

INF 335 – Information in Cyberspace

Ivan Watkins
Unique Number 28075
Fall 2016

Syllabus

The syllabus for INF 335 includes goals for the course, the grading policy, and an overview of assignments. If, at any time throughout the semester, you have questions about the syllabus, please contact your instructor for clarification.

Contact

Instructor: Ivan Watkins
Office Hours: By appointment
Email: (please contact me using Canvas) iwatkins at utexas.edu
Office: N/A
TA: TA Pool
Email: ta_pool@ischool.utexas.edu
Google Hangout: https://talkgadget.google.com/hangouts/_/g4p4bw3kagcndiumrjgephaa7ia
Skype: ischool.itlab

Course Goals

Information in Cyberspace (INF335) is a course designed for undergraduate students that provides an overview of the history and social impact of Internet and Web technology. INF335 emphasizes technology self-sufficiency and information literacy.

The purpose of this course is to prepare students to think about information technology in a critical, thoughtful manner. The goal of this course is to pull back the curtain on some of the inner workings of information technology and empower students to navigate confidently through information spaces in networked environments. While it may be safe to assume the Internet will continue to exist for the foreseeable future, we can count on our description of cyberspace changing over time. This course aims to give students the tools to think critically about networked information communication technologies and their role as information consumers, producers, and leaders in the evolution of cyberspace.

Course Objectives

Students will learn:

- About technical applications that make the Internet possible.
- About political, financial, and social implications of creating content on the Internet.
- How to find, evaluate, and cite Information resources on the Internet.
- How to protect content and resources from malicious attacks.
- How to create content (such as Web pages) on the Internet.

Students will enact the following learning techniques:

- Reading about history and current news related to information technology.
- Discussing history and current news related to information technology.
- Completing hands-on projects to practice presenting and assessing information in different contexts.

Students will develop an online portfolio that is both a formative and summative evaluation of their learning over the course of the semester.

Course Prerequisites

While there are no prerequisite classes for INF335, you should know the following before taking this course:

1. You need to contact your instructors and TAs to ask questions or get help at the first sign of trouble.
2. You need to pay close attention to the course home page to keep up with what's going on.
3. You need to plan to spend at least 12 hours a week working on this class.
4. Students who are unable to motivate and organize themselves, and especially those who don't communicate with their instructors or TAs, tend to be unsuccessful in a virtual classroom environment.
5. Although it is not necessary to be a computer expert to complete this course, you do need to know the basics of operating a personal computer and navigating the Internet. You should know how to:
 - a. Create folders and view the contents of a disk;
 - b. Open an application or program;
 - c. Send and receive e-mail;
 - d. Search the Internet.
6. Submit work that meets college-level writing standards.

If you don't know how to do these things, let your instructor or TA know during the first week of class. We will be happy to sit down and show you how to do it.

Required Readings

Readings are available online via the course modules.

Assignments and Grading

INF 335 consists of seven modules. Most modules include three graded elements: online discussions, a quiz, and a project. Each module is approximately two weeks long.

MODULE	DUE DATES	COMPONENTS	TOTAL POINTS
0	8/24 – 9/7	2 Discussion posts (4 pts) Quiz (6 pts)	10
1	9/7 – 9/21	2 Discussion posts (4 pts) Project (6 pts) Quiz (5 pts)	15
2	9/21 – 10/5	2 Discussion posts (4 pts) Quiz (11 pts)	15
3	10/5 – 10/19	2 Discussion posts (4 pts) Project (6 pts) Quiz (5 pts)	15
4	10/19 – 11/2	2 Discussion posts (4 pts) Project (6 pts) Quiz (5 pts)	15
5	11/2 – 11/16	2 Discussion posts (4 pts) Project (6 pts) Quiz (5 pts)	15
6 or 7 (student choice)	11/16 – 12/5	2 Discussion posts (4 pts) Project (6 pts) Quiz (5 pts)	15
TOTAL			100

Late Assignments

It is important to complete your work on time, both so you can stay on track and so you can collaborate and interact with your fellow students. Late assignments will not be accepted and will receive a zero. I will use the Canvas upload time as the official time of the submission, so if you submit your assignment 5 seconds after the deadline, Canvas will mark your assignment as late and you will receive a zero for that assignment. Please submit assignments well in advance. Any computer problems, network outages, or other “technical” issues do not constitute a valid excuse for submitting late assignments.

Plan ahead. This is an online course and you have a full week to ensure you complete everything on time. As there is no scheduled class time, you must be responsible for completing work in a timely manner. The course allows for a lot of flexibility for you to schedule your work, so I will be very strict about excused late work.

