

IS310: Information Seeking: Resources & Strategies

FALL 2009 SECTION 002

Delivered by Asynchronous Distance Education

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

High-quality information is a vital resource for academic and scientific research, as well as for all kinds of decision-making in business, healthcare, and everyday life contexts. This course will cover the effective use of a wide range of resources that comprise today's complex information environment, as well as how to plan and execute research projects, supported by effective information search strategies. The techniques learned in this course will empower students to find the answers they need from the Internet, online databases, government documents, legal and medical resources, statistical sources, biographical materials, literary critiques, and reference books. The course learning outcomes have direct practical value to students from any major, for writing a senior thesis, graduate studies, research and decision making related to any professional field, and the countless information needs that arise in one's personal life.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students who complete the requirements for IS 310 will be able to:

- Understand the research process in order to properly define a research task
- Identify and locate appropriate information resources relating to the research task.
- Evaluate information for quality, completeness, and appropriateness.
- Know the basic terminology associated with research, information technology, and information retrieval.
- Understand the characteristics and issues associated with the current online and offline information environment.
- Develop personal strategies for gathering information in his or her particular area of study or interest.

ABOUT THE COURSE

This section of IS 310 will be delivered by asynchronous distance education (ADE), which means that each student will access each week's class sessions at a time of his or her choosing, during the course of that week. UT is beginning to offer ADE courses for undergraduate classes, in order to help students cope with balancing their busy schedules of classes, homework, jobs, and extracurricular activities. In addition, ADE-delivered courses prepare students for future experiences in the 21st century workplace, where online ADE-type methods are often used for continuing education, advanced certification, and professional development courses. By taking this class, you will be gaining both greater flexibility in managing your time, and valuable experience with this alternative learning environment.

UT and the School of Information Sciences (SIS) have successfully used distance education to deliver graduate classes for many years. IS 310 is one of two ADE courses offered this semester in the SIS undergraduate minor program, and I am glad that you will have the opportunity to benefit

from ADE's advantages. It is important to recognize that taking an ADE class is different from a traditional class, or even a synchronous DE class, where everyone attends online at the same time. There are a few simple guidelines to follow (listed below), which will ensure that you have a successful and satisfying ADE experience; some of these are directed at me, as your instructor, and some are all about you, as the student. I promise you that I will uphold all of the guideline principles that are my responsibilities, in order to give you the same high level of support, access, and communication that you would want to have in a traditional classroom setting. The course is structured to make it a rewarding learning experience that will also have meaning for you both for your subsequent education, and in your future professional life. In some aspects, your part of the bargain is the same as it would be for a traditional class. I expect you to demonstrate critical thinking skills as well as commitment and involvement with our online discussions and your assignments. Learning is not a passive process; it is about a student's actively engaging the material through reading, thinking, discussing (online), questioning, practicing skills, and ultimately understanding. Bring your best efforts, a positive outlook, energy, and curiosity to each of the class sessions. Together we can make the class as interesting, relevant, and exciting as possible.

ADE Success Guidelines for Students:

Accept that you must be more self-reliant in an ADE class: Although students are always responsible for knowing everything in the syllabus and complying with the requirements of a course, this is especially true for ADE. Students are expected to show self-initiative, to make good time management decisions, and to be especially proactive in contacting the instructor when they are having problems, or don't understand something.

Keep up with the weekly schedule outlined below: Enjoy attending class at 2am, wearing your pajamas, from a hotel room half way across the world, if you wish, but don't abuse the schedule flexibility by falling behind, just because the class doesn't meet at the same times each week. **THE SINGLE BIGGEST MISTAKE ADE STUDENTS CAN MAKE IS TO PUT OFF VIEWING THE CLASSES AND ALLOW THE WORK TO PILE UP.**

Put extra effort into all opportunities for interaction with your classmates and instructor: We will be using the online discussion board, blog tool, and other electronic means to interact as a class. Many students are very comfortable with interacting through electronic media like Facebook or G-chat, but whether you are or not, believe me that we can have meaningful discussions, and question and answer sessions, even though we will not be together at the same time, as long as you do your part to participate.

CONTACTING ME

I'm here to help – so always feel free to ask questions or share ideas! For an ADE class, it is especially important that you contact me if you need help, or clarification about the course material or assignments. You may drop in during my office hours, or we can set up an appointment at another time that is more convenient for you. E-mail is the sure-fire way to contact me. I believe e-mail is an excellent communication tool, and I check mine on a very regular basis. What I like about e-mail is that it is 24/7; that means you can ask a question when it's fresh on your mind – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. I've set my mail to sort incoming messages; so to assure a quicker response from me always start your message subject line with 310. I'll usually answer within 24-48 hours, but I'll often get back to you even faster!

