SI 110: Introduction to Information Studies

Instructor

Dr. Erin Krupka, Associate Professor of Information, School of Information
Email: ekrupka@umich.edu
Office Hours: by appointment

Teaching Team

Name 1

Name 2

Name 3

Name 4

Name 5

Name 6

Course Objectives

Are we in the midst of an Information Revolution? Is the Information Age essentially different from other periods in history and if so, how? What role does Information, and the myriad systems for processing and disseminating Information, play in individual lives, or in society as a whole? How can we build effective Information Systems to accomplish important goals such as facilitating commerce, fostering civic participation, and supporting human relationships?

This course will provide the foundational knowledge necessary to begin to address the key issues associated with Information and its impact on human lives. Issues will range from the theoretical (what is Information, and how do humans construct it?), to the cultural (is life on the screen a qualitatively

different phenomenon from experiences with earlier distance-shrinking and knowledge-building technologies such as telephones?), to the practical (what are the basic architectures of computing and networks?). Successful completion of this "gateway" course will give you the conceptual tools necessary to understand the politics, economics, and culture of the Information Age, providing a foundation for later study in Information or a valuable complement to studies in other disciplines.

More specifically, after taking this course, you will:

1. Be able to identify and explain important concepts related to the study of Information,
2. Be able to articulate arguments related to current debates about Information Policy and the impacts of Information on society,
3. Be able to critically reflect on your own use of contemporary Information Systems, such as social media sites and services, and
4. Be knowledgeable about basic principles and strategies for designing effective information systems.

Assignments and Grading

There is a total of 830 points available in the class. There are many opportunities to gain points, some of which are scheduled. Of course, you'll need to do several assignments in order to get to higher grade levels, and some assignments count for a ton of points. The grading scheme is inspired by the notion of "gamification" (adding game-like elements into non-game environments, like college courses), and thus allows you to apply some strategy to get the grade you want. You'll also have to spend some time to make sure that you understand the "rules of the game" so that you can play effectively.

There are two types of "quests" (a.k.a. "assignments") in the course. Major quests are worth the most points, and are due at scheduled times that are published at the beginning of the course (see below). Major quests are essentially required—you cannot get a good grade in the course without doing well on the major quests (though there is one opportunity for a "do-over"). Minor quests are required, but you can pick from several and must complete at least 4. You can't get an A without doing the Minor Quests. Each of these quests is managed in Canvas.

An important note on the assessment philosophy. Most assignments will have rubrics attached, which will spell out our expectations. However, just meeting the details of the assignment is by definition average work, which we normalize at the B category. If your goal is to get an A, you will have to "go above and beyond" on these assignments. We don't necessarily spell out how to "go above and beyond" because that is just specifying a different assignment. It will be up to you to think about and accomplish work that "exceeds expectations" (your teaching team is a good sounding board for this as well). Please see the communication policy below, but note there that IAs can explain/clarify why a particular grade was given via comments on submissions, but changes in grades have to be discussed with the GSI and then approved by the instructor.

TL;DR Table

Assignment	Points
Major Writing Assignment (Major Quest): Occupy Social Media	220
Major Writing Assignment (Major Quests): 1 InfoMaven (2 submission windows)	150
Major Quizzes (Battles): Best 3 of 5 content quizzes (readings and lectures)	240
Major Participation (Quests): Discussion Section Participation: Midterm and Final (GSI assigns)	100
Minor Writing Assignments (Minor Quests): BiblioQuests, ExploroQuests (and sometimes RandoQuests). Best 4 (optional total attempts of 6)	120
Additional points such as pop-quizzes might be added	variable
Total	**830**

Major Quests and Battles - Writing Assignments and Quizzes

These major assignments are scheduled throughout the term, and have differing degrees of difficulty. There are 830 total points available through fixed assignments. As the scholars have said: "Gotta catch them all!"

