

FALL 2018

IS 530: INFORMATION ACCESS AND RETRIEVAL

The School of Information Sciences, The University of Tennessee

Class Meetings: Thursdays, 6:30-9:10 p.m. ED/ST

DISCLAIMER

Please be aware revisions may be made to this syllabus over the course of the semester, and as such, the content contained within may be subject to change.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Information access, retrieval, and use. Information seeking, user interfaces, information services and tools. Database structure, search engines, query logic, and evaluation of retrieval system performance. Required Course.

The amount of knowledge and skills you will gain from this course will depend on the amount of time and work you invest each week.

Much of the content of the course is problem-based. You, as a user of information, are and will always be faced with information problems that you need to solve. Users also have their own information problems, but often need "expert" assistance to solve them. You are the future information professional who will mediate user needs and find the best solutions for their information problems. What you will gain in this course should equip you with the basic knowledge of the reference tools and services that should be available or provided in libraries and information agencies to meet user needs. This course is structured to be a rewarding learning experience. It is designed to provide a foundation for advanced classes.

This course is characterized by a collaborative learning atmosphere. You will be challenged, intrigued, confused, frustrated, and may be "lost" in using and evaluating interfaces and in solving information problems in both digital and more traditional information environments. Your dedication, perseverance, patience, and motivation should help you navigate these challenges successfully.

COURSE OUTCOMES

This course is part of the required curriculum determined by SIS faculty to contain basic knowledge that SIS students must acquire. It is intended to prepare students for specialized electives offered in the program.

Upon completion of the course, you should:

- be familiar with various types of information access and retrieval tools and systems,
- have developed skills for communicating with users/patrons and conducting a reference interview,
- have gained knowledge in using various answer-providing tools and matching user' information need to appropriate tools,
- be familiar with subscription database services,
- be aware of diversity and cultural differences in communicating with users, and
- be familiar with RUSA's (American Library Association/Reference and User Services Association) and other relevant associations' guidelines for providing effective reference/information services in specific library and information environments

...and be able to:

- compare interface options and search logic of selected search engines and databases,
- discuss the implications of selected models of user information seeking for providing effective reference service,
- evaluate the retrieval performance of search engines and databases,
- evaluate a variety of digital reference services,
- evaluate and compare interface options and search logic of selected information retrieval systems (IRs),
- discuss selected information behavior theories and models and their implications for practice,
- use metrics to evaluate the retrieval performance of selected IRs,
- discuss and compare user- and IRs-based criteria for judging relevance of information retrieval,
- evaluate selected Q&A answering services and compare them to human-driven reference services.

REQUIRED and RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Kay Ann Cassell & Uma Hiremath. 2018. *Reference and Information Services: an Introduction*. 4th Ed. New York: Neil-Schuman Publishers, Inc.

Additional readings as assigned

Recommended: APA or Chicago Style Manual

POLICIES

COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

I am required to communicate with you through your UTK email address. If you prefer to use another address, consult the [OIT Helpdesk](#) to obtain directions for forwarding your UTK mail to your preferred address if you don't wish to check both accounts.

Email is the most expedient way to get in touch with me. If I will be unable to check my email for a significant period of time (less than once/24-hour period), I will provide you with an alternative method of contacting me.

Most lecture notes will be posted on Canvas before the class meeting for you to download. Note that lecture notes do not substitute for the assigned readings. Read the class announcements posted on Canvas to stay current with course matters.

COMPUTING REQUIREMENTS

To successfully complete this course, students must

- Have adequate computing skills, including but not limited to use of Microsoft Office suite or equivalent to process, format, save, and retrieve documents. In some instances, you may need to use MS or equivalent diagnosis tools to detect and clean up documents/files from viruses before submitting them in Canvas Learn.
- Learn how to submit your assignments using Canvas. The [Office of Information Technology \(OIT\)](#) provides training classes in using varied technologies for students at no charge (advance registration is required).
- Have the PowerPoint Reader or the regular PowerPoint software installed on your computer in order to download the lecture notes from Canvas.
- Subscribe to the SIS listserv (UTKSIS-L@LISTSERV.UTK.EDU) and monitor messages about class and other school events or matters.

CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY

It is assumed that each student will miss no more than one session and will speak in class -- the equivalent of a "B" grade for "participation." Missing more classes or failing to participate will lower your grade; frequent participation will raise the grade.

Regular attendance is required and necessary. A substantial portion of your grade will be based on in-class work and participation. Unexplained absences will affect your grade. Contact me as soon as possible if you cannot attend class. If you must be absent from class, you must:

- Inform me in advance or as soon as possible after class
- Submit any work due from the missed class period
- Obtain notes, handouts, etc. from Canvas

Acceptable reasons for absence from class include:

- Illness
- Serious family emergencies,
- Military obligation,
- Severe weather conditions,
- Religious holidays and
- Obligations for court imposed legal obligations (i.e., jury duty, subpoena)

Other reasons may also be approved.

Missing more than one class meeting for reasons other than those listed above will have a negative impact on your course participation grade.

CLASS CANCELLATIONS

Should it be necessary to cancel a class meeting, every effort will be taken to do so in advance. Look for e-mail announcements via Canvas.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

"The University of Tennessee will remain open except in the most severe weather conditions. The Chancellor (or appointed representative) may officially close or suspend selected activities of the

university because of extreme weather conditions. When a decision to close is reached, campus and local radio and TV stations will be notified and a UTAAlert will be issued. The notice will also be posted on the front page at www.utk.edu...” ([Hilltopics](#)) SIS will cancel classes when UT is closed. Please check the SIS student listserv (UTKSIS-L@LISTSERV.UTK.EDU) for messages about closing.

DISABILITIES THAT CONSTRAIN LEARNING

Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 865-974-6087 in 2227 Dunford Hall to document their eligibility for services. ODS will work with students and faculty to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

CIVILITY

Civility is genuine respect and regard for others: politeness, consideration, tact, good manners, graciousness, cordiality, affability, amiability and courteousness. Civility enhances academic freedom and integrity, and is a prerequisite to the free exchange of ideas and knowledge in the learning community. Our community consists of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and campus visitors. Community members affect each other’s well-being and have a shared interest in creating and sustaining an environment where all community members and their points of view are valued and respected. Affirming the value of each member of the university community, the campus asks that all its members adhere to the principles of civility and community adopted by the campus:
<http://civility.utk.edu/>.

CCI DIVERSITY STATEMENT

The College of Communication and Information recognizes that a college diverse in its people, curricula, scholarship, research, and creative activities expands opportunities for intellectual inquiry and engagement, helps students develop critical thinking skills, and prepares students for social and civic responsibilities. All members of the College benefit from diversity, and the quality of learning, research, scholarship and creative activities is enhanced by a climate of inclusion, understanding and appreciation of differences and the full range of human experience. As a result, the College is committed to diversity and equal opportunity and it recognizes that it must represent the diversity inherent in American society. The College is acutely aware that diversity and fairness are foundations that unite the College’s faculty, staff, students, and the larger communication and information community.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students should be familiar and maintain their *Academic Integrity* described in [Hilltopics](#) as: *“Study, preparation and presentation should involve at all times the student’s own work, unless it has been clearly specified that work is to be a team effort. Academic honesty requires that the student present his or her own work in all academic projects, including tests, papers, homework, and class presentation. When incorporating the work of other scholars and writers into a project, the student must accurately cite the source of that work.”*

Students should abide by the **Honor Statement** described in the same [Hilltopics](#):

“An essential feature of The University of Tennessee is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the University, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming

my own personal commitment to honor and integrity.”

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism in any of its several forms is intolerable, and attention to matters of documentation in all written work is expected and required. Inadvertence, alleged lack of understanding, or avowed ignorance of the various types of plagiarism are not acceptable excuses.