COURSE COMMUNICATIONS

To take this course, you must have access to a computer with high speed Internet access, and you need to have a UTK email account. You may use your own personal computer, or you may use the computers available in the various campus libraries or computer labs.

LiveOnline (also known as Centra) is the software used to deliver DE courses at UT. It is available at <http://liveonline.utk.edu> . Each class session, entitled Unit 1, Unit 2, etc. will be available as an audio recording, illustrated by the powerpoint slides or other visual aids. Prior to the start of class, I will send you an email with more detailed instructions about how to use LiveOnline to access the class sessions.

The Online @ UT program, also known as Blackboard, will be used for many course management tasks. We will use interaction tools such as the Discussion Board and blog tool, and the Course Materials link for the posting of information about assignments. You will also use the Digital Dropbox feature to turn your assignments in. Blackboard is available at <http://online.utk.edu> .

DISABILITIES

Please contact the Office of Disability Services at 191 Hoskins Library at 865.974.6087 if you need course adaptations or accommodations. They will work with you to arrive at the appropriate program and register you for services. Also contact me so we can talk about solutions.

REQUIRED READINGS

Textbooks:

Bolner, M.S. & Poirier, G.A. (2007). *The research process: Books and beyond*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt. ISBN: 0-7575-2862-7. ISBN-13: 978-0-7575-2862-0 . (Abbreviated “B&P” on the class schedule).

Stebbins, L.F. (2006). *Student guide to research in the digital age: How to locate and evaluate information sources*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited. ISBN: 1591580994. ISBN-13: 978-1591580997. (Abbreviated “Stebbins” on the class schedule).

Required Readings:

Garfinkel, S.L. (2008, November/December). Wikipedia and the meaning of truth. *MIT Technology Review*. (Available on Blackboard).

Additional readings may be assigned later, as needed.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Do all assigned readings prior to attending each class session.** The lecture will assume that you know the information that is in the readings, and will build upon it.
- **Complete all assigned exercises** and submit them on time, using the format and procedure specified by the instructor.
- **Check your e-mail and Blackboard regularly.** I will use email to return assignments, solicit student input, and make clarifications. Blackboard will also be used for announcements and the discussion board and other interactive activities.
- **Attend two brief face to face meetings with the instructor during the semester.** These meetings can take place either during my scheduled office hours, or they can be scheduled at your convenience. The first one should take place within the first four weeks of the semester (by Sept. 11), and the second one should be no later than November 8.

- **Complete two examinations.** The exams will consist of a mixture of short answer and multiple choice questions. Materials from the exam will come exclusively from the required readings and those concepts covered during class sessions. Exam #2 is not comprehensive; it will cover the material addressed after Exam #1 through the end of the course.
- **Complete one reading quiz and one thought question each week.** These assignments are simple to complete, but are designed to help you to stay on pace with the class. They are explained in detail below.
- **Complete a project** built around a research question and a list of information resources related to your academic discipline or field of interest. More information about this project will be available on Blackboard later in the semester.
- **Participate** actively in the class by giving your best effort to the interactive activities using the discussion board or blog tool, In addition, treat your classmates with courtesy and respect by reading and reflecting on their online comments, and responding to them appropriately.
- **Timely online attendance is required.** The course schedule below lists which class sessions you should complete at your convenience during each week. It is essential that you keep up by attending the sessions in the proper week, so that you can complete assignments and exams as scheduled.

Student Evaluation (See the class schedule for all due dates)

Evaluation is based on performance for each of the responsibilities listed above. The final grade is based on the following assignments; you must complete them to earn a grade in this class.

	% of total grade	Total Points Possible
Examination #1	= 15%	150
Examination #2	= 15%	150
Project	= 25%	250
Exercise 1	= 5	50
Exercise 2	= 5	50
Exercise 3	= 5	50
Exercise 4	= 5	50
Thought questions	= 5	50
Reading quizzes	= 10%	100
Discussion Board/Blogs	= 10%	100
TOTAL	= 100%	1,000

Grading Scale:

A = 94-100% of possible points

A- = 88-93

B+ = 85-87

B = 82-84

B- = 78-81

C+ = 75-77

C= 72-74

C- = 68-71

D= 58-67

F= 58 or below

ASSIGNMENTS

Project: You will propose a research question that is relevant to your academic discipline or your professional aspirations, and create an annotated bibliography of a variety of types of resources that are relevant to the research question. This assignment is the largest single component of your grade for the course. This assignment's File Designation is Project (see the "Submission" section below). Detailed instructions will be posted under the Assignments link on Blackboard. There are two due dates for this project: you will first send me a brief description of your research question in October, then the project will be due near the end of the semester. (See the course schedule below). Also, during Week 15, we will meet in a synchronous session in which each student will give a 3 minute oral presentation, summarizing their research question and sharing one insight about their experience in finding sources.

