Introduction to Information Organization
SLIS 5200

Syllabus Fall 2010

Contents

Note: This syllabus and all other course materials also apply to SLIS 4200.

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Course Description

Graduate catalog

Principles, concepts, and practices of information organization and presentation. Concepts and problems of human information behavior, classification, and categorization related to information organization. Database technology, structure, and design. Standards for information organization, data representation, and information exchange. Systems for organizing information and facilitating access in various information use environments.

Goals and objectives

This course is designed to serve as a foundation for subsequent coursework and professional practice. The course **goals** are to:

- Introduce concepts and problems of information organization and its relationship to information retrieval in the context of human information behavior and information technologies
- Introduce conceptual tools and information technologies for the multiple processes involved in organizing information
- Develop problem-solving, analytical reasoning, technical writing, and other professional skills

The **objectives** are for students to develop and apply understandings of:

- Basic concepts of information and its representations, information user and use environments, information systems, information organization, and information retrieval/access
- Major theories and models underlying concepts of information need, information representation and categorization, and information seeking and searching behaviors
- Types of knowledge structures and representations, and techniques and standards for representing information objects and intellectual content
- Types of databases and information retrieval mechanisms designed for certain information use environments
- Types and techniques of bibliographic control and standards
- Types and techniques of vocabulary control
- Approaches to design and evaluation of information systems as related to information organization
- Developments in electronic information systems and networks and their implications for information organization
- The role of research in understanding and evaluating information organization, human information behavior, and information system design
- Analytical thinking and practical problem-solving skills for effective organization and retrieval of information
- Professional technical skills (information organization, software use), communication skills (interpersonal, online, technical writing), and research skills (literature searching and synthesis)

Technology Requirements

Internet access and Blackboard

Reliable Internet access is required. Blackboard is the course management software used at UNT, and Blackboard recommends that you use either of the following browsers (note that some versions of each browser are not supported):

- Internet Explorer 5.0 to 6.0, except 5.5 Service Pack 1 (PC)
- Internet Explorer 5.0 and 5.1 (Mac OS 9.x)
- Internet Explorer 5.1 (Mac OS 10.1)
- Internet Explorer 6.0
- Internet Explorer 6.0 Service Pack 1
- Netscape 4.76, 6.2.1, 6.2.2, and 6.2.3 (PC & Mac)
- AOL 7.0 (PC & Mac)

Instructions for logging into Blackboard are provided in class.

Hardware and software

It may be necessary to upgrade your computer system. This course requires the use of PC based software (InMagic). MAC users will need be able to run Windows based software or acquire emulation capability prior to start of semester.

For running Inmagic, you must use a computer with the Windows operating system (Win95/98/Me, Windows NT/2000, or Windows XP). The educational version of Inmagic is free; the software and instructions are provided in class. MAC users are responsible for their own accommodations, but the software runs on any number of PC emulators.

In order to access some course files in pdf format, you must have the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader. You can download this free from http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html

For help with technology problems, contact The UNT Computing and Information Technology Center (CITC) Help Desk (http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.htm or 940-565-2324).

Technology competencies

Familiarity with Internet, Windows, Microsoft Office products and general PC use is essential for success in this class. . **SLIS 5200 personnel do not provide training in SLIS entry-level technology skills.** (We do provide help guides and personal assistance for course-related software.)

SLIS 4200/5200 requires basic competency in word processing, email, and database management programs. If you lack skills in these areas, expect to devote extra time to learning them at your own expense and initiative.

We assume you have taken or are taking SLIS 5000/4000 and have been oriented to Blackboard. We provide a brief orientation to Blackboard at the beginning of the semester,

Course Requirements

Readings

The required textbook is:

Taylor, A. G. (2008). *The organization of information* (3rd ed.). Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

Additional required readings from various professional and scholarly sources are explained in class. The full reading list is available under Readings & Assignments in Blackboard.

Style manual

In written reports, you are required to cite sources according to format rules in the APA style manual:

American Psychological Association. (2008). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Guidelines for using a style manual and additional advice for citing electronic sources are provided in:

Schamber, L. (2005). *Tips for coursework*. [personal publication; latest revision].

This document includes general advice for improving class papers, team projects, and oral presentations. It is available free with the course (see FAQ & Helps in Blackboard).