Specific examples of plagiarism are:

1. Copying without proper documentation (quotation marks and a citation) written or spoken words, phrases, or sentences from any source;
2. Summarizing without proper documentation (usually a citation) ideas from another source (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge);
3. Borrowing facts, statistics, graphs, pictorial representations, or phrases without acknowledging the source (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge);
4. Collaborating on a graded assignment without the instructor’s approval;
5. Submitting work, either in whole or in part, created by a professional service and used without attribution (e.g., paper, speech, bibliography, or photograph).

Infractions of academic integrity are penalized according to the severity of the infraction but **may include a course grade of "F."** Students who may be unsure of the nature of plagiarism should consult the instructor or a guide for writing research reports.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Student work is assigned a grade based on quality of thought and writing style, thoroughness of research and of references, appropriateness of length, and originality. Only exceptional work will receive an "A" grade. Papers that are received after the due date will be assigned a lower grade than would otherwise be received. All sources must be cited; quotations must be in quotation marks and attributed correctly. Not doing so constitutes plagiarism.

PREPARATION OF WRITTEN WORK

Please use either APA or CMS documentation style. All sources must be cited; quotations must be formatted and attributed correctly. Not doing so constitutes plagiarism.

- Grades for assignment submissions that include incomplete in-text citations or reference lists will be lowered by one-half grade level (e.g., an assignment that would have received 17/20, or an 85/100: B, will be lowered to 16/20, 80/100: B-).
- All assignments must be word-processed and include your name, the date, class number (i.e., 530).

PRE-SUBMISSION FEEDBACK

I am happy to look at a ***good draft*** of assignments prior to final submission. I will not pre-grade assignments, just provide general feedback and tips. These pre-submissions should be sent via email attachment (i.e., not Canvas) no later than one week prior to final due date.

DUE DATES AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments should be submitted to the “assignments” area of Canvas and are due (officially) at 11:59

p.m. EST on the due date listed on the syllabus. I will download the submissions from Canvas early the next morning. **I will ONLY download assignments from Canvas ONCE.** Therefore, if your assignment is not ready by the deadline...

- You must send me an email informing me that your assignment will be late. If you fail to do this, I will deduct one point from your assignment grade
- When it's ready, you must submit it to me via email, as an attachment
- One point will be deducted for each 24-hour hour period the assignment is not turned in.

ASSIGNING GRADES

Please note that I do not assign letter grades for individual assignments, but will mark your paper with my comments and provide a point score based on the possible points earned for that assignment. If you'd like to compute a letter grade based on the score provided, divide your score by the total points possible for the assignment and refer to the scale on p. 6 of the syllabus for the corresponding letter grade. For example, if you earned 23/25 points on an assignment, your percentage grade would be $92/100=B+$. Your final grade will be based on total points earned/100 possible points over the course of the semester.

EVALUATION

Semester grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A	93-100	(4 quality points per semester hour) superior performance.
A-	90-92.75	(3.7 quality points per semester credit hour) intermediate grade performance.
B+	88-89.75	(3.5 quality points per semester hour) better than satisfactory performance.
B	83-87.75	(3 quality points per semester hour) satisfactory performance.
B-	80-82.75	(2.7 quality points per semester credit hour) intermediate grade performance.
C+	78-79.75	(2.5 quality points per semester hour) less than satisfactory performance.
C	70-77.75	(2 quality points per semester hour) performance well below the standard expected of graduate students.
D	60-69.75	(1 quality point per semester hour) clearly unsatisfactory performance and cannot be used to satisfy degree requirements.
F	59.75≥	(no quality points) extremely unsatisfactory performance and cannot be used to satisfy degree requirements.
I		(no quality points) a temporary grade indicating that the student has performed satisfactorily in the course but, due to unforeseen circumstances, has been unable to finish all requirements. An I is not given to enable a student to do additional work to raise a deficient grade. The instructor, in consultation with the student, decides the terms for the removal of the I, including the time limit for removal. If the I is not removed within one calendar year, the grade will be changed to an F. The course will not be counted in the cumulative grade point average until a final grade is assigned. No student may graduate with an I on the record.
S/NC		(carries credit hours, but no quality points) S is equivalent to a grade of B or better, and NC means no credit earned. A grade of Satisfactory/No Credit is allowed only where indicated in the course description in the <i>Graduate Catalog</i> . The number of Satisfactory/No Credit courses in a student's program is limited to one-fourth of the total credit hours required.
P/NP		(carries credit hours, but no quality points) P indicates progress toward completion of a thesis or dissertation. NP indicates no progress or inadequate progress.
W		(carries no credit hours or quality points) indicates that the student officially withdrew from the course.

