INFORMATION STUDIES 10: INFORMATION AND POWER

SAMPLE COURSE SYLLABUS
SUMMER 2016 Session A
Meeting Time: Tuesday and Thursday 10:45 AM-12:50 PM
Location: GSEIS 111

INSTRUCTOR
Marika Cifor
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OFFICE HOURS
TBD or by appointment
244 GSE&IS Building

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES
Information Studies 10 draws on the research literature in information studies and related fields and on contemporary events and issues to explore the connection between information and power. Taking a social justice perspective, the course investigates the political, economic, legal, technological and cultural structures and forces that shape the ways that information is created, used, accessed, controlled, discarded, and destroyed. Topics include information and democratic institutions, legal and cultural perspectives on access, surveillance and privacy, censorship and leaks, the economics of information, and the politics of classification, categories, and ontologies.

This mixed lecture/discussion course is designed to combine group presentations, debate, readings and media to focus on the core issues that arise at the intersection of information and power.

As a result of instruction in this course, students should be able to:

- Describe how information and power have been defined and related in the research literature and popular discourse over time, and how these concepts foster or discourage social justice;
- Summarize major social issues associated with today’s information technologies, including privacy and surveillance, intellectual property, access to information resources, and political participation;
- Use specific cases or examples to evaluate current perspectives on these issues, as well as to construct, support and justify an argument about the mutual shaping of power and information.

COURSE WEBSITE
The course website can be accessed through MyUCLA.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS
Readings
Course readings are listed on the schedule under the date that they will be discussed in class. You are responsible for reading all of the assignments before this date. You should bring copies of the
assigned text(s) to each class session, as we will refer directly to them in our discussions. You should come to each class having read and thought about the material, with at least two meaningful contributions to make to the discussion. Dr. Miriam Sweeney’s piece “How to Read for Grad School,” is an excellent resource for any student as you think about how to make the most of your time preparing for class. It can be seen at: http://miriamsweeney.net/2012/06/20/readforgradschool/

Participation and Discussion In-Class
This class is primarily discussion based. Because the best learning happens iteratively, it is very difficult to earn an excellent grade in this course if you do not verbally participate in the conversation about research presented in this course. Being able to talk about course material is a vital part of learning it, and the ability to contribute in group situations is an indispensable skill in both college and the “real world.” Accordingly, I expect and require that everyone will participate actively in the discussions during our meetings. This is your time to ask questions and voice opinions and reactions related to the content of the course.

I encourage you to jot down notes, questions, and key passages as you do the reading. This will facilitate your contribution to the discussions (and help you come time to write about your case studies). Having questions and comments written down especially helps if you sometimes feel hesitant to contribute during discussion. Always read for the big picture or the main point, and then refine your thinking with the details. Bring an open mind and critical perspective to the course materials and class discussions; read the assigned readings BEFORE class, not during or after.

Tardiness and Attendance
In this class, as in much of life, punctual attendance is expected. You will need to sign-in on random occasions. If you need to miss class due to an illness or other emergency, please email me prior to your absence (if possible). You are still accountable for any assignments that were due during your absence. Please be on time. When you arrive late, you may miss valuable information and disrupt the class. Exception: Absences will not be counted if a valid excuse (for example, from your doctor) is submitted immediately upon returning to class. If you know you’ll be absent due to required work for another course, let me know in advance.

Getting a good grade in this class requires more than attendance. I expect to run this course as a seminar, which demands that students bring questions and commentary to every session. Missing more than two class meetings will reduce your grade a whole letter. Missing four class meetings means you are failing the course; come see me immediately. Students arriving to class 10 minutes late will not receive credit for attending class that day. However, you can get participation credit and the benefits of class discussion, so you may still want to attend.