High-Level Schedule

In this course, you will complete six primary instructional modules covering the following areas:

1. Orientation to the course and search techniques
2. A discussion of the definition of Cyberspace and History of the Internet
3. An examination of the technical underpinnings of the Internet
4. Accessibility, gender issues, and other social concerns for information in cyberspace
5. Search and evaluation of information
6. Student's choice of a module about online health information (module 6) or video games (module 7)

Learning objectives and due dates for the assignments will be posted on the first page of each module.

Each module contains:

1. Learning objectives for the module
2. Introductory content on the topic, developed by the i335 team
3. Online audio, video, and reading assignments
4. At least two deliverables: a quiz, a participation post, and a project.

Details on the discussion format and topics may vary with each module and will be shared at the beginning of each module. All work must be submitted by midnight on the specified due date. Assignments will include instructions for how they should be submitted, but each assignment will require some part to be submitted to Canvas.

Required Readings

All required readings for this course are available through the course modules. We will ask you to read articles from other schools and websites, watch online videos produced here or elsewhere, and work through online tutorials created by School of Information.

Grading

Points for most **modules** come from three areas:

1. **Class Participation**
2. **Quiz**
3. **Project**

Class Participation

In each module, you will contribute to the discussion forum as part of the class participation assignment.

PLEASE NOTE: You will be expected to participate in the discussion forum throughout the week, not at the end of each module. Details on discussion requirements will be discussed at the start of each module. Each discussion is graded on a two-point scale:

1 Point: Original discussion submissions of at least 150 words (unless the discussion topic specifically states a different length). Your post should make it clear that you read that week's assigned reading.

2 Points: Along with your initial submission must respond to submissions of two classmates. These responses should be at least two sentences long and move the conversation forward. Responses such as "I agree, this is similar to my experience" will not receive credit because they do not move the conversation forward. This requirement means you will not receive credit for your entire submission, including your original submission.

Quiz

A pre-test appears at the start of most modules. This pre-test is ungraded, but can help you preview the upcoming material and get a sense of the questions that may be on the final quiz. A traditional quiz follows each module. This quiz will test your comprehension of module content and the readings. Feel free to use the module content and readings while you take the quiz.

Project

The project will differ for each module, but all projects will incorporate skills taught throughout the course. Start projects early and contact your Instructor or TA early if you need help. Each project will require you to submit a written component in word format prior to the end of the module.

Each of the written components of the project will be submitted to Canvas and will be passed through the Turnitin plagiarism check software. The results of this software analysis are not the only method I use to detect plagiarism. If I find blatant plagiarism (e.g., copy and paste from Wikipedia) you will be referred to Student Judicial Services and you fail the class. Avoid plagiarism!

The submission format for most projects will be a page on the Wordpress site you will develop during the semester. It is critically important that you submit the correct URL, since your project will be graded based on the **screenshot** that Canvas takes of your submission. If you submit the incorrect URL and Canvas takes a screenshot of your login screen (for example), you won't receive credit for that part of the assignment. Double check your submissions and contact TA's immediately if you experience problems. Please don't let technical errors get in the way of success!

Grade conversions

We will make every effort to grade your submissions within a week of the assignment deadline. Some assignments may take longer to grade. If you have questions or concerns about a grade, please let me know!

This class uses an accumulation of points to determine your grade, not a percentage. This can be confusing if you are used to looking at averages, so the chart below should help.

YOU MUST COMPLETE ALL MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS TO PASS THE CLASS. If you fail to turn in one of the projects, you will not pass the class regardless of how many points you have collected. The projects are the major assignments.

You will find your grades in the lefthand menu of Canvas. If you have trouble, contact your TA or instructor.

A	93 – 100 points
A -	90 - 92
B +	86 - 89
B	83 - 86
B -	80 - 82
C +	77 - 79
C	73 - 76
C -	70 - 72
D+	67 – 69
D	63 - 66
D-	60 - 62 (minimum for pass/fail students to pass)
F	Below 60 points

University Policies

Academic Integrity

Please adhere to the University's policy on academic integrity. All work you submit must be your own. "Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating and plagiarism... Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. University policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced." From: The University of Texas: General Information, Appendix C.

Special Needs

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. To determine if you qualify, please contact the Dean of Students at 471-6259; 471-4641 TTY. If they certify your needs, we will work with you to make appropriate arrangements.

Religious or Holy Day Observance

"A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence."

(<http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/gi04-05/ch4/ch4g.html>)

Email

"Electronic mail (e-mail), like postal mail, is a mechanism for official University communication to students. The University will exercise the right to send e-mail communications to all students, and the University will expect that e-mail communications will be received and read in a timely manner."

(<http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/gi04-05/app/appn.html>). Both the instructor and the TA will reply to student emails within 24 hours on weekdays and 48 hours on weekends barring a rare and extenuating circumstance.

I look forward to working with you all this semester. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, do not hesitate to email me!