

INSC 531: INTRODUCTION TO INFORMATION SOURCES & SERVICES

School of Information Sciences, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Fall 2022 Meetings: Wednesdays, 6:30-7:45 p.m. on ZOOM; additional weekly asynchronous 1:15

Faculty Contact Information

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A NOTE ABOUT FALL 2022:

Things aren't normal!

The past couple of years have been rough.

Some of us have lost work; some of us have lost loved ones or are profoundly worried about loved ones who might be vulnerable. Some of us are vulnerable! We are all experiencing stress, anxiety, and disruption.

All of this makes it more difficult to buckle down, focus, and produce quality work.

We'll get through it!

I will be as flexible as I can with deadlines and attendance this semester as long as you do your best to communicate with me.

I worry about my students when they're absent from class, miss a deadline, or leave my emails unanswered.

I know you are all diligent and hardworking; when you go "off-grid" I assume there's something wrong. Please do your best to let me know what's going on.

COURSE INFORMATION

Catalog Description

Introduction to reference services in libraries and information centers, including the reference interview, service standards and guidelines, and general reference sources and source types.

Additional Information

INSC 531 builds upon introductory material related to reference and information sources and services presented in the required courses. While not a formal prerequisite, INSC 531 can be considered a "bridge course" connecting the required courses to other information sources/services-related electives in the 53X sequence.

We will pay particular attention to the ways in which a variety of factors—including the American library’s institutional history of racism and other types of discrimination—contributed to and continue to influence the design and provision of information sources and services.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students who complete this course will be capable of demonstrating awareness, knowledge, and/or understanding of...

- information behavior-related research that provides a window into why and how people ask the questions they do (and don’t);
- the reference interview from initiation to conclusion and follow-up, including
- the ways in which social and personal context can shape communication between information service providers and information seekers;
- effective approaches to parsing information requests, and
- identifying the appropriate resources for addressing them;
- the main categories of information sources and important titles in each (print and web-based); and
- approaches to managing and evaluating information sources and services.

Recommended Texts

Cassell, Kay Ann, and Uma Hiremath. [*Reference and Information Services: An Introduction, Fourth Edition*](#). Chicago: ALA/Neal-Schuman, 2018.

Style handbook of your choice (APA or Chicago Manual of Style).

[*Choice*](#) and [*Books in Print Global Edition*](#).

COMMUNICATION

Email

I am required to communicate with you through your UTK email address. 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.

Instructor Availability

Email is the most expedient way to get in touch with me. If I will be unable to check my email for a significant period of time (less than once/24-hour period) I will provide you with an alternative method of contacting me.

It is *tremendously* helpful to me if you include our course number in the subject line of emails you send.

COMPUTING REQUIREMENTS AND RESOURCES

Requirements

You must have adequate computing skills, including but not limited to use of word processing, Web browsers, e-mail, listservs, Canvas, and ZOOM 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 must obtain a UTK email account and subscribe to the SIS student listserv. In addition, you must have the PowerPoint Reader or the regular PowerPoint software installed on your computer to download the lecture notes from Canvas.

Technical Support

Please review the SIS Technology Introduction website for help getting started with the tools you'll need in the program: <https://sis.utk.edu/techintro/>

For assistance with technical and computing issues, contact the OIT HelpDesk by phone at (865) 974-9900, using the [Contact Form](#), or at the [Walk-in HelpDesk](#).

Course Resources

- Most lecture notes will be posted on Canvas before the class meeting for you to download.
- Note that lecture notes do not substitute for the assigned readings.
- Read the class announcements posted on Canvas to stay current with course matters.

COURSE ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICIES

Attendance and Participation

Because the format of this class is 1:15 synchronous/1:15 asynchronous, I gauge participation and attendance a little differently.

Asynchronous: students will complete the 1:15 asynchronous class segment by participating in a variety of independent and small group activities. These are not optional.

I will evaluate your participation for completeness, relevance, timeliness, and substance as part of your participation grade.

If extenuating circumstances such as illness prevent you from completing your asynchronous activities on time, please inform me as soon as possible.

If you are absent from our class meeting, I will still expect you to complete that week's activity unless circumstances are sufficiently significant to prevent you from doing so.

Synchronous: I assume that each student will be present and participate in class. Missing multiple classes and/or failing to participate will lower your grade; frequent participation will raise the grade.

Regular attendance is required and necessary, and unexplained absences will affect your grade. Contact me as soon as possible if you cannot attend class.

