and knowledge?
  - What makes a person Information Literate? Is it skills or a state of mind? Or both?
- Information and Technology concepts to touch upon:
  - Restate the philosophy of information established in the first class; emphasize how the rise of new technologies have reshaped (or created entirely new ways of) how we relate to information

- o Give an overview of the rise and uses of Web 2.0 technologies. Look briefly at Blogs (i.e. examples of Blogs, uses of Blogs, relevance of Blogs, and how to judge and examine information found on Blogs), Wikis (Overview of what a Wiki is and what it is useful for) and social applications (Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter)
- o What is the difference between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0?
- o What does the rise of this user created information mean to a student pursuing research? How can technology help or hurt your chances of becoming information literate?
- o Once all the other materials are presented, move the focus of the class onto Wikipedia. (This topic might stretch into the next class; not a problem as a discussion of Wikipedia is relevant to that class topic as well.) Compare the user-generated information against that of a print or mainstream electronic encyclopedia.
  - ▪ Questions to ask: Why are many professors against students using Wikipedia? How trustworthy is Wikipedia? What do you use it for and are you thinking of using it for one of your classes? Where does the information of Wikipedia originate?

Class 02:
Thinking about the World Wide Web and Research Resources
- • This class will focus on the following:
  - o Continuing the discussion of Wikipedia from the last class and moving that discussion into looking at the Internet in general as a resource
  - o Presenting CUNY+ and various specific databases to the class as an efficient and reliable method of conducting research.
  - o This class should help to introduce students to a specific and skeptical mindset when approaching information found on the web.
- • World Wide Web Concepts to touched upon:
  - o What are search engines? How should you approach them when looking for information? Where does information in a search engine originate? How trustworthy can this information be? How should you judge information you come across on the web?
  - o Google and Wikipedia - Useful or Useless? Why? And how should a student who is trying to find useful information approach them? Also mention the connection between Google and Wikipedia – Is it a good thing that the first search on Google tends to be a Wikipedia entry?
  - o How free is information? Does it matter how we get it?
  - o Boolean Searching – Does And/Or really matter in your research? (Refer to Boolify.org)
  - o What is the Invisible Web? Is it a myth? What use is it to me as a student? How will it help me in becoming information literate?
- • Catalog and Database concepts to touch upon:
  - o A basic look at the CUNY+ catalog and the resources available through it. (Students should spend some time in class conducting specific searches for

material on their own in order to familiarize themselves with CUNY+ and the overall Library collection.)

- o An overview of highly used, useful and reliable databases available at the Lloyd Sealy Library including specific methods of conducting useful searches. (Databases to touch upon should be, depending on the amount of time available: Academic Search Premier, Lexis-Nexis, and Criminal Justice Periodicals Index. Mention should be made of the John Jay version of Google Scholar.)

Class 03:
Research Resources II –Special and Government Collections/Sources and Critical Evaluation
- This class will focus on the following:
  - o Special collections and government resources; the role of academics and government resources affect how information is maintained and made available.
  - o Critical evaluation of information and sources they find in the library collection, in databases and on the Internet.
- Special and Government Collection concepts to touch upon:
  - o Government based resources and databases. How trustworthy are these sources? How useful are these resources? Where does this information originate? Why is it being preserved? What use is it to me as a student?
  - o A look at a variety of Special Collections and how they are developing with the rise of technology. Why are these collections being maintained? Where does this information originate? How trustworthy is it? Where can I find it?
  - o This class should mention the shifts in technology – from paper to microfilm to web -based databases
- Source and Critical Evaluation concepts to touch upon:
  - o How do you evaluate researched information critically?
  - o Is the material I've located useful? Is the material relevant to what I am writing about? Does it sound accurate? How can I use it? Can I use both?
  - o How is the information I've found organized? Where did I locate it?
  - o What is popular material? What is scholarly material? Is one better than the other?

Class 04:
Quality of Information II – Sources, Property, Copyright and Integrity/ Research Strategies/Building Research Questions
- This class will focus on the following:
  - o Plagiarism and academic integrity included a discussion of intellectual property, copyright laws, and citing sources. (Basically this class is an overview of how and why students should avoid any charges of plagiarism.)
  - o How to define and refine a topic as well as how to continue to search for relevant information as your topic and paper shift during the writing process.
- Copyright and Integrity concepts to touch upon:
  - o This class should cover how sources should be cited in a paper including mentions of APA and MLA style, bibliographies, and footnotes/endnotes.

- o What is Copyright? How can an idea be property? If everything is copyrighted then how can I Xerox material out of a textbook? What is "Fair use"? Why isn't Xeroxing ten pages out of a textbook and putting quotes at the beginning of the first page and all the way at the last page not an acceptable use of quoting material?
- o What is plagiarism? Why should I avoid it? You mean I can't Cut and Paste stuff off Google and hand it in to my professor?! Why is Academic Integrity necessary to being not just information literate but also to do proper research?
- Research Strategies and Building Research Questions concepts to touch upon:
  - o How to approach writing papers and doing research in an information literate manner.
  - o Overview of Thesis/Anti-thesis/Synthesis
  - o How do I start a research paper? What are the proper steps in creating the proper mindset to conduct research and writing in a literate manner?

Final Exam Presentation
- Class submits Final Exam project and assignment from Class 04.
- No late assignments accepted.
- No make-ups except under the most dire of circumstances.