


COLLEGE OF
COMMUNICATION &
INFORMATION

INSC 542:
Social Informatics



COURSE INFORMATION

Spring 2024

School of Information Sciences, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Course Section: [001, 002]

Course Credit Hours: 3

Asynchronous Online Course

Faculty Contact Information

- Devendra Potnis, PhD [Recipient of "[Faculty Teaching Award 2020](#)"]
- Email: dpotnis@utk.edu
- Virtual Office: [Zoom Meeting Room](#)
- Web Page URL: <https://sis.utk.edu/dp>
- Office Hours: By appointment



Welcome Statement

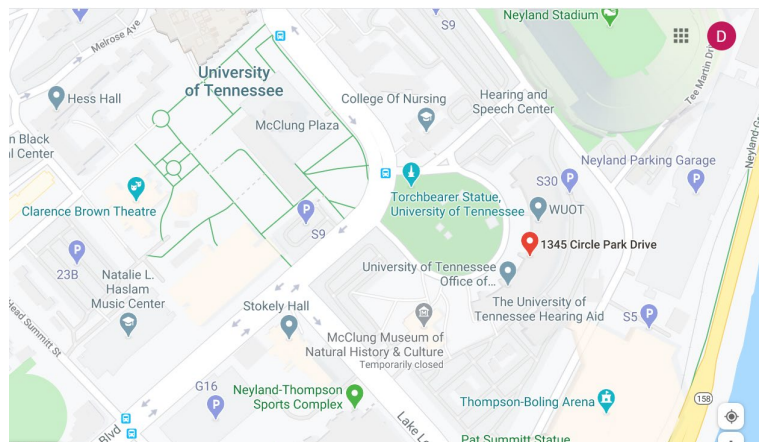
Welcome! My name is Dr. Devendra Potnis, and I will be your instructor for the Social Informatics course. In this course, you will study the interplay between people, technology, organizations, and information, using examples from around the world.

- My main goal is to create a memorable learning experience for each one of you.
- You own this course since you control almost every aspect of learning in this course.
- All of us learn differently. For instance, learning can be accomplished through reading, writing, listening, and/or hands-on activities. Interesting and intellectually stimulating assignments in this class cater to the needs of different types of learners.
- You will have plenty of opportunities to interact with and learn from your classmates, which will help you build a “community of learners.”

- Thought-provoking, real-world examples will help you grow personally and professionally. This course will equip you to serve as an information consultant to create value for different types of organizations.
- I would like each one of you to get a letter grade of "A" in this course. I will make sure that you have timely access to all the resources needed to succeed in this course. All assignments will be released in the first week of classes so that you can better plan and manage your time throughout the semester.
- Canvas shows you the suggested deadlines to submit assignments. These suggested deadlines can also be found in the course syllabus. However, your late submissions will not be penalized. Please give your best to submit your work by the suggested deadlines. **May 13** will be the last date to submit any late assignments.
- Asynchronous online courses serve as the last-mile solution for delivering knowledge and building skills among millions of vulnerable Americans. This asynchronous online course has been completed by single parents, caregivers, athletes, and those who have disabilities or live in remote, rural parts of Tennessee where there is no broadband connection to attend synchronous online courses. You might interact with and learn from such students in this asynchronous online course.

Instructor Availability

Please don't hesitate to email me with updates, questions, or concerns. I will typically respond within 72 hours. You can email me at dpotnis@utk.edu to schedule an appointment with me. We can meet in my [office on campus](#), over the phone, or in my [Zoom Meeting Room](#).



COURSE DESCRIPTION

Causes and consequences of accessing and using information and technologies by individuals, communities, organizations, governments, and society

Course Objectives

- This course equips students with the knowledge necessary to identify, analyze, and report various ICT-related issues faced by society, governments, and organizations.
- This course covers key topics in social informatics including the economics of information, diffusion of innovations in the information society, digital divide and

information divide, gender issues related to the design and deployment of ICT, the role of social media in shaping communication patterns at work and in personal contexts, electronic-Governance, applications of mobile technologies for businesses, and information ethics, privacy, and digital censorship.