INCOMPLETES

Based on adopted University of Tennessee-Knoxville and SIS policy, a grade of *I* (Incomplete) is

reserved for emergencies that prevent the student from completing the course on time. Incompletes are granted only under "the most unusual of circumstances" and solely at the discretion of the instructor. Plan your semester's course of study carefully to insure sufficient time to complete the required work. For students who simply "disappear" without contacting the instructor and without completing the required form, an "F" is submitted.

COURSE EVALUATION

You will be invited to evaluate the course at the end of the term. Please participate in this valuable process. I also invite your comments throughout the course and read all comments, suggestions, and recommendations.

GRADED ACTIVITIES

This table provides a brief summary of assignment names, due dates, and grade distribution. A fuller description of each assignment follows the table.

Activity	Due Date	Points
Participation	Ongoing (in class and canvas)	15
Group Agreement	10/18	5
Assignment 1: Reference Observation	9/27	25
Assignment 2: Question Set Exercise	11/1	30
Group Project: Presentation and Summary	11/15 or 11/29	25
TOTAL		100

Class Participation (15%)

Much of the course material will be presented in the readings and discussions. You are expected to do the reading assigned for class and come to class prepared to offer your opinions about it. To participate in class you must be in attendance, so being present (physically and mentally) is important. If you are not the type of student who feels comfortable speaking in class, it's possible to participate online by posting comments and questions to our discussion board, sharing supplementary readings and web pages of interest with classmates, etc. Missing class will have a negative impact on your participation grade.

Assignment 1: Reference Observation Exercise (25%)

This assignment is designed to "reboot" your experience of reference and information services through outsider and participant observation. First, complete the assigned readings related to the Reference Interview, paying particular attention to [RUSA's Guidelines](#). Then, visit at least one library *at which you are not known* and

- Spend at least 40 minutes observing activity in the reference department
 - Approach the reference desk and ask a reference question.
1. Visit a library or information center of your choice.
 - A. Make sure you schedule the visit during peak hours where mediators or reference librarians may be very busy helping patrons (this means that you will need to find out when the reference service is very busy. We'll discuss optimal times in class).
 - B. If you have a strong preference for a particular area of librarianship (e.g., adult reference, academic information services, services for children or young adults, medical or law

librarianship, IT support, etc.), you may use this as an opportunity to observe in that type of reference setting. Otherwise, a “generic” public or academic library setting is perfectly acceptable.