If you will be absent from class, you must:

- Inform me in advance or as soon as possible after class
- Submit any work due from the missed class period
- Listen to class recording
- Obtain notes, handouts, etc. from Canvas
- Check with classmates for notes, announcements, etc.
- Complete any assigned activity

Acceptable reasons for absence from class include:

- Illness
- Serious family emergencies,
- Military obligation,
- Severe weather conditions,
- Religious holidays and
- Obligations for court imposed legal obligations (i.e., jury duty, subpoena)

Missing more than one class meeting for reasons other than those listed above will have a negative impact on your course participation grade.

Inclement Weather

“The University of Tennessee will remain open except in the most severe weather conditions. The Chancellor (or appointed representative) may officially close or suspend selected activities of the university because of extreme weather conditions. When a decision to close is reached, campus and local radio and TV stations will be notified and a UAlert will be issued. The notice will also be posted on the front page at www.utk.edu...” SIS will cancel classes when UT is closed. Please check the SIS student listserv (UTKSIS-L@LISTSERV.UTK.EDU) for messages about closing.

If you face inclement weather conditions in your home location and attending class is impossible or unwise, please let me know when you are able.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND POINTS OF INFORMATION

Disabilities that May Impede Learning

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is committed to providing an inclusive learning environment for all students.

If you anticipate or experience a barrier in this course due to a chronic health condition, a learning, hearing, neurological, mental health, vision, physical, or other kind of disability, or a temporary injury, you are encouraged to contact Student Disability Services (SDS) at 865-974-6087 or sds@utk.edu.

An SDS Coordinator will meet with you to develop a plan to ensure you have equitable access to this course.

****If you are already registered with SDS, please contact your instructor to discuss implementing accommodations included in your course access letter.****

Civility

“In 2011, the university adopted the Principles of Civility and Community. They are designed to work in concert with all existing codes of conduct. The principles encourage all members of the campus community to foster a learning environment where the differences of our diverse culture are valued, respected and celebrated. Civility is an act of showing regard and respect for others including: politeness, consideration, tact, good manners, graciousness, cordiality, affability, amiability and courteousness...” (Hilltopics, p.10).

This statement applies to communicating with the instructor, classmates, and other members of the UT community.

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.

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.

*Please note that my mandatory reporting responsibilities extends to incidents that occurred prior to this semester, even by several years. **By no means** do I want to discourage students from speaking with me about these or any other issues, but it’s important that you are aware I may not be able to maintain confidentiality before you choose to speak with me.*

ASSIGNMENTS, ASSESSMENTS, AND EVALUATIONS

Academic Integrity

Students should be familiar and maintain their *Academic Integrity* described in <https://hilltopics.utk.edu/academics/> as: “*Study, preparation and presentation should involve at all times the student’s own work, unless it has been clearly specified that work is to be a team effort. Academic honesty requires that the student present his or her own work in all academic projects, including tests, papers, homework, and class presentation. When incorporating the work of other scholars and writers into a project, the student must accurately cite the source of that work.*”

Students should abide by the [*Honor Statement*](#) Section XI. Honor Statement)

“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.”

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious offense, subject to disciplinary action. (p. 26-7)

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 include, but are not limited to:

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). (p. 26-7)

Academic Dishonesty

The UTK Student Code of Conduct (p. 27) identifies examples of academic dishonesty beyond plagiarism, including:

1. providing or receiving unauthorized information during an examination or academic assignment, or the possession and/or use of unauthorized materials during an examination or academic assignment;
2. providing or receiving unauthorized assistance in connection with laboratory work, field work, scholarship, or another academic assignment;
3. falsifying, fabricating, or misrepresenting data, laboratory results, research results, citations, or other information in connection with an academic assignment;
4. serving as, or enlisting the assistance of, a substitute for a student in the taking of an examination or the performance of an academic assignment;

5. altering grades, answers, or marks in an effort to change the earned grade or credit;
6. submitting without authorization the same assignment for credit in more than one (1) course;
7. forging the signature of another or allowing forgery by another on any class or University-related document such as a class roll or drop/add sheet;
8. gaining an objectively unfair academic advantage by failing to observe the expressed procedures or instructions relating to an exam or academic assignment; and (9) engaging in an activity that unfairly places another student at a disadvantage, such as taking, hiding, or altering resource material, or manipulating a grading system.

Procedures for Addressing Academic Dishonesty

The [UTK Code of Student Conduct](#) outlines the process for addressing instances of suspected academic dishonesty:

Sections 11.7 Academic Dishonesty Process, and 11.8 Academic Dishonesty—Resolution Through the Student Conduct Process (p. 27-8)

See also [The University of Tennessee Graduate Council Appeal Procedure](#).

