UNL 205 – Information Literacy – Syllabus, Spring 2011, 8wk2 (5225)

Instructor: Greg Bobish
Office Location: LI 107B
E-mail: gbobish@uamail.albany.edu
Phone: (518) 442-3581 Fax: (518) 442-3088
Office Hours: Wednesday s 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. or by appointment
Course Day & Time: Tuesday, 2:45 to 4:45
Location: University Library Basement, Room LI0048
Course Blog: http://liblogs.albany.edu/infolitgreg

Description:

Information is an extremely necessary and valuable commodity in today’s world. Information is far more accessible than it ever was, and is generated by a far broader range of authors than ever before. Indeed, you yourself are an information producer, and you may be publishing some of this information publically on the Web. Because of this incredible abundance, it is imperative to be able to efficiently find information and to critically assess and evaluate it and the sources in which it appears. In this course, you will interact with a broad range of information sources and strategies for finding information. You will practice using your skills in the context of a team-based wiki on a topic connected with information in today’s world. There will be a focus in the course on a wide range of ethical and social issues connected with accessing and using information, from plagiarism to Internet privacy, not only to increase your exposure to different viewpoints, but also to empower you in your own decision making processes. UNL 205X meets the Information Literacy General Education requirement. Please see the end of the syllabus for more details.
**Professional Skills:**
*When you leave this class, you will have gained or honed the following skills that will be important in the workplace or in graduate school:*

1. You will know where to look to find the information you need. If you don’t know immediately, you will have strategies to determine where to look.

2. You will know that appropriate format, as well as creator and quality of the information, will affect where you look.

3. You will have effective skills for finding the information you need, without wasting time.

4. In conjunction with the knowledge you gain in your major, you will be an effective evaluator of the information you find. This will help you with your projects or reports.

5. You will be a good resource for others whose information finding skills are less developed.

These skills will increase your value to employers, as well as your skills when researching job opportunities and preparing for interviews.

**Student Responsibilities:**

Each student is expected to contribute to an environment conducive to the learning of all students. This contribution includes, but is not limited to:

- Respecting the opinions and work of others
- Being prepared to participate actively, both in the class as a whole, and in your team
- Taking responsibility for your learning and progress in the course
- Helping your team and the rest of the class to learn, and allowing others to help you learn
- Seeking help from the instructor as needed

Students are responsible for knowing and following the policies. University policies are outlined in the Undergraduate Bulletin (http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html).
Instructional Methods:

This class will incorporate active learning techniques and will require a high level of student participation. Teams will be established on the first day of class, and will work together throughout the course. Preparation for class material will take place before class, and several times during the quarter, I will be giving readiness assessment tests (RATs), checking your preparation for class. These tests will be taken first individually, and then as a team. Students will be responsible for taking part in class and team discussions. I am a strong proponent of learning by doing and by discussing. There will be little lecture during the course. Class readings and assignments as well as supplementary materials will be available through Blackboard. Teams will be using a wiki to present their work.

Because of the structure of the course and your team’s reliance upon every member, you need to attend regularly in order to do well.

Class Policies:

1. Class attendance policies:

   - Readiness assessment tests are generally given at the beginning of class, and once one starts it is not possible to take it if you arrive late.

   - Work done during class is integral to the course, so this work cannot be made up. Your team will be counting on your participation.

2. Assignments:

   - It is always the responsibility of the student to know when assignments are due.

   - In order to show exact formatting, you must type citation and annotation assignments. I do not accept handwritten citations and annotations. Submit these assignments in Word or rtf files via Blackboard before midnight on the day before class.

   - Please write “This is my work and only my work” on each assignment you turn in or in the Blackboard submission comment box. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and may result in a failing grade for the course. I will also report it to the Office of Undergraduate Education. For more information on plagiarism, go to http://library.albany.edu/usered/plagiarism/index.html

3. Please turn off cell phones, Blackberries, iPods, and other personal electronic devices before class starts. In order to protect the computers, only water can be brought into the classroom.

