

Social Aspects of Information Systems (Info215)
College of Computing & Informatics, Drexel University
Course Syllabus, Spring 2018

Section 001
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30–10:50 a.m., in Rush 014

Instructor
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Office hours by appt



Quito City Library, Ecuador
Photo by Denise Agosto

Course Description

Info215 introduces some of the social issues involved in information systems design and use, such as personal computing, telecommuting, computers in education, the privacy and security of stored and transmitted information, information ownership and copyright, and the interaction of high technology, employment, and class structure. When you have completed this course, you should be able to:

- Understand the concepts of the information society, the information industry and the information profession as a context for becoming familiar with a broad range of social, economic, political, and legal issues affecting information systems.
- Understand the interactions between emerging technologies and social systems.
- Acquire and use analytic skills in recognizing and understanding some of the social, economic, political and legal aspects of information systems.
- Understand the societal context in which information professionals work.

Course Content

The course includes lectures, discussions of readings, and student debates. Coursework involves: (a) reading and analyzing scholarly articles; (b) connecting these articles with your personal experiences; and (c) completing assignments, presenting class presentations and participating in debates. Active participation in class discussions is a key component of the course.

Course Readings

There is no required textbook. Most of the readings in this course will be items you will find during your own research, but there will also be a set of required readings. The required readings, which are listed on the schedule, will be made available on Drexel Learn (a.k.a. Blackboard or BbL, at <http://learn.dcollege.net>). Other readings may be added throughout the course, particularly in the case of relevant current events.

Reading, for better or worse, is not a simple matter of osmosis. To be successful in this course, you should practice active reading. A good way to do that is to come up with as many questions as you can while you read. Think about them and write them down. Grapple with them. Why did the author write this? Why was it assigned in this course? Pay attention to what you do not understand, what you

disagree with, what surprises you, etc. Observe your feelings and hunches while you read. Consider how you can bring the author's ideas forward, coming up with additional examples of concepts and applying the ideas in your own life.

Reading can be very difficult. Worse, it can also be time-consuming. You should expect to have to read some things more than once. When you do the readings, it helps to be in a relaxed setting, to have time dedicated to the task, etc.—the stuff we “know” but often forget to practice. To encourage you to put these things into practice, we won't be doing all that much reading in this course—typically one article a week, and not every week. So read diligently.

Assignments and Grading

A total of 100 points will be allocated as follows. Even if you add this course late, you are required to complete all assignments.

Sociotechnical Perspectives	20	
Debate	15	<i>presentation 5, summary 10</i>
Dystopia Project	20	
Final Project Topic Proposal	5	
Final Project Essay	20	
Final presentation	5	
Participation in class discussions	15	

Final letter grades will be calculated according to the following scale:

A+	97–100
A	93–96.9
A-	90–92.9
B+	87–89.9
B	83–86.9
B-	80–82.9
C+	77–79.9
C	73–76.9
C-	70–72.9
D+	67–69.9
D	63–66.9
D-	60–62.9
F	<60

Grading Standards

You will be graded according to the Universal Intellectual Standards published by the Critical Thinking Community. As such, your grade will depend on how well you responded to the requirements of the assignment (relevance), the quality of your argument (clarity, logic and fairness), your grasp of the subject matter (accuracy and precision), the depth of your analysis, and the effective use of the literature to support your arguments and observations (breadth).

A – Excellent. Goes beyond mastery of “facts” or the ideas presented in class to propose original ways of thinking. Creatively synthesizes class readings and discussions with outside readings, personal reflections, and observations about the world when available. Clearly differentiates personal opinions

from alternate interpretations and supports arguments with citations and/or data. Exhibits no or virtually no misapprehensions of course material.

B – *Good*. Demonstrates understanding of the course materials and ideas presented in class. Exhibits few misapprehensions of course material. Most arguments are supported with citations and/or data, although personal opinions can be included.

C – *Okay*. Meets most expectations but some material is misapprehended, not addressed, or not explained well.

D – *Poor*. Misses or insufficiently addresses parts of the assignment; demonstrates faulty understanding of significant portions of course material.

F – *Failing*. Consistent misapprehension of course material; major parts of the assignment are missing or insufficiently addressed.

Assignments

Please read and follow all assignment instructions carefully. Submit all assignments on Drexel Learn. (If you create something that is not electronic, then bring it to class.) You must turn in all assignments to pass this class. Late assignments will be penalized by one grade per day (A would-be A paper one day late gets a B, two days late gets a C, etc.).

Writing

This course includes non-written options for some of the assignments, but no matter what you will be doing some writing this quarter. I expect work to be well-written; your grade will take into account grammar, readability and spelling in addition to content. If you are interested in improving your writing, I recommend the book *The Sense of Style*, by Steven Pinker.

If you would like writing assistance, avail yourself of the [Drexel Writing Center](#) (MacAlister 0032). If English is not your first language, you may note this on the assignment, and I will take that into account; however, I expect to see an earnest effort toward improvement.

Class Policies

Attendance and Participation

Participation is a critical aspect of this course and constitutes 15 percent of your grade. Regular class attendance is required as part of participation. You may miss two classes—no questions asked—and still receive full points. If you miss more than two, your participation grade will go down by 3 points for each missed class. Note that *participation* means more than mere attendance. You must come prepared and take part in discussions to receive full points.

That said, I understand that some people are shy or otherwise get anxious around discussion. I also understand that no one can be at 100% all the time. Some days are difficult for personal or other reasons, and some topics are less engaging than others. All I ask is that you do your best on any given day. If you have concerns about meeting the participation requirements, let me know.