Students who may be unsure of the nature of plagiarism should consult the instructor or a guide for writing research reports.

UTK Libraries offer an extensive collection of resources related to responsible and ethical authorship: <https://libguides.utk.edu/scholarlypublishing/plagiarism>

Assigning Grades

Please note that I assign numeric rather than letter grades, but you can calculate a letter grade by dividing your score by the total points possible for the assignment, then referring to the scale below for the corresponding letter grade. For example, if you earned 23/25 points on an assignment, your percentage grade would be $92/100=A-$.

Your final grade will be based on total points earned/100 possible points over the course of the semester.

Evaluation

Semester grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

Letter	Range	Points for GPA	Qualitative significance (performance)
A	93≤	4/hour	Superior
A-	90-92.99	3.7/hour	Intermediate (note: I would classify this as “very good”)
B+	88-89.99	3.5/hour	Better than satisfactory (“good”)
B	83-87.99	3/hour	Satisfactory
B-	80-82.99	2.7/hour	Intermediate (note: not sure why this is the same as A-?)
C+	78-79.99	2.5/hour	Less than satisfactory
C	70-77.99	2/hour	Well below the standard expected of graduate students.

Letter	Range	Points for GPA	Qualitative significance (performance)
D	60-69.99	1/hour	Unsatisfactory performance and cannot be used to satisfy degree requirements.
F	59.99≥	0	Extremely unsatisfactory, cannot be used to satisfy degree requirements.
I	n/a		<p>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.</p> <p>An I is not given to enable a student to do additional work to raise a deficient grade.</p> <p>The instructor, in consultation with the student, decides the terms for the removal of the I, including the time limit for removal.</p> <p>If the I is not removed within one calendar year, the grade will be changed to an F.</p> <p>The course will not be counted in the cumulative grade point average until a final grade is assigned.</p> <p>No student may graduate with an I on the record.</p>
W	n/a		indicates that the student officially withdrew from the course.

Course Evaluation

You will be invited to evaluate the course at the end of the term. Please participate in this valuable process. I also invite your comments throughout the course and read all comments, suggestions, and recommendations.

Incompletes

Based on adopted University of Tennessee-Knoxville and SIS policy, a grade of *I* (Incomplete) is reserved for emergencies that prevent the student from completing the course on time. Incompletes are granted only under "the most unusual of circumstances" and solely at the discretion of the instructor (in other words, I may refuse a student's request for an incomplete). Plan your semester's course of study carefully to ensure sufficient time to complete the required work.

If a student disappears without contacting me, I will submit the grade as earned to that point.

DISCLAIMER

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus and schedule as the semester progresses, but I will never make a change that would have a negative impact on student grades, add to workload, or accelerate deadlines.

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Assignments and Grading

Let's make a deal: if the work you submit reflects your best effort, I will put my best effort into reviewing and grading it.

What do I mean?

The Student:

- Reviews the assignment as described and makes a good-faith effort to understand its parameters (note: if something is not spelled out explicitly in the assignment, it is open to your interpretation)
- Begins working with sufficient time to complete the assignment as required
- Cites references as required using the most recent iteration of Chicago (CMS) or American Psychological Association (APA) style (Purdue OWL is an incredible resource: <https://owl.purdue.edu/>)
- Finalizes the assignment before submitting, checking for typographical, citation, and other errors (and correcting them)
- Submits the assignment as close to the deadline as possible.

The Instructor:

- Provides a description of each assignment that includes requirements for success (note: if something is not spelled out explicitly in the assignment, it is open to your interpretation)
- Reviews assignments with an open mind and generous heart
- Uses grading criteria reflective of the assignment as described for students (i.e., not a standard in my head)
- Provides clear feedback, especially to explain why a grade is lower than a student might hope it would be (note: if an assignment is really great, I might not make a whole lot of comments on it. You can interpret “minimal comments” as “high praise” 😊)
- Returns graded assignments as quickly as possible. I tend to put a lot of time into grading—it's important to me to be fair and thorough.

Preparation

- Unless otherwise stated, please submit assignments created using MS Word so I can use track changes and make comments easily (not so easy with pdfs).
- Please use either APA or CMS documentation styles for in-text citations and list of references/bibliography.
- Formatting assignments themselves per APA or CMS guidelines (e.g., headers, headings, etc.) is not necessary.

- You must cite all sources, format and attribute all quotations correctly. Not doing so constitutes plagiarism.

Pre-submission Feedback

I am happy to look at a good draft of assignments prior to final submission. I will not pre-grade assignments, just provide general feedback and tips. These pre-submissions should be sent via email attachment (i.e., not Canvas) no later than one week prior to final due date.