<p style="color:red; text-align:center">**PDF format is required in most assignments!**</p>

Battles (Quizzes) - 240 points (3 @ 80 points each)
There will be five content quizzes throughout the term, of which your best 3 scores will count (i.e., your 2 lowest quiz grades will be dropped). These are quizzes that focus on <u>detailed</u> content in the readings and the lectures.

Occupy Social Media: Proposal (Level 1) (20 points and required to "unlock" OSM Level 2)
Check in for your Occupy Social Media Major Quest.

Occupy Social Media: Final Report (Level 2) (200 points)
You'll need to pick a social media platform you don't currently use. You will spend the first two-thirds of the semester (about 7 weeks) participating on the site. This activity will culminate in a final report. The details and expectations of this assignment will be up on Canvas early in the semester before your Occupy Social Media: Proposal assignment is due.

Participation I: Midterm (50 points)
This is the participation grade for the first half of the term in your discussion section (and, where applicable, in lecture). Your GSI will assign your grade based on your section (and lecture) activities.

Participation II: Final (50 points)

This is the participation grade for the second half of the term in your discussion section (and, where applicable, in lecture). Your GSI will assign your grade based on your section (and lecture) activities.

InfoMaven (150 points total / but two windows for submission that you can pick from)
This assignment is designed to let you show your mastery of the course material over the course of the semester. There are two windows for submission from which to pick (so think about what works with your schedule) AND notice that there is an incentive to submit in the first window but NOT in the second window. The incentive is that you can re-submit (revise and get an improved score) if you submit in the first window. Let me repeat: the optional opportunity for a "do-over" with guidance on a focus area for that do-over is only available to those who submit in window #1. This do-over is limited to a revision of the first InfoMaven for a better grade. (The Redo will be due in November - see the Readings & Topic Schedule or Canvas for the exact due date.)

You will pick only ONE form for the InfoMaven assignment. The different forms are:

1. Argumentative Essay
2. Infographics
3. UX Analysis
4. Video

Details of each type can be found in Canvas.

Additional Points through pop-quizzes
There will be pop-quizzes conducted over the term. These will be worth 5 points each and will be conducted in-class. These are ways to increase your points through simple questions.

Minor Quests

There are two main types of Minor Quests: BiblioQuests and ExploroQuests. There are also ad-hoc quests (RandoQuests). Altogether, up to 120 points can be earned through Minor Quests.

There will be multiple opportunities to complete these over the course of the semester. Here is how it works:
- Requirements
  - You **must** do four Minor Quests in total. You may do up to six and then we will take your best 4.
  - You have your choice of completing BiblioQuests, ExploroQuests or RandoQuests in any combination so long as you do at least four and no more than six.
    - For example, you could do three BiblioQuests and one ExploroQuest...or you could do two BiblioQuests and two ExploroQuests. Or you can do four Bibilioquests.

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    - **Everyone is required to complete BiblioQuest #1: Gleick (Chapter 2) due on September 19.**
  - Grading
    - Your four best scores across all of your submissions will be applied to your final grade.
    - If you submit more than six Minor Quests, only the first six submitted will be considered.
    - If you complete less than four Minor Quests, you will receive zeros for the number you that you fall short of the four.
  - Timing of Submissions:
    - **Everyone is required to complete BiblioQuest #1: Gleick (Chapter 2) due on September 19.**
    - If you submit two Minor Quests by Thursday, October 17 (inclusive), you will receive eight extra credit points.
    - If you submit two Minor Quests between Friday, October 18 (inclusive) and Thursday, December 5 (inclusive), you will receive eight extra credit points.

Types of Minor Quests

BiblioQuests (30 points for each assignment)
Due dates for BiblioQuests are noted in the Reading & Topics Schedule and in Canvas
- BiblioQuests are the main type of Minor Quest and are available almost every week. They are brief reports on designated Optional Readings. A number of such readings are indicated on the Readings & Topics Schedule.
- When will you get your graded BiblioQuest back? The grading timeline is a week from when the assignment closes; in the case of multiple submissions, we will take the earliest BiblioQuest first and turn that around within the week and then move to the next BiblioQuest.