4. Incompletes are not given for this course.
Grading and Course Requirements:

Grading (A-E grading system)

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<td>D-</td>
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<td>595 and below</td>
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15% Discussion posts on blog  
15% Individual research guide components  
24% RATs (50% individual, 50% team)  
6% Weekly team wiki assignments  
25% Team Wiki  
5% Team presentation  
10% Team peer feedback and assessment  
5% Extra credit available

Blog Posting Assignments

There are frequently breaking news stories or information on Websites that concern the topics we will be discussing in class about which I will post. You will be responding either to one of my posts, or one of your classmate’s posts, on a weekly basis. Grades will be based on the quality and depth of your posts. You will earn more points if you effectively respond not only to the initial discussion posting, but also respond to others’ comments. Thoughtful, in-depth posts will probably be in the range of two paragraphs. Brief, perfunctory, or unoriginal responses will earn few points. Please be civil and considerate in your messages.
Your final course project is a wiki-based research guide, produced collaboratively by your team. This guide will provide solid evidence of your team’s understanding of the material highlighted in this course. Consider it, too, as a guide for novice researchers on the topic you are addressing. You should create your wiki guide with these interested users in mind. Throughout the course, you will be finding, citing, and evaluating information sources on your team’s topic. You will supplement the annotated bibliography portion of the guide with additional materials to aid these novices: an introduction in the form of the thesis statement page, a glossary of key terminology, and a review of the best database you identified for locating sources (with search strategy). I will create team discussion forums within Blackboard, should you desire to use them.

Your individual weekly assignments contribute to the team wiki, and will be submitted, via Blackboard, before midnight on the day preceding the class meeting.

The final wiki-based research guide created by your team will contain the following components, presented in an aesthetically and functionally pleasing way:

- Title
- Indication of the wiki’s components, with a way to maneuver between them
- Thesis Page: This page will include your team’s thesis statement, and a narrative of approximately one page that indicates how key items in the research guide helped you prove (or disprove!) your thesis statement.
- Glossary of Terminology: Define, in your own words, five of the terms connected with your team’s topic. Select terms that novice researchers might not understand, or that were important when you were doing database searches for materials. If you need to include a brief phrase from a print- or Web-based source, include an in-text citation to show that these are not your words.
- Annotated bibliography: See below for full specifications
- Analysis of a valuable library subscription database with comparison to a second, less helpful, database. Includes a helpful and focused search strategy for the best database.
- The grading rubric that your team has filled out. Bring this to class, or submit as a Word document through Blackboard.
The annotated bibliography portion of the wiki should contain nine items in alphabetical order or in another way that your team thinks is the most helpful to readers:

- A reference source
- A book
- Three articles (based on criteria discussed in class)
- Two excellent Web sites
- One primary source
- One additional resource from one of these categories: government document, multimedia source (for example, a video, or a video or audio clip mounted on the Web), or the format of your choice as long as the source is an excellent one, as documented in your annotation
- *An appropriate source from amongst the 9 should also be labeled as a secondary source*

You need to label each item in some way so I will know what category it fulfills. One option is to put the type of source in parentheses, for example: (scholarly article). In addition, add the label (secondary source) to an appropriate existing source, in addition to its first label. Your team may find another way to indicate categories, which is fine, as long as it is clear.

Use the MLA citation generator page (also linked through Blackboard), or the 7th edition of the Modern Language Association of America’s style manual, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (ReadyRef LB 2369 G53 2009, also available in Reference) to make certain your citations are written correctly.

**Course Readings:**

Required and suggested readings for this course will be available through Blackboard. The assignments, videos, and other course materials will also be there.
Extra Credit:

#1: Goblin Threat Game (15 points):
http://www.lycoming.edu/library/instruction/tutorials/plagiarismGame.html

If you complete this game successfully by Class 6 and send (or bring) your confirmation of completion page to me, I will give you fifteen points toward your final grade. Register with your name as you enter the game, so you will have proof of playing the game at the end.

#2: Convincing Other Students of the Importance of Information Literacy (up to 35 points)

Develop a creative product (artwork, short video, song, poem of at least 20 lines, engaging PowerPoint presentation, series of a half dozen or more Twitter posts accessible via a distinctive hashtag, creation of an IL-focused Facebook group which attracts UAlbany members, etc.) in which the goal is to convince UAlbany students who have not yet taken the information literacy general education requirement of the following:

- The importance of this general education requirement
- The importance of being information literate in everyday life
- Possible consequences of not being information literate

There is obviously no “right” response to this assignment. I am looking forward to enjoying your creativity. To be eligible for full points, you will want to do some research on the importance of being information literate, and provide evidence of this research in your product. Points given will be based upon covering the bulleted items above and incorporating information gained through your research. Please feel free to ask questions of me if you are interested in this assignment, and wish further information. You must submit your product, either electronically or in person, by class time on April 26. If you are willing to share your product with the rest of the class, or more broadly, on the UNL Website, that would be much appreciated!