Classroom Etiquette
This class shall maintain professional language use. Let us strive to use language that facilitates an environment of learning. Passion for research and the ideas that spawn from evidence is welcome. Critique ideas, backed with evidence, rather than criticize people. We must all work together to foster a respectful environment where diverse opinions can be freely voiced and a critical but constructive dialogue can be created. Please be open-minded with your classmates
and with me – none of us are perfect communicators, and communication includes the words we choose as well as the mindset with which messages are decoded and understood. You demonstrate learning by encountering and considering a wide range of possibilities, and I encourage you to become a well-rounded critical thinker and scholar. You do not have to agree with all the research presented, but you need to demonstrate you understand it.

**Respect for each other includes not talking, texting, working on laptops or tablets, or reading materials during class lecture or presentations. All cell phones must be turned off during class at ALL times.**

**Presentation of Coursework**
When required, all assignments MUST be typed in a 12-point font, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins with page numbers and your name on each page. All work for this class must be properly labeled. Every assignment should include: (1) course title/number, (2) generic assignment description, (3) your first and last name, and the (4) the date (e.g., “INFO10_Essay1_YourName_Date.docx”). It will be specified in assignment directions whether a hard and/or electronic copies of assignments are required.

**Tutoring Resources**
The Student Writing Center (A61 Humanities) offers UCLA undergraduates one-on-one sessions that address individual writing issues. The Center is staffed by undergraduates trained to help at any stage in the writing process and with writing assignments from across the curriculum. Students can walk in but appointments are preferred. For more information please call 310-206-1320 or visit www.wp.ucla.edu and click on “Student Writing Center/Make an Appointment.”

Academic Advancement Program (AAP) students can also use AAP Tutorials (1114 Campbell Hall, 206-1581).

**Students with Disabilities**
If you wish to request an accommodation due to a disability, please contact the Office for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible at A255 Murphy Hall, (310) 825-1501, (310) 206-6083 (telephone device for the deaf), or www.osd.ucla.edu.

**Academic Integrity**
All students are responsible for knowing the definitions and penalties for academic dishonesty, which include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, academic interference, etc. Students are expected to abide by the academic integrity provisions set out in the university student code of conduct. Please read UCLA’s plagiarism policy carefully (http://www.studentgroups.ucla.edu/dos/students/integrity/). It is the responsibility of the student to make her/himself aware of the standards of academic integrity. Plagiarized material submitted in this course will be penalized based on the rules and regulations outlined in the student code. Generally, when you submit work in this course, you are indicating that it is YOUR work. Copying another’s work wholesale is cheating and is only one kind of plagiarism. For example, plagiarism can be simply drawing on another’s ideas without giving proper credit. Please use a writing style guide to cite references, citations and resources appropriately in your work. You may choose a style guide of your choice (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.). Apply it consistently throughout your work. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.
Instructor Support
I am available to consult with you on your assignments and to answer any questions during office hours, by appointment and email. Please allow 24 hours for me to respond to emails during weekdays. On weekends and holidays, I cannot promise a prompt response to emails. Please include “INFO 10” in the subject line of your emails.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING
Students in INFO 10 will be evaluated on the basis of their participation and performance in class and on other required assignments; the percentage of the final course grade for each activity is indicated in parentheses:

Class preparation and participation (20%).
All students are expected to read or review all required materials in advance of each week’s class activities (required readings and additional resources are listed under “Topics/Modules,” below). They should be prepared to summarize and comment on those materials individually and in groups. As noted below in the syllabus, on some days students will also present discussion items, news stories, and reflections in class. Informed, active participation in all class meetings and discussions, both in the classroom and online, is required; therefore regular attendance is expected. Poor attendance and participation will negatively affect student performance and grades.

Assignments and exercises (10% each).
• **IIQ: Important/Interesting/Question.** Each student will be responsible once for setting the agenda for discussion based on one of the course readings. Students should identify 2 important things, 2 interesting things that they found or that occurred to them while doing the reading, and formulate 2 or more rich discussion questions. The reading selected for the IIQ cannot be the same as the one selected by the student for the Critical Analysis. Please hand in your IIQs at the beginning of the class session or email them to me before the start of class on the day you will be presenting them. These responses will be used to set the agenda for discussion to be continued and expanded upon in class.