- The course deliverables provide a unique opportunity for students to apply the knowledge acquired through case studies, research articles, reports, lecture slides, videos, etc.
- Finally, the course prepares students for comps, e-Portfolio, thesis, and dissertation.

Learning Outcomes

Students who complete this course will be capable of...

- Analyzing and applying information policies, and information-related laws that influence the delivery of information resources throughout society.
- Complying with the changing responsibilities of the information professional in a culturally diverse and networked global society.
- Identifying critical professional issues in a variety of organizational, cultural, societal, disciplinary, transdisciplinary, and historical contexts.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

This is an asynchronous online course, which means to complete this course you are not required to travel to campus. You will participate in this course **asynchronously** and using Canvas, the University of Tennessee's Learning Management System. Every Monday, I will upload multiple short recorded class sessions on Canvas. You can access these pre-recorded class sessions at any time during the week. Additional [Canvas](#) and [Zoom](#) resources are available for students unfamiliar with these online environments.

- This class will help you cope with balancing your busy schedules of classes, homework, jobs, and extracurricular activities.
- Research shows that online courses prepare students for future experiences in the 21st-century workplace, in which online learn-on-demand courses are often used for continuing education, advanced certification, and professional development courses.
- By taking this class, you will be gaining both greater flexibility in managing your time and valuable experience with this alternative learning environment.

HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THIS COURSE

Learning is a social and ongoing process; it is about a student's actively engaging the material through reading, thinking, discussing (online), questioning, practicing skills, and ultimately understanding. Bring your best efforts, a positive outlook, energy, and curiosity to each of the class sessions. Together we can make this asynchronous online class as interesting, relevant, and exciting as possible.

The course is structured to make it a rewarding learning experience that will also have meaning for you, both for your subsequent education and in your future professional life. I expect you to demonstrate critical thinking skills as well as commitment and involvement with our online discussions and your assignments.

There are a few simple guidelines to follow, which will ensure that you have a successful experience.

Learner Expectations (Guidelines for Students)

1. **Be more self-reliant in an asynchronous online class:** Although students are always responsible for knowing everything in the syllabus and complying with the requirements of a course, this is especially true for an asynchronous online course. Students are expected to show self-initiative, make good time management decisions, and be especially proactive in contacting the instructor when they are having problems, or do not understand something.
2. **Keep up with the weekly schedule outlined below:** Enjoy attending class at 2 am, or from a location halfway across the world, but don't abuse the schedule flexibility by falling behind, just because the class doesn't meet at the same place and time each week. The class requires consistent work – the workload should be easily manageable as long as you keep up with it. **THE SINGLE BIGGEST MISTAKE ONLINE STUDENTS CAN MAKE IS TO PUT OFF VIEWING THE CLASS RECORDINGS AND ALLOW THE ASSIGNMENTS TO PILE UP.**
3. **Put extra effort into all opportunities for interaction with your classmates and instructor:** We will be using Canvas' online discussion board, to interact as a class, and to have meaningful discussions, and question and answer sessions, even though we will not be together at the same time, as long as you do your part to participate.

Student Responsibilities

1. Watch all class recordings on time. You will click on the page for the class recording that you want to attend and then click as usual on the video to play or pause the video as desired.
2. Complete all assignments (e.g., online discussion board entries, blogging, etc.) and submit them on time, using the format and procedure specified by the instructor.
3. Check your email and Canvas regularly. I will use email to return assignments, solicit student input, and make Canvas will also be used for announcements and the discussion board, assignment instructions, and other content or activities.

4. Participate actively in the class by giving your best effort to the interactive activities using the discussion board, or in-class. In addition, treat your colleagues with courtesy and respect by reading and reflecting on some of their online comments and responding to them appropriately.
5. Timely online attendance is required. The course schedule below lists which class sessions you should complete at your convenience during each. It is essential that you keep up by attending the sessions in the proper week so that you can complete assignments as scheduled. Canvas effectively tracks whether or not a student has "attended" a recorded class session, which allows me to "take roll" just as I would in a traditional class.
6. Be respectful of others.
7. Abide by the UT Honor Code.
8. For additional student support, refer to UT's Online Programs [How to be Successful in an Online Course \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

Instructor Expectations

I promise you that I will uphold my responsibility to provide you with the same high level of support, access, and communication that you would want to have in a face-to-face classroom setting. For instance, I will...