Exercises 1-4: You will complete and submit complete four assigned exercises, which will give you hands-on practice in working with various kinds of information resources. The answers for the exercises will be submitted in accordance with the detailed instructions for each exercise that will be posted in the Assignments section of the Blackboard site. The File Designation for each exercise assignment is Exercise1, Exercise2, etc.

Thought Questions: During one of the class sessions each week, I will verbally assign a question related to the current topic. Outside of class, you will write a brief (one paragraph) response, which must be turned in no later than 6am on the following Monday. These questions will not require you to do further reading or research; the answers will be either asking for your opinion related to something you will already have read or done, or a reflection piece on your information-seeking related experiences, or a thought-provoking exercise in creative problem solving. The file designation for these assignments is "Thought" followed by the week number. For example, the file designation for the thought question for the third week of class will be Thought3. There will be a total of 15 thought questions (there will be no thought question for week 16, the final short week of the semester).

Reading Quizzes: Each week, I will post a brief (5-question) multiple choice quiz on Blackboard, that you will need to log on and take sometime during the week, no later than 6am of the following Monday. All of these questions will come directly out of the readings for that week, and will call for factual answers, rather than interpretive ones; if you have done the required reading, you will have no problems answering the questions. These reading quizzes are designed to help you stay on task with the class timetable, and avoid the pitfall of letting classes or assignment slide to the following week. There will be a total of 15 reading quizzes for the semester (there will be no reading quiz for the week 16). The grading for these quizzes will be as follows: to pass a quiz, you must get three out of five questions correct. If you pass 13 or more quizzes, you will get the point equivalent of an A for the reading quizzes for the semester. If you pass 10-12 quizzes you will get the point equivalent of a B. Passing 6 to 9 quizzes will earn the point equivalent of a C. If you pass five or fewer quizzes, but take them all, you will get the point equivalent of a D. If you do not take all of the quizzes, you will get the point equivalent of an F.

SUBMISSION OF GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

This course is divided in one-week segments, with three recorded class sessions associated with most weeks. (The exceptions are Weeks 1 & 16, the "short" weeks which begin and end the semester. These weeks have only one or two class sessions). Assignments that are associated with each week may be turned in at any time during that week, but must be turned in by no later than 6am on the Monday of the following week. All assignments must be submitted via the Digital Dropbox on the class Blackboard site.

Be sure to properly name each file you submit; incorrectly named files will have a one-step grade deduction (e.g., an “A” becomes an “A-“). Note that the file designation for each assignment is specified above. You should use the following naming convention:

YourLastName_YourFirstName FileDesignation (e.g. Jones Mary Exercise3)

Also be sure that each assignment you submit has the following items included within the text of the file (preferably in the header or footer):

- Your Name
- IS310
- Assignment label (e.g., Exercise 4).
- Page numbers

When appropriate, additional guidelines for completing each assignment will be provided.

Late assignments will not be accepted, unless I have been advised in advance and given a good reason for lateness. Those assignments that are accepted as late assignments will earn reduced credit of at least one grade step (i.e. an “A-” becomes a “B+”) and perhaps more than one grade step depending on the tardiness. **Note: For the Thought Question and Reading Quiz assignments, no late assignments will be accepted.** These two assignments are designed to keep you working on the specified class schedule, so they must not be late.

CLASS PARTICIPATION: INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES

In our ADE environment, class participation will occur using the interactive tools available on the Blackboard site. The Discussion Board allows both the instructor and class members to pose and answer questions, and to share thoughts or ideas with the group. Online communication and even the use of social networking applications are becoming essential parts of the professional and academic environment. Here are some ideas of how you can be involved in our online conversation:

- You can post questions to the discussion board based on what we have read.
- You can create a conversation about topics that we are studying in class.
- You can talk about your experiences (both successful and frustrating) looking for information, either for class or for other aspects of your life.
- You could pose an information-seeking challenge, and ask your classmates to suggest search strategies, or good resources to use.
- You could use the blog tool to make journal entries about your information needs, or your strategies for finding information that your need. Do you need to buy a car? Trying to decide which digital camera or cell phone to buy? Thinking about picking a grad school? These are all different types of information needs that you could write about. Share your strategies, or what sources you used.

This portion of your grade will be based on your *efforts to join* the interactive online conversations. If you contributions exhibit both quality of thought and frequent participation, you will earn top points for this aspect of your grade.

CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

The University of Tennessee operates with a strict student code of honor regarding academic integrity. All work submitted by a student must be that student’s work. When you write for this class or when you find information through a search, remember that any sources you use must be credited and that materials from the Internet must be cited too. Use any standard style manual for citing sources as long as you are consistent in formatting the citations, although the preferred style for our college is APA (American Psychological Association) style. If you use someone's words or ideas without attribution - that's plagiarism. Remember, cheating and plagiarism are violations of scholarly and professional ethics and University policy; don't do it! **If you cheat or plagiarize, you will fail the course** and could face further penalties in accordance with University regulations. Further information is available in Hill Topics, the UTK student handbook.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

(SUBJECT TO CHANGE DURING THE SEMESTER)

****PLEASE NOTE FOR READINGS:** These items should be READ BEFORE you attend the recorded class meeting that they are associated with. ****PLEASE NOTE FOR ASSIGNMENTS:** Assignments must be submitted via the DIGITAL DROPBOX on BlackBoard and are DUE BY 6am OF THE MONDAY OF THE FOLLOWING WEEK.

Week	Class dates	Topics	Reading	Assignment Due for Week
1	8/19-8/23	Session 1: Course introduction & Syllabus review. Session 2: Information Sources & Formats	None B&P Chap. 1	Reading Quiz, Thought Question
2	8/24-8/30	Session 3: Primary Sources Session 4: Academic Libraries Session 5: Research Paper	Stebbins Chap. 4 None B&P Chap. 2 & Stebbins Chap. 1	Reading Quiz, Thought Question
3	8/31-9/6	Session 6: Citations, References, & Plagiarism Session 7: Legal Research Session 8: Scholarly & Popular Articles	Stebbins, Chap. 8 Stebbins, Chap. 6 Stebbins, Chap. 3	Exercise #1, Reading Quiz, Thought Question
4	9/7-9/13	Session 9: Searching Electronic Sources Session 10: Books & E-books Session 11: Super Searcher tips	B&P, Chap. 3 Stebbins, Chap. 2 Article TBA	Reading Quiz, Thought Question F2F Meeting #1 by Sept. 11
5	9/14-9/20	Session 12: Searching Electronic Sources Session 13: Classification systems & Catalogs Session 14: Classification systems & Catalogs	Kindle article TBA B&P, Chap. 4 None	Exercise #2 Reading Quiz, Thought Question

6	9/21-9/27	Session 15: Internet & WWW Session 16: Internet & WWW Session 17: Internet & WWW	B&P Chap. 5 Article TBA None	Reading Quiz, Thought Question
7	9/28-10/4	Session 18: Evaluating sources Session 19: Evaluating sources Session 20: Information Literacy & Exam #1 review (Synchronous session?)	B&P Chap. 6 Article TBA Snopes.com article TBA	Reading Quiz, Thought Question
8	10/5-10/11	Session 21: Exam #1 Session 22: Reference Sources Session 23: Reference Sources	None B&P Chap. 7 Article TBA	Reading Quiz, Thought Question
9	10/12-10/18	Session 24: Reference Sources Session 25: Reference Sources FALL BREAK-NO THIRD SESSION	None Article TBA	Project Research Question Due Reading Quiz, Thought Question
10	10/19-10/25	Session 26: Periodicals Session 27: Periodicals Session 28: Periodicals	B&P, Chap. 8 Article TBA None	Exercise #3 Reading Quiz, Thought Question
11	10/26-11/1	Session 29: Government Info Session 30: Government Info Session 31: Statistical Sources	B&P, Chap. 9 Stebbins, Chap. 7 B&P, Chap. 10	Reading Quiz, Thought Question
12	11/2-11/8	Session 32: Statistical Sources Session 33: Biographical Sources Session 34: Biographical Sources	None B&P, Chap. 11 Stebbins, Chap. 5	Exercise #4 Reading Quiz, Thought Question F2F Meeting #2 by Nov. 8
13	11/9-11/15	Session 35: Book Reviews, Literary Criticism, Collections Session 36: Health Context Session 37: Health Context	B&P, Chap. 12 Article TBA None	Reading Quiz, Thought Question
14	11/16-11/22	Session 38: Business & Financial Context Session 39: Consumer Context Session 40: Info. Professions	Article TBA Article TBA None	Projects Due Reading Quiz, Thought Question

15	11/23-11/29	Session 41: Project Sharing (Synchronous session?) Session 42: Information Frontiers HAPPY THANKSGIVING!	None Genetic Information article TBA	Reading Quiz, Thought Question
16	11/30-12/1	Session 43: Review for Exam #2 Session 44: Exam #2: Available for 12/1 through 12/7.	None Happy Holidays, & Have a Good Winter Break!	