If you miss a class, you can watch it on Echo360. However, viewing lectures online has no impact on your attendance grade. Late adders are required to complete all assignments and to be familiar with all of the course material missed. You will not be penalized in your participation grade if you added late.

PRO TIP! Don't ever ask instructors if you "missed anything important" in class!

Academic Honesty

Any incidence of plagiarism or other academic dishonesty will result in an automatic F for the course. Do not plagiarize from anywhere, including articles, class handouts, other students, websites/templates, work you have submitted to another course, etc. All the work you turn in must be your own original work for this course. Quotes from others' work must be properly cited.

Any assignment that includes plagiarized material, including using someone else's work or your own work from another course, will result in course failure and reporting of the incident to the College. No excuses will be accepted. It is up to you to be familiar with what counts as plagiarism. Here are some suggested sources for understanding plagiarism:

- [Presentation on Academic Integrity from the Drexel Libraries](#)
- <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>
- <https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/avoiding-plagiarism>

Note on Collaborative Work: Studying together or providing one another with feedback on writing is not dishonest. I encourage you to share your work with one another responsibly. Just don't plagiarize!

PRO TIP! Give credit where credit is due.

Academic honesty not just about following the rules. It's about not being a jerk.

Sources and Source Citations

You should be reading articles, news reports, blog posts, etc., relevant to the class, and your writing should draw on these sources. You can cite a mixture of types of materials in our papers, but be sure that at least half of the items you cite in in your papers are well-researched scholarly articles.

All written work should be formatted according to the American Psychological Association (APA) sixth-edition (2010) style guide. This is the standard style guide for writing in the social sciences, including information science and systems. The manual provides guidance on clear and correct writing as well as in-text citation conventions and reference list citation style. You may also consult online resources for formatting, such as [Purdue Owl](#), but be warned that online sources vary in their up-to-dateness and accuracy. For more resources, see <http://libguides.library.drexel.edu/citation>.

PRO TIP! Avoid citing dictionaries and encyclopedias (such as Wikipedia) in college papers. Look for sources with interesting and new ideas in them like peer-reviewed, scientific and scholarly publications.

Course Technology

Blackboard and your official university email address will be used for all course communication. There will be no makeups if you miss an assignment because you did not read an email. You are responsible for the correct submission of your work via Blackboard, and you should be familiar with how Blackboard works. Classes will be recorded by the Echo360 lecture capture system for you to review later if you wish.

Incompletes

Incomplete grades for the term are issued at the professor's discretion and will be issued only in extreme cases, after the student has worked with the professor to try to complete the work during the term. Incompletes will be given only to students whose completed coursework has been qualitatively satisfactory, but who are unable to complete all course requirements because of serious illness or other extenuating circumstances beyond their control. Students should notify the professor

via email as soon as they realize they are having trouble completing work on time. Note that the decision whether or not to allow an incomplete is up to the professor, not the student, and in most cases, requests for incompletes will be denied.

Course Withdrawal

University policies apply.

Course Evaluations

Official course evaluations will be available online. Please complete them since they serve an important role in improving the quality of education at Drexel.

Provisions for Students with Disabilities

Students [requesting accommodations](#) due to a disability at Drexel University need to request a current Accommodations Verification Letter (AVL) in the [ClockWork database](#) before accommodations can be made. These requests are received by Disability Resources (DR), who then issues the AVL to the appropriate contacts. For additional information, visit the DR website at drexel.edu/oed/disabilityResources/overview/, or contact DR for more information by phone at 215.895.1401, or by email at disability@drexel.edu.

Course Schedule

		Topics	Readings to be done before class	Assignments due
Week 1	T 4/3	Introduction and Overview		
	R 4/5	What is “society”?	Brey, “The Strategic Role of Technology”	
Week 2	T 4/10	Epistemic Concepts; Information Society	Webster, “Theories of the Information Society”	
	R 4/12	Sociotechnical Approaches	Winner, “Do Artifacts have Politics?”	
Week 3	T 4/17	Communities & Social Networks		
	R 4/19	Web 2.0 and IoT		Sociotechnical Perspectives
Week 4	T 4/24	Work & The Sharing Economy	Hamari, “The Sharing Economy”	
	R 4/26	Debates 1: The Digital Divide	<i>If debating:</i> Materials you select	<i>If debating:</i> Debate Summary
Week 5	T 5/1	Information Ethics, pt. 1	Donovan, “Algorithmic Accountability”; Floridi, “Soft Ethics”	
	R 5/3	Information Ethics, pt. 2	Podcast episodes	
Week 6	T 5/8	Privacy, pt. 1; Overview of Final Project		Dystopia Project
	R 5/10	Privacy, pt. 2	Meola, “Security & Privacy”; Abomhara, “Security & Privacy”	
Week 7	T 5/15	Debates 2: Copyright and DRM	<i>If debating:</i> Materials you select	<i>If debating:</i> Debate Summary
	R 5/17	Debates 3: Open Data	<i>If debating:</i> Materials you select	<i>If debating:</i> Debate Summary
Week 8	T 5/22	Artificial Intelligence		Final Project Topic Proposal
	R 5/24	Current Research in Social Media	Agosto & Abbas, “Don’t be Dumb!”	
Week 9	T 5/29	Debates 4: Educational Technologies	<i>If debating:</i> Materials you select	<i>If debating:</i> Debate Summary
	R 5/31	Course Review	Damasio, “The Human Condition Now”	
Weekro	T 6/5	Final Presentations		Final Project; Presentations
	R 6/7	Final Presentations; Course Wrap-up		Presentations