- Be respectful of all students
- Create and facilitate meaningful learning activities
- Behave according to University codes of conduct

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Text

There is no required text for this class.

Course Design

This course adopts an active learning approach. Students are required to complete readings, attend all class lectures, complete graded activities and assignments, and participate in all activities. 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. Information sharing and processing, and collaboration are essential components of learning. Discussion on reading(s) always requires active contribution & participation by all students for meaningful and engaging discussions. A record will be kept of each student's participation in the class each week.

Computer Requirements

You must have adequate computing skills, including but not limited to use of word processing, Web browsers, email, listservs, and Canvas software. You must 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). You need to have a high-speed Internet connection to watch the pre-recorded class videos. You must obtain a UT email account. In addition, you must have the PowerPoint reader, or the regular PowerPoint software installed on your computer in order to download the lecture notes from Canvas. For more information visit: [UT Available Software](#).

Required Equipment

You will need a computer to attend classes. A headset with a microphone is optional. Here are the [system requirements for using Zoom](#). For more information visit: [campus computing information](#) and [computing support](#).

Course Resources

- [Getting Started with Zoom](#)
- [Online@UT Canvas](#)
- [UT Library](#)
- UT Library's [Information for Distance Education](#)
- UT [Research Guides](#) and [Subject Librarians](#)

Technical Support

For technical issues, contact the OIT HelpDesk by phone at (865) 974-9900 or at the [Walk-in HelpDesk](#). For IT and Computing issues, use the online [Contact Form](#). For additional student support, this section could include a link to UT's Online Programs [How to be Successful in an Online Course](#).]

COURSE COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Online “Classroom” Etiquette (Netiquette)

To “attend” class sessions:

1. Log into Canvas, and click on the “INSC 542” site box in your Courses list.
2. Click on the page for the class recording that you want to attend, and then click as usual on the video to play or pause the video as desired.

Be civil and respect everybody when interacting with others in online discussion boards, groups, email, and other online interactions. For more details refer to [UT's Principles of Civility and Community](#).

Announcements

This course is offered in a virtual mode using Canvas. Read the class announcement posted on Canvas to stay current with course matters.

Submission

Submit assignments on Canvas. Do not email them to the instructor.

Email

The course instructor is required to communicate with students through UTK email addresses. 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. Feel free to contact me for questions or to share ideas! To ensure a quick response, start your message subject line with **INSC 542**.

Campus Closures

Online, distance, and hybrid courses follow the same academic calendar and semester schedule as on-campus courses. If the university closes campus for any reason, including [inclement weather](#), instructors teaching online should not penalize students who are unable to attend, submit assignments, or otherwise participate in an online, distance, or hybrid class session.

ASSIGNMENTS, ASSESSMENTS, AND EVALUATIONS

Academic Writing

Use [APA guidelines](#) for completing course assignments. For more information refer to university writing support resources such as the [UT Writing Center](#).

Academic Honesty/Student Conduct

Students are expected to complete their own work. Student work completed for a former class or by someone other than the student could result in disciplinary action.

Students shall not:

- Cheat.
- Plagiarize.
- Collaborate with others on an assignment unless the student is assigned by the instructor to complete group work.
- Allow another student to access your Canvas account using your NetID.

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).

Students who may be unsure of the nature of plagiarism should consult the instructor or a guide for writing research reports. (Additional resources are available at <http://www.lib.utk.edu/instruction/plagiarism>.)

Infractions of academic integrity are penalized according to the severity of the infraction but **may include a course grade of "F."**

For more information refer to the University Academic Integrity policy and Honor Statement found under the University Policies section of the syllabus as well as the Acceptable Use, Copyright, and other [policies](#) regarding information and technology use at the University of Tennessee.