- C. Choose a location in the Reference area from which you can observe what mediators are doing.
 - D. Observe what is happening for at least 40 minutes without speaking to librarians or other patrons, if possible.
 - E. Take notes on your experience submit a comprehensive narrative that addresses the following:
 - 1) Without naming the library you visited, provide a basic description including information like type, size, and location.
 - 2) Describe the nature of your observation. Provide the day and time, length of visit, and any notable circumstances that you suspect might have had an impact on the activity you observed. Was the library hosting a program? Did you visit in the middle of a thunderstorm? Did the reference department appear to be short-staffed?
 - 3) Describe the physical location of the reference desk. You might include the size of the Reference area, the location of the Reference desk, the number of staff members who appeared to be working in the reference department, and any other details you consider important. Include comments about the visibility of the reference desk, signage, and any physical attractions that are inviting to patrons (e.g., displays, colors, lighting).
 - 4) Describe what you see the staff and patrons doing. This should be the longest part of this section of the assignment. How did the staff interact with each patron during your observation? Did they remain seated at the desk, or did they circulate throughout the area? Did they accompany patrons to computer workstations or the bookshelves?
 - 5) Try to take note of specific details like
 - i. The number of patrons to approach the desk
 - ii. How busy the staff seemed to be
 - iii. The average length of a staff-patron interaction
 - iv. The age range of patrons in the reference area
 - v. Summarize your observation, noting strengths, weaknesses, and overall impressions of the activity you observed.
2. Visit a library and ask a question at the reference desk. You can conduct the second part of this assignment at the same library on the same day, or in another location and/or at a different time.
 - A. Make this a question on a topic that you actually know about or that is meaningful to you. Select a topic that you are comfortable sharing in your report.
 - B. It is important that you visit a library at which you are not known. Do not ask a question of a friend, colleague, or professional acquaintance.
 - C. Let the staff person lead you through the reference interview and answer as you think a patron needing this information would respond.
 - D. Report on the individual’s reference interview techniques and quality of the transaction, paying special attention to the following:
 - 1) His/her verbal and nonverbal behaviors.
 - 2) The questions s/he asked
 - 3) Questions s/he didn’t ask (but should have)
 - 4) Your comfort with the interaction
 - 5) The staff’s treatment of other users

- 6) The individual's treatment of colleagues/coworkers
 - 7) Evidence of policies for providing reference assistance, including signage
 - 8) The extent to which your question was answered
- E. Note any other impressions (staff person was friendly/harried, user was angry/polite). Were you satisfied? Why or why not? What could have been done differently?
3. Rewrite your notes into an organized essay about your observations, using the assigned readings to support your evaluation.
- A. If you conduct the research for this assignment at two different locations and/or times, make sure that's evident in your paper.
 - B. Do not identify the name of the library nor librarians in your paper.
 - C. Be sure to cite supporting material (using APA or Chicago style). Attach a bibliography of sources.

Assignment 2: Question Set (30%)

You will use the resources we've read about and discussed in class to answer a series of questions that an information services professional might be asked by a patron. While you'll be expected to answer the questions themselves, the more important consideration in completing these assignments is an explanation of your process in pursuing the question's answer.

Group Project: Resource Evaluation and Presentation (25%)

Your final project this semester will be done as part of a group. There are several reasons for this: first, to replicate the collaborative environment in which you are likely to find yourself as an information professional; second, to maximize peer learning opportunities, and third, to maximize the quality of your work through blending individual group members' strengths.

I will assign each student to a group based on a variety of factors including areas of interest, scheduling preferences, and proximity. Your group will select, research, analyze, and evaluate two web-based subject databases from a list I will provide to you. Each group will present their findings to the rest of the class.

Your presentation should last approximately 20-minutes and provide an overview of the two databases, describing them according to Cassell & Hiremath's criteria for evaluating reference resources:

1. Scope
2. Content
3. Accuracy
4. Currency
5. Authority
6. Ease of use
7. Arrangement
8. Appropriateness for users/ Treatment
9. Format

You should plan to use a visual component (like PowerPoint slides) in your presentation. It is advisable to include screenshots to illustrate the resources' appearance, capabilities, and limitations.

While each group member is not required to speak during the presentation, each group member must participate in some way that is acceptable to the rest of the group.

By 11/15, your group should also submit a brief written summary of your evaluation. This need be no longer than 2 pages and will serve primarily as a vehicle for my comments.

Group Agreement (5%)

Your group will need to create a group agreement (templates and examples available in Canvas) outlining the group's expectations and processes for completing and submitting work. This is not a graded assignment in that as long as your agreement displays evidence of an appropriate amount of effort, each group will receive full credit. Use the Group Agreement writing process to explore roles and responsibilities. Also include the name of the resources you are evaluating.