• **Case study proposal.** Halfway through the course (week 3), students will turn in a short (2 pages) paper proposing their case study for the final paper (see below). In this proposal, identify the ‘actors’ that play a role in your case. Keep in mind that objects/technologies can also function as actors. Show how the various actors define the issue at stake. What is the matter of concern? How can this matter be resolved, according to the various actors? Demonstrate how the actors are connected, and how these connections have changed over time. Consider what readings from class and beyond you will be drawing on. This proposal is due in hardcopy on July 7 at the start of class.

Critical Analysis Postings (30%). These assignments are due on Fridays at 5pm (unless otherwise specified). Each student will be responsible for posting a Critical Analysis of one or more of the readings for that week. The point of this assignment is to get deeper into the readings, to give you a chance to consider some of the issues they raise and the implications of them, and to help you prepare for class discussions and assignments. There are many approaches you can take to each of the critical analysis postings. For example, you might compare and
contrast two of the readings in terms of argument, definition or other points. Alternately, you could apply a concept from the readings to a current issue of your choosing. You may also choose to focus on what about this reading was interesting, problematic, or meaningful to you personally. Whatever approach you take you will be asked to reflect on what the information, research or evidence means to you. You will also be asked to move beyond summary into your own analysis. Each Critical Analysis will be 1-2 pages with coherent paragraphs drawing on evidence from the reading and analyzing it. They should be posted to appropriate CCLE forum.

**Final Case Study Paper and Presentation (30%).**
Students will prepare a case study of an incident or controversy of their choosing and show how the case illustrates or exemplifies the connection between information and power (e.g. public response to government surveillance; the role of popular media and information services in elections; public education policy and curriculum; financial markets and trade, scientific controversies; etc.). Projects should include a detailed account of the case and a well-supported and well-argued discussion of how it demonstrates the relation between information and power, drawing on the concepts covered in the course (10 pages; 2500 words). The paper needs to explicitly engage with the main themes of our class and demonstrate a thoughtful, informed perspective that is based on our course readings, discussions, as applied to a topic of interest to you. The paper is worth 25%.

During week 6 of the course you will have approximately 5-6 minutes to share your case study with the class. The goal of the assignment is to articulate current issues that are relevant to the theme of the class and demonstrate your ability to recognize some of the attendant challenges and opportunities of the topic you have chosen. The presentation is worth 5%.

Possible topics for the case study include:
- Open access and academic journals
- Anonymous and the Patriot Act
- Facebook’s privacy policies
- Google and (non-)compliance with the European Union’s “Right to be Forgotten”
- The sharing of intelligence data across agencies through “Optic Nerve”
- YouTube as a forum for information-sharing and community building among transgender youth
- Zach Blas’ Facial Weaponization Suite as an artistic intervention in surveillance practices
- The UN’s use of biometric technology in refugee registration
- World of Warcraft and racial identity
- The use of Twitter in the #blacklivesmatter activism
- iPad implementation in the Los Angeles Unified School District

**Late Policy**
A hard copy of your paper assignments must be submitted to me at the **beginning** of class the day it is due. Final case study papers must also be submitted electronically to TURNITIN. For each day an assignment is late, you will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g. a B+ assignment two days late becomes a B- essay). This policy applies to both late assignments and late submission to TURNITIN and will affect the final grade of your essay. Departmental policy states that essays turned in more than one week late will receive an F.
Course Grading
Assignment Breakdown:
Attendance and participation 20%
IIQ 10%
Case Study Proposal 10%
Critical Analysis Postings 30%
Case Study Paper 25%
Presentation: 5%
TOTAL= 100%

Grading Scale:
97-100 A+; 93-96 A; 90-92 A-; 87-89 B+; 83-86 B; 80-82 B-; 77-79 C+; 73-76 C; 70-72 C-; 67-69 D+; 63-66 D; 60-62 D-; below 60 F

COURSE SCHEDULE
Please make sure to read the assigned readings before our class meeting on the corresponding day.