ExploroQuests (30 points for each assignment)
Due dates for ExploroQuests are 7 days (one week) to submit from the date on which the talk was given or the link to the online content was made public.
- ExploroQuests are less frequent and you should think of them as something special - an opportunity to do something different than the BiblioQuest and an opportunity that comes up with short notice. However, you will need to do one. They are brief reports on talks, lectures, and similar events around campus related to the topic of Information.
- Announcements regarding events that are available for an ExploroQuest will be announced as they become available. This means that the announcements can come on short notice. However, you will only have 7 days (one week) to submit from the date on which the talk was given or the link to the online content was made public.

RandoQuests (30 points for each assignment) are random and unanticipated, so don't count on them!
Due dates for RandoQuest are 7 days (one week) to submit from the date on which the online content was made public.
- There may be several chances to participate in these quests. First, you might participate in the experiments of some professors on campus. If that happens, then you will find out about it

through this class (do not go off and participate without hearing about it here first). Or, you might do something special in discussion sections. Or you might complete a challenge with your "House" (discussion section). Or do some other thing entirely!
- These assignments are not yet defined, but there almost certainly will be options here. However, this should not be what you count on to get points, and the announcements can come on short notice. However, you will only have 7 days (one week) to submit from the date on which the online content was made public.

Grading Scale:

Here are how the different scores will convert to grades when sent to the Registrar. There are more than 830 points available in the course, even though the percentages required for particular grade levels are scaled to 830.

Total Points	Letter Grade	Numeric Grade		Total Points	Letter Grade	Numeric Grade
780 or more	A	4.0		630	C+	2.3
750	A-	3.7		600	C	2.0
720	B+	3.3		570	C-	1.7
690	B	3.0		540	D	1.0
660	B-	2.7		Less than 540	E	0.0

Getting an A+:
- If you earn 820 points or more, you will receive an A+ for the course.

Missed and Late Assignments

Things come up. We understand that not everyone will be able to make it to class every week and there may be reasons why an assignment needs to be turned in a bit late. Here are the policies regarding absence and lateness.
- Late quests will be assessed a 10% penalty for each day that they are late. Quests that are more than four days late will not be accepted.
- To spell it out (because this is how Canvas is going to "see" and "mark" your submission):
  - Before the deadline: No penalty
  - 0:00:01-24:00:00 hours after the deadline: 10% off
  - 24:00:01-48:00:00 hours after the deadline: 20% off
  - 48:00:01-72:00:00 hours after the deadline: 30% off
  - 72:00:01-96:00:00 hours after the deadline: 40% off
  - > 96:00:01 hours after the deadline: 100% off
- If an extension is required for legitimate reasons*, you must make your request to the teaching team by email at least 12 hours before the deadline.

* "Legitimate reasons" for absence and lateness include illness, family emergencies, exceptional job duties, and significant emotional distress. A doctor's note, sports related travel notice from a coach, or curricular-related travel notice from an instructor will always be considered legitimate. The legitimacy of other specific instances is at the discretion of the teaching team. However, please note that "legitimate reasons" do not include awesome parties or excessive course-related or extracurricular work--you are required to plan ahead to meet your deadlines in all classes.

Readings and Other Materials

All readings and materials (e.g., videos) will be available either on the public Internet or via Canvas. All materials will be accessible from the [Readings & Topics Schedule](#).

Classroom Comportment, including Laptops and Other Distractions

Be cool.

One thing to realize about engaging in activities that are not part of the shared classroom experience, is that they not only detract from your own ability to learn and benefit (which I suppose is up to you, to some extent), but they often distract others in the class, and contribute to a general environment that is not conducive to learning for anyone. To support learners who would prefer not to endure such distractions, whether self-inflicted or imposed by classmates, we will designate a device-free zone in the lecture hall wherein laptops will not be used and phones will remain out of sight. We will ask you to work together to respect the zone rules. Even if you are seated outside the device-free zone, you are *strongly* discouraged from engaging in non-class activities (e.g., emailing, game playing, web browsing, Tweeting, Facebooking, Pinteresting, etc.). If you find it difficult to refrain from such activities, you might spend some time reflecting on why this might be so. And you might try out the device-free zone to see if it feels different. Of course, the teaching team reserves the right to ask you to put devices away if need be.