No other extra credit assignments are available.
Class Outline

Class 1

Introduction/Student Introductions

Team Selection and Intro to TBL

Review of Syllabus

RATs on syllabus (individual and team)

What is info lit?

Guidelines for topics

Groups choose topics in class and post to wiki

Thinking preparation for blog topic: Analysis of data set

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Homework:

1. Watch the video “The Beauty of Data Visualization”
   (http://www.ted.com/talks/david_mccandless_the_beauty_of_data_visualization.html), visit the website http://www.informationisbeautiful.net/ and post a comment to the class blog: http://liblogs.albany.edu/infolitgreg

2. Watch the following 3 short videos on how to use the Minerva library catalog, all accessible from the Minerva search screen:
   - Basic Search
   - Advanced Search
   - Subject Headings

3. Read the following web page about developing thesis statements:
Class 2

RATs (individual and team)

Individually post a thesis statement on your topic to blackboard

Teams discuss and pick their favorite thesis statement and post it to wiki

Books and Reference Sources – brief introduction

Blog topic preparation – open access exercise

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Homework

1. Watch/Read Open Access material and post individual comments to blog

2. Find/cite/annotate one book and one reference book on your topic. Hand this in on Blackboard by midnight of the day before class.


Class 3

RATs (individual and team)

Types of articles exercise

Finding articles

Teams discuss, add best book and best ref book to wiki with citation and annotation improved by team

Team member feedback

Blog introduction (copyright)

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Homework

1. Watch Lawrence Lessig talk:  
http://www.ted.com/talks/larry_lessig_says_the_law_is_strangling_creativity.html, look at Creative Commons website: http://creativecommons.org/ and post individual comments to blog

2. Individually find/cite/annotate 3 articles and hand in on Blackboard by midnight the day before class.


Class 4

RATs

Web searching exercise in teams

Teams discuss and add best 3 articles (one of each type) to team wiki

Blog introduction (privacy)

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Homework

Read http://www.eff.org/files/eff-locational-privacy.pdf and post a comment on the blog individually.

Individually find/cite/annotate 2 quality websites and hand them in by midnight the day before class.

Read primary and secondary source materials: http://library.albany.edu/usered/dr/primary.html and http://library.albany.edu/usered/dr/prisci.html
Class 5
Follow-up privacy exercise
Teams discuss and choose best 2 websites on topic and post to wiki
Teams discuss and choose best primary source on topic and post to wiki, and identify a secondary source on wiki
Blog topic: Cognitive Surplus preparation

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Homework
1. Complete peer assessment
2. Watch http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_iN_QubRsQ and post comment on blog.

Class 6
Course evaluation
Follow-up cognitive surplus exercise
Team work on wikis – thesis page linking thesis statement to sources – final editing of other parts

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Homework
Wiki grading rubric
Team wiki should be completed

Class 7
Team presentation of wikis
Wrap-up exercise
Characteristics of all General Education Courses

1. General Education courses offer introductions to the central topics of disciplines and interdisciplinary fields.
2. General Education courses offer explicit rather than tacit understandings of the procedures, practices, methodology and fundamental assumptions of disciplines and interdisciplinary fields.
3. General Education courses recognize multiple perspectives on the subject matter.
4. General Education courses emphasize active learning in an engaged environment that enables students to be producers as well as consumers of knowledge.
5. General Education courses promote critical inquiry into the assumptions, goals, and methods of various fields of academic study; they aim to develop the interpretive, analytic, and evaluative competencies characteristic of critical thinking.

Information Literacy General Education Courses

Information Literacy General Education courses introduce students to various ways in which information is organized and structured and to the process of finding, using, producing, and distributing information in a variety of media formats, including traditional print as well as computer databases. Students acquire experience with resources available on the Internet and learn to evaluate the quality of information, to use information ethically and professionally, and to adjust to rapidly changing technology tools. Student must complete this requirement within the freshman or sophomore year.