INSTRUCTOR STATUS AS A TITLE IX MANDATORY REPORTER

University of Tennessee faculty are committed to supporting our students and upholding gender equity laws as outlined by Title IX. Please be aware that if you choose to confide in a faculty member regarding an issue of sexual misconduct, dating violence, or stalking, we are obligated to inform the University's Title IX Coordinator, who can assist you in connecting with all possible resources both on- and off-campus. If you would like to speak with someone confidentially, the Student Counseling Center (865-974-2196) and the Student Health Center (865-974-3135) are both confidential resources. For additional resources and information, visit titleix.utk.edu.

GRADING CRITERIA

Grade Distribution

Deliverables	% of Total Grade	MSIS Program Outcomes
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Video Introduction	3%	N/A
Quiz on Syllabus	3%	N/A
Blogging	20%	3, 4, 5
Discussions on Real-World Problems from Social Informatics Perspective	21%	3, 5
Field Project Group Presentation (10%) Field Project Group Report (10%)	20%	3, 4, 5, 9
Watch Class Recordings	26%	N/A
Peer Assessment of Blogs	4%	N/A
Peer Assessment of Field Project Group Members	3%	N/A

N/A: Not applicable

Extra Credit

"Best Social Informatics Blog" Award (Extra Credit)	2%
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Grading Scale

A	93≤	(4 quality points per semester hour) superior performance.
A-	90-92.99	(3.7 quality points per semester credit hour) intermediate grade performance.
B+	88-89.99	(3.5 quality points per semester hour) better than satisfactory performance.
B	83-87.99	(3 quality points per semester hour) satisfactory performance.
B-	80-82.99	(2.7 quality points per semester credit hour) intermediate grade performance.
C+	78-79.99	(2.5 quality points per semester hour) less than satisfactory performance.
C	70-77.99	(2 quality points per semester hour) performance well below the standard expected of graduate students.
D	60-69.99	(1 quality point per semester hour) clearly unsatisfactory performance and cannot be used to satisfy degree requirements.

F	59.99≥	(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 the 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.

Grades

If you have a question, email the instructor at dpotnis@utk.edu. Please do not post questions about grades on the discussion board.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Integrity

[This section could include a description of the University of Tennessee's policy on academic integrity and a link to the UT Honor Code. From the [University of Tennessee Honor Statement](#), "An essential feature of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville 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.'*"

University Civility Statement

“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.” See the [UT Principles of Civility and Community](#).

Disability Services

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact Student Disability Services in Dunford Hall, at 865-974-6087, or by video relay at, 865-622-6566, to coordinate reasonable academic accommodations.

Your Role in Improving Teaching and Learning Through Course Assessment

At UT, it is our collective responsibility to improve the state of teaching and learning. During the semester, you may be requested to assess aspects of this course either during class or at the completion of the class. You are encouraged to respond to these various forms of assessment as a means of continuing to improve the quality of the UT learning experience.

Key Campus Resources for Students

- [Center for Career Development](#) (Career counseling and resources; HIRE-A-VOL job search system)
- [Course Catalogs](#) (Listing of academic programs, courses, and policies)
- [Hilltopics](#) (Campus and academic policies, procedures and standards of conduct)
- [OIT HelpDesk](#) (865) 974-9900
- [Schedule of Classes/Timetable](#)
- [Student Health Center](#) (visit the site for a list of services)
- [Student Success Center](#) (Academic support resources)
- [Undergraduate Academic Advising](#) (Advising resources, course requirements, and major guides)
- [University Libraries](#) (Access to library resources, databases, course reserves, and services)