Assignments

Information Organization Project (IOP): The semester project requires understanding and applying major concepts of information organization covered in the course. You will choose or be assigned a collection of information objects, develop a system for organizing the collection, and implement the system using Inmagic database software. You will submit the project report in a series of drafts throughout the semester. You will also exchange report drafts with other students for peer review before grading. You must complete the IOP assignment in order to receive a final grade for the class.

Concept Briefing: This is a short research report that provides an opportunity to explore a concept related to information organization. You will be assigned a specific concept and deadline. Your report will define the concept, explain purposes and implications, and provide examples. We will post part of your report to the class to help inform others.

Online participation: Students are required to use Blackboard to submit and exchange assignments electronically and contribute to online discussions. They are also expected to visit the course Blackboard site daily to read and respond to communications and course material. Specific assignments included in the online participation grade are:

- Blackboard startup assignments
    - Howdy message posting
    - Email with Word file attached
    - Student Profile Survey

- IOP-related assignments
    - Draft 1 electronic submission (for instructor approval of topic)
    - IOP description posting (describe IOP topic to entire class)
    - IOP peer review (student exchange of IOP drafts)

- Online chat with the instructor (participation in one scheduled chat required)

All online assignments are intended for student benefit. Weekly chats with the instructor and one chat with the Concept Briefing Facilitator are scheduled during the semester. The online chats with the instructor and the peer review process are particularly good for helping with the IOP. In the **peer review**, you exchange IOP drafts with other students and serve as a peer reviewer of other students' drafts prior to grading. This is an essential step toward helping improve the quality of your project. Although participation in only one scheduled chat with the instructor is required, you are encouraged to participate in as many chats as possible and/or to read the chat logs posted after each session.

Detailed assignments are available in Blackboard under Readings & Assignments and help documents under FAQ and Helps.

Assignment competencies

SLIS 5200 assignments require the following intellectual and communication competencies. If you lack skills in these areas, you may have a difficult time completing course assignments successfully.

- Applying analytical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Writing professional-quality documents including concise descriptions and technical instructions
- Searching the literature using library catalogs and indexes as well as Web search engines
- Using bibliographic reference style based on a standard style manual
- Following specific assignment instructions
- Meeting assignment deadlines
- Communicating online in clear and succinct language

Effort expected

This is a challenging 4-credit-hour course. You can expect to work 3 to 4 hours per week for each credit hour. This means you may spend about 12 to 16 hours a week on readings, assignments, and communications (in addition to class meetings). Beyond comprehending the subject matter, you are expected to develop or refine various professional skills, including the technology and assignment competencies listed above. In order to succeed, you are advised to:

1. Ensure that your technology competencies meet the SLIS entry-level standards at the outset.
2. **Keep up** with the course. Set a personal schedule to maintain a consistent level of effort throughout the semester.
3. Participate. Attend class sessions and online chats. **Check Blackboard daily** for communications and new course material.
4. Follow instructions and **meet deadlines** for assignments (see grading criteria below).
5. Use the many sources of help available, including readings, lecture slides, online modules, study aids (resources lists, software helps, *Tips for Coursework*, tutorials, examples), and of course instructors and assistants, and other students.

The SLIS 5200/4200 instructors and staff want you to succeed and are available to help. If you are having problems or falling behind, **contact your instructor** as soon as possible.

Grades and Grading

Grading system

Grades indicate the degree to which a student completes assignments according to stated requirements. Grades are determined on a 100-point scale in 10 point increments (90-100 = A, 80-89 = B, etc.). An **A** signifies **superior work well beyond basic requirements and instructions** of the course, **B** signifies adequate work that meets most requirements but does not go significantly beyond written assignment instructions, and **C** or lower signifies inadequate work that does not meet the requirements. This is a core course in the master's program: master's students who do not earn a B- or higher grade must retake the course. Students enrolled in SLIS 4200 who are pursuing bachelor's degrees are graded somewhat more leniently than graduate students (those enrolled in SLIS 5200).

IOP draft 2	20%
IOP draft 3	20%
IOP draft 4	20%
Concept Briefing	25%
Online participation	15%

Online participation includes 3 Blackboard startup assignments (3%); IOP description posting (1%); 3 IOP peer reviews (9%); and 1 online chat with the instructor (2%). Participation scores are tallied throughout the semester and posted in Blackboard as a single score at the end of the semester.

This is a core course in the SLIS master's program: **SLIS 5200** students who do not earn a final grade of B- or higher must retake the course.