WEEK 1: Information, Power, Social Justice and Classifying and Collecting
We’ll look at some foundational concepts and ongoing debates surrounding our understandings of information, power, social justice and the relationship between all of these. Information intersects with power in the ways that the world is organized, named, and defined. Taxonomies, folksonomies, ontologies, and classification all have the power to name and categorize, affecting real-world struggles over information access and community identity. Critical Analysis Posting on these readings due on 6/24 at 5PM.

Tuesday June 21
Course introduction; Foundations and on-going debates
• Personal introductions. Overview of the course syllabus. Explanation of expectations for assignments. Demonstrating CCLE site.
• What is information? What is information studies? What is power? What is social justice? What does this all have to do with information?

Readings:

Optional Readings:

Thursday June 23
Classification, Authorities, Naming, and Tagging
Readings:

Optional readings:

WEEK 2: Information and Data Access, Politics, and Equity
Cultural, legal, economic, and political influences all play a role in the equitable and effective distribution of information access and use. Key concepts we’ll go over include the “digital divid,” and the politics of search engines. Critical Analysis Posting on these readings due 7/1 at 5PM.

Tuesday June 28
Digital Divides
Readings:

Optional
Thursday June 30
Search and the Politics of Access
Readings:


Optional readings:


WEEK 3: Data, Politics and the Governance of Information Technologies
This week we will look at the politics of data (big and small), net neutrality and at how information technologies are objects of conflict, as actors struggle for control at the level of network infrastructure. Case Study Proposal is due at the beginning of class on 7/7. Critical Analysis Posting on these readings due on 7/8 at 5 PM.

Tuesday July 5
Data Structures, Ownership and Study
Readings:


Optional readings:


Thursday July 7
Internet Governance
Assignment:
• Case Study Proposal due.
Readings:

WEEK 4: Information, Community, and Resistance
We will examine what are the social, political, technological and economic conditions that make the ability of individuals and groups to inquire, read, speak, hear, learn and know without unwarranted restrictions or influence possible social change. We will also look at the formation of identities and communities through information technologies. Critical Analysis Posting on these readings due on 7/15 at 5 PM.

Tuesday July 12
Digtial activisms, Social Media, and Power
Readings:

Thursday July 14
Technology, Identity and Digital Community
Readings:

• Act 1: “Computer Or Human + Thad,” *Invisibilii* No. 6 “Our Computers, Ourselves” (February 13, 2015)


**WEEK 5: Information and the State**

What is the role of government in democratic states to regulate and make information available? On the one hand it is the state’s responsibility to make documents public and accessible; on the other hand, its duty is to protect citizens and national security, which are often used to justify surveillance and censorship. How do information technologies define, support, or undermine the nation-state? **Critical Analysis Posting on these readings due on 7/22 at 5 PM.**

**Tuesday July 19**

FOIA and the Right to Know

Reading and viewing:

• Watch Clay Shirky’s TED Talk, How the Internet Will One Day Transform Government.


**Thursday July 21**

Leaks and state surveillance

Readings and viewing:


Optional readings
INFO 10, 11

- Kaplan, F. (2015). Mend It, Don’t End It. Available at: http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/war_stories/2015/05/congress_should_revise_the_patriot_act_s_section_215_the_national_security.html

**WEEK 6: Information, Economics and Political Action**

We will discuss the political economy of information, as bounded by culture, technologies, and the law. As restrictions on information grow, so do the practices and technologies used to work around them. We will also look at how information technologies are used as a medium for political action and contestation. **Critical Analysis Posting on these readings due on 7/29 at 5 PM.**

**Tuesday July 26**

Copyright and the Public Domain, Copyleft and Free Culture

Assignment:
- Case Study Presentations

Readings:
- Bazelon, E. (2013). When the Law is Worse Than the Crime. Available at: http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2013/01/aaron_swartz_suicide_prosecutors_have_too_much_power_to_charge_and_intimidate.html

**Thursday July 28**

Hacking and Intellectual Freedom

Assignment:
- Case Study Presentations

Readings:

Optional readings:

**FINALS WEEK**

**Tuesday August 2**

Assignments:

Final case study paper due to TURNITIN by 5 pm.