Come to class on time, having done the assigned readings and turned off your ringer. Be prepared to engage in fruitful discussions. Feel free to ask questions--usually, if you are confused, others are too.

Communication Policy

In order to reduce any anxiety regarding the response time on our communications, here is our policy:

- Your first communication should be to reach out to your discussion GSI.
  - You should always include [SI 110] in your subject heading otherwise we will not see it.
- We will be responding to emails 2x a week: Once by Friday 5pm and once by Monday 5pm.

- If you wish to have a response by Friday 5pm, then you must SEND the email by Thursday at 10pm.
- If you wish to have a response by Monday 5pm, then you must SEND the email by Sunday at 5pm.
- These timelines cannot be guaranteed, but we will work towards ensuring that you receive responses in a timely manner.
- Please provide us at least 24 hours for a response in the case where your email is sent less than 24 hours before an email response deadline for a speedy resolution.
- Please note that a response is not necessarily a resolution. For simple queries, it is possible that the response could contain a resolution. However, in some cases, the request in the email might require more time to handle and might involve multiple parties to resolve. In such cases, the resolution will depend on the complexity of the request.

Collaboration and Original Work

Collaboration

UMSI strongly encourages collaboration while working on some assignments, such as homework problems and interpreting reading assignments as a general practice. Active learning is effective. Collaboration with other students in the course will be especially valuable in summarizing the reading materials and picking out the key concepts. You must, however, write your homework submission on your own, in your own words, before turning it in. If you worked with someone on the homework before writing it, you must list any and all collaborators on your written submission. Each course and each instructor may place restrictions on collaboration for any or all assignments. Read the instructions carefully and request clarification about collaboration when in doubt. Collaboration is almost always forbidden for take-home and in-class exams.

Plagiarism

All written submissions must be your own, original work. Original work for narrative questions is not mere paraphrasing of someone else's completed answer: you must not share written answers with each other at all. At most, you should be working from notes you took while participating in a study session. Largely duplicate copies of the same assignment will receive an equal division of the total point score from the one piece of work.

You may incorporate selected excerpts, statements or phrases from publications by other authors, but they must be clearly marked as quotations and must be attributed. If you build on the ideas of prior authors, you must cite their work. You may obtain copy editing assistance, and you may discuss your ideas with others, but all substantive writing and ideas must be your own, or be explicitly attributed to another. See the (Doctoral, MSI, MHI, or BSI) student handbooks available on the UMSI intranet for the definition of plagiarism, resources to help you avoid it, and the consequences for intentional or unintentional plagiarism.

In this course, an assignment containing plagiarized material will receive zero points. This applies whether the plagiarism is intentional or inadvertent. If you are unsure about whether a passage in your writing constitutes plagiarism, you are encouraged to seek help from the teaching team or from the Sweetland Writing Center. Be sure to plan sufficiently ahead in your writing so that you can receive and incorporate feedback if you are uncertain about the boundaries of plagiarism.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; http://ssd.umich.edu) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing

The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students, while acknowledging that a variety of issues, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, and depression, directly impacts students' academic performance. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (734) 764-8312 and https://caps.umich.edu/ during and after hours, on weekends and holidays or through its counselors physically located in schools on both North and Central Campus. You may also consult University Health Service (UHS) at (732) 764-8320 and https://www.uhs.umich.edu/mentalhealthsvcs, or for alcohol or drug concerns, see www.uhs.umich.edu/aodresources. For a more comprehensive listing of the broad range of mental health services available on campus, please visit: http://umich.edu/~mhealth/.