For **SLIS 4200** students who are pursuing bachelor's degrees, online participation assignments worth 5% of the final grade are optional: 2 Blackboard startup assignments (howdy message posting, email with Word file attached; 2%); IOP description posting (1%); and 1 online chat with the instructor (2%). These points will be assigned regardless of actual participation. These students are also graded more leniently in general than graduate students. In order to gain these benefits, you must **confirm your status as a bachelor's degree student** at the beginning of the semester.

Grading criteria

Deadlines: To facilitate timely grading, all assignments must be submitted by the due date. **Half a grade (5 points) will be deducted for each day an assignment is late.** An exception, at the instructor's discretion, can be made if you absolutely cannot meet the deadline and notify the instructor in advance. Without this notification and an extension by the instructor, **any assignment submitted more than three days (3 days) late will not be reviewed or graded.** Assignments are very detailed. Many students lose points for incomplete submissions and failure to follow instructions. A common remark on graded assignments is **RTA**: read the assignment. If you do not understand the assignment, ask your instructor for help **prior** to the deadline. Instructors reserve the right to reject incomplete assignments, as well as those that do not adhere to instructions.

Writing: Both the substantive content of the reports and the quality of the writing are considered. Substantive content includes completeness and adherence to the assignment, knowledge of appropriate concepts, strong supporting material, and reasonable conclusions or solutions. Quality of writing covers organization and clarity of expression, appropriate use of references, adherence to the format prescribed by the assignment, and correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. References must be made in APA style (see above). **Up to half a grade (5 points) will be deducted for inaccurate references.**

Participation: This course requires a high level of participation in both onsite and online discussions and activities. (See attendance policy below.) All students are expected to **login to Blackboard daily** and to reply to email within 24 hours. Exceptions are weekends and holidays unless an assignment is due.

Grade options

Extra credit: No assignments for extra credit will be made under any circumstances. If you are having trouble with regular assignments, contact your instructor as soon as possible for advising.

Withdrawal: See UNT *Graduate Catalog* for policies and semester schedule for deadlines. A grade of Withdraw (W) or Withdraw-Failing (WF) will be given depending on your participation and grades to date. Note that if you simply disappear and do not file a **UNT withdrawal form**, you may receive an F. **You are responsible for ensuring that course drops and withdrawals are initiated and completed. Instructors cannot withdraw you from a course and will not follow up on your intent.**

Incomplete: See UNT *Graduate Catalog* for policies and semester schedule for deadlines. A grade of Incomplete (I) will be given, at the discretion of the instructor, only for a justifiable reason, only if you are passing the course, only if you have made significant progress in the class, and only if you have signed a letter of agreement with the instructor. **You are responsible for contacting the instructor to request an incomplete** and discuss requirements for completing the course. If the incomplete is not removed within the time frame agreed upon by you and the instructor, you may receive a grade of F.

Course Policies

Attendance

Web Institute students are required to attend and complete all four days of required classes. Failure to do so will result in being dropped from the course.

Instructors and students are expected to be prompt and prepared for class. You are asked to **notify your instructor in advance** if you cannot attend class, must arrive late or leave early, expect to submit work late, or intend to withdraw from the course. For some assignments, students rely on each other to meet deadlines and do their fair share of the work. If you are falling behind or intend to withdraw from the course, inform your partners and instructor so you can work out alternatives.

Plagiarism

SLIS has an Academic Misconduct Policy that addresses plagiarism. A signed acknowledgement form related to this policy is required from each student for continuation in this class.

Guidelines: To avoid charges of plagiarism in SLIS 5200/4200, you are advised:

- Do not quote or paraphrase **published works,** including assigned readings and Web-based sources, without explicit reference to the original work. Credit the source using appropriate citation style according to the required style manual.
- Do not insert parts of **course materials** (class lectures, online modules, tutorials, examples) into your own work. These are published by the instructors, who properly cite the sources of any external published sources.
- Do not insert parts of **previous students' work** into your own work. The previous students have given written permission for their work to be displayed for illustrative purposes only. A warning about plagiarism precedes each example.
- Do not insert parts of **current students' work** into your own work. If the current student is your IOP peer review partner, that student trusts you to respect his/her intellectual product.