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.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week # Date	Topics	Assignments and Suggested Due Dates
Week 1 Jan 22	Introduction to the Course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Syllabus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policies ○ Expectations • Assignments 	
Week 2 Jan 29	Fundamentals of Social Informatics (SI) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is SI? • Key Ideas • The I-Model • Where Good Ideas Come From? • IBM's 100 Innovations in 100 Years 	Video Introduction (3%) Quiz on Syllabus (3%)
Week 3 Feb 5	Gatekeeping <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Producers vs. Consumers • Information Gatekeeping • Gatekeeping Rationales • Social Networking and Our Small Worlds • Going Viral 	Watch Week 2 Class Recordings (2%) Online Discussion Board 1A (4%)
Week 4 Feb 12	Innovations in Information Society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions • Types of Innovations • Process of Managing Innovations • Diffusion of Innovations • Risks 	Watch Week 3 Class Recordings (2%) Online Discussion Board 1B (3%)

Week 5 Feb 19	Digital Divide & Information Divide <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions • Types • Causes and Consequences • US Census Bureau Data • Solutions 	Watch Week 4 Class Recordings (2%) Submit the link to your blog (5%)
Week 6 Feb 26	Gender and Information Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global issues faced by women • STEM Skills → Opportunities • Glass Ceiling for Women • “Family Penalty” in Mid-Career • Solutions 	Watch Week 5 Class Recordings (2%) First Blog Entry (5%)
Week 7 Mar 4	IT & Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myths of IT in Education • Robots Replacing Teachers • Multimedia Tools • Distance Education: Modes & Types • Virtuality Continuum • Learning Models 	Watch Week 6 Class Recordings (2%) Online Discussion Board 2A (4%)
Spring Break		
Week 8 Mar 18	IT for Financial Inclusion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for Financial Inclusion • Access ≠ Use • Microfinance • Last-Mile Technologies • Challenges & Solutions 	Watch Week 7 Class Recordings (2%) Online Discussion Board 2B (3%)
Week 9 Mar 25	Electronic-Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions • Dimensions • Smart City • Risks of Government Innovation • Social Media Policy • Future 	Watch Week 8 Class Recordings (2%) Second Blog Entry (5%)
Week 10 Apr 1	Algorithms and Society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition and Examples 	Watch Week 9 Class Recordings (2%)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three Roles Humans Play in Developing and Deploying Algorithms • Algorithms to govern people • Algorithms Worsening Economic Inequalities • Algorithmic Content Moderation 	Online Discussion Board 3A (4%)
Week 11 Apr 8	<p>Digital Activism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infodemic, Misinformation vs. Disinformation • Types of Digital Activism • Fighting Fake News • Literacies Needed: Information Literacy, Digital Literacy, Media Literacy, and Science Literacy 	<p>Watch Week 10 Class Recordings (2%)</p> <p>Online Discussion Board 3B (3%)</p>
Week 12 Apr 15	<p>Economics of Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race with the Machine • Productivity vs. Employment • GDP Excluding Free Knowledge <p>Monetizing Information Big Data Exploiting Big Data using Analytics</p>	<p>Watch Week 11 Class Recordings (2%)</p> <p>Third Blog Entry (5%)</p>
Week 13 Apr 22	<p>Artificial Intelligence and Organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will AI Change Work? • Collaborative Intelligence: Humans and AI Joining Forces • Three Ways AI is Getting Emotional! • OpenAI – ChatGPT and chatbots <p>Social Media for Organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media for marketing • Social media for HR management • Measuring ROI in social media 	Watch Week 12 Class Recordings (2%)
Week 14 Apr 29	<p>Intellectual Property</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copyrights • Patents • Trademarks <p>Privacy & Digital Censorship</p>	<p>Watch Week 13 Class Recordings (2%)</p> <p>Peer Assessment of Blogs (4%)</p>

Week 15 May 6	Finish Watching Class Recordings Work on Field Project	Watch Week 14 Class Recordings (2%)
	CLASSES END MAY 7	
May 13	Field Project Group Presentation (10%) Field Project Group Report (10%) Peer Assessment of Field Project Group Member(s) (3%) Last Day to Submit Late Assignments	

For important dates in this semester, you can access the [academic calendar](#) or [Campus Calendars](#).

The instructor reserves the right to revise, alter or amend this syllabus as necessary. Students will be notified via email of any such changes.

Last updated: January 14, 2024