You are expected to study and learn from the materials available, then to use your own words in your assignments, or clearly credit sources using appropriate citation style. It is wrong to blindly copy another person's intellectual content or syntax. It is particularly shortsighted–and glaringly obvious–when a student copies another student's errors. You do not have to police every word you write, just be aware of

your sources. It is **not necessary to cite sources of general knowledge**, such as definitions of basic concepts in the field, but it is wise to reword them. When in doubt, ask your instructor.

Procedures:

- **IOP drafts and Concept Briefings may be submitted to Turnitin.com for verification of originality.** Instructors look for passages of text that conspicuously fail to adhere to the parameters above (excluding required parts of assignments that obviously will be duplicated).

- **All students are required to sign a form acknowledging that they have read and understand the SLIS Academic Misconduct Policy on plagiarism.**

- **Penalties:** Plagiarism is illegal, unethical, and unacceptable. Instances of plagiarism in SLIS 5200/4200 will be handled in accordance with current university guidelines regarding academic misconduct.

- **Due Diligence:** Students are solely responsible for their progress in this class. The responsibility of familiarization with instructions, course procedures, due dates and deadlines, course organization, location of course materials, and other disseminated class related information lies with the student. As a student applying to a profession that specializes in finding information, you are expected to quickly gain a working familiarity with all the locations, methods of distribution, and work flow of class related materials.

Electronic tracking

Blackboard enables instructors to track the times of your first and last logins, number of Discussions postings, and visits to certain pages. (You can also view your own usage record in Blackboard under My Information.) This information may be used, in part, in determining your level of activity in the course.

Class conduct

Availability: Instructors are usually available for student consultation after class, by appointment, and online in Blackboard. You are asked not to detain instructors during their preparation time immediately prior to onsite classes or at the beginning of class breaks.

You are expected to check Blackboard mail daily to see whether instructors or others are trying to reach you. Do not assume that instructors and teaching assistants are online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to answer your questions immediately. Instructors typically respond to email messages within 24 hours.

Courtesy: 5200 maintains a zero tolerance policy with regard to violations of online etiquette and professional behavior. In class discussions and group assignments, both onsite and online, instructors and students are expected to demonstrate professional behavior at all times and in all modes of communication. This means cooperating and interacting in a courteous, supportive, and tactful manner based on mutual respect for each other's ideas. Disrespectful communication will be dealt with immediately, and may involve the Department Chair and/or College Dean. Instructor is the final judge as to what constitutes disrespectful communication.   Written communication in the form of email, public postings and otherwise are expected to adhere to proper conventions of online composition, such as brief salutation, grammar, punctuation and signature. "Textspeak" such as "i nd 2 read th assmt… whr is it, LOL" will not be tolerated in any form or venue.

Instructors make plans and keep records based on students' attendance and work. Inform your instructor if you cannot attend at the scheduled class period, cannot meet an assignment deadline, or are withdrawing from the course.

UNT Policies

ADA accommodation

Any student with a disability who requires accommodation under the terms of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) must present a written accommodation request to the instructor by the end of the **second week of the semester**. A request should be submitted even if it is possible that accommodation may not actually be necessary later in the semester. The student should register with the UNT Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA; <http://www.unt.edu/oda/> or 940-565-4323), which provides many kinds of support services. The Disability Accommodation Policy in the *UNT Policy Manual* <http://www.unt.edu/planning/UNT_Policy/volume3/18_1_14.html> explains all relevant procedures.

Note: the ADA provision "Extended time for all in class assignments: tests, quizzes, etc. up to 2x" applies only to tests and quizzes taken in a classroom environment, and does not apply to long-lead assignments such as the IOP or Concept Briefing

Note: ADA/ODA letters may not be applied retrospectively. Rather, the provisions take effect at the time the letter is submitted to the instructor.

Academic misconduct

Academic misconduct includes cheating, plagiarism and other unethical and illegal activities. Penalties range from reducing the grade for a test or assignment to revoking an academic degree already granted. Specific policies, penalties, and the appeals process are explained in the UNT *Graduate Catalog,* the *Code of Student Conduct and Discipline*, and the *Policy Manual*, all of which are available online. The instructors of this course abide by and enforce the UNT policy on academic misconduct. Students should be particularly aware of the risks of plagiarism (see above).

International student requirement

To comply with U.S. immigration regulations, F-1 Visa holders who take online courses may need to participate in an on-campus experience. For this course, the requirement applies only to international students in **Web Institute sections**, and the on-campus institute fulfills the requirement. Further information and a UNT form for documenting the on-campus experience are provided in class.