Due Dates and Late Assignments

- Submit assignments to the corresponding Canvas assignment.
- Assignments are due (officially) at 11:59 p.m. Eastern on the due date listed on the syllabus.
- I will download the submissions from Canvas early the next morning.
- I will download the submissions from Canvas early the next morning.

If your assignment is not ready by the deadline...

- You must send me an email informing me that your assignment will be late.
- Submit your assignment using Canvas when it's ready.
- Assignments submitted after the deadline may incur a point-per-day penalty.
 - ✓ note: it's often better to take a bit more time with an assignment and take the late penalty than to turn in an assignment that's on time but incomplete, hasn't been proofread, etc.

MSIS Program Outcomes

It is our vision to provide a quality educational program, and for students to have the very best educational experience possible. By the end of their time in the MSIS program, each student should be able to:

1. Describe and discuss the processes of creation, organization, distribution, storage, access, retrieval, management, use, and preservation of information.
2. Describe and discuss the nature of leadership and management in the information professions and the importance of participation in the global information society.
3. Apply the general principles, values, and ethical standards of providing information services in a variety of settings and for diverse populations.
4. Comply with the changing responsibilities of the information professional in a culturally diverse and networked global society.
5. Identify critical professional issues in a variety of organizational, cultural, societal, disciplinary, transdisciplinary, and historical contexts.
6. Analyze and apply standards or policies related to the processes of creation, organization, distribution, storage, access, retrieval, management, use or preservation of information.
7. Explain the changing nature of information, information needs, and information behavior.
8. Assess and implement information technologies, systems, sources, and services that serve users effectively and efficiently.
9. Analyze research and apply it to information practice.

Assignments: Descriptions, Due Dates, and Program Outcomes for SLC

Details and due dates available in Canvas assignments.

Participation

Much of the course material will be presented in the readings and discussions. I expect that you will complete the reading assigned each week and come to class prepared to offer your opinions and insights.

This class meets synchronously for 1.25 hours weekly. On most weeks we will have an out-of-class activity to account for the additional hour of class time. These may be independent or small group activities and will typically require some type of discussion board post or verbal summary at their conclusion. These activities will contribute to your participation grade.

Reference Interview Exercise 10/26 or 11/2

This assignment is designed to help you rethink the nature of reference and information services through outsider and participant observation. First, complete the assigned readings related to the Reference Interview, paying particular attention to [RUSA's Guidelines](#). Then, utilize a library's in-person (if possible to do so safely, and at a library at which you are not known), phone, and/or reference chat service and ask a question.

Some guidelines:

- Make this a question on a topic that you actually know about or that is meaningful to you.
- Select a topic that you are comfortable sharing in your report.
- If you visit a library in-person, it is important that you visit one at which you are not known.
- Do not ask your question of a friend, colleague, or professional acquaintance.
- Let the staff person lead you through the reference interview and answer as you think a patron needing this information would respond.

Take notes on your experience and submit a comprehensive narrative that addresses the following:

- The type of library and service you utilized, and the time and day of the week;
- The individual's reference interview techniques and quality of the transaction, paying special attention to the following:
 - ✓ Their verbal and nonverbal behaviors.
 - ✓ The questions they asked
 - ✓ Questions they didn't ask (but should have)
 - ✓ Your comfort with the interaction
 - ✓ Evidence of policies for providing reference assistance, including signage (in person), phone menus (on the phone), and/or web directions, notices, or links (online)
 - ✓ The extent to which your question was answered
- Note any other impressions (staff person was friendly/harried, user was angry/polite).
- Were you satisfied? Why or why not? What could have been done differently?

Rewrite your notes into an organized essay about your observations, using the assigned readings to support your evaluation.

- Do not identify the name of the library nor librarians in your paper.
- Be sure to cite supporting material (using APA or Chicago style) and attach a bibliography of sources.

Question Exercises (at least) any 25/50 pts. by 12/7

In the first few weeks of the term I will post a list of questions. Each question has a “points” value attached (in parentheses)

- Please complete at 25 pts.’ worth of the posted questions by 12/7
- I will grade submissions throughout the semester
- You may complete as many of the questions as you’d like (beyond 25 points); your assignment grade will be calculated accordingly. In other words, the more questions you complete beyond 25 points, the smaller the impact of each question on your overall grade.
- These assignments are designed to encourage you to think about both the utility of individual information sources and the theory and practice of information services and will include, among other things, questions for you to research.
- While you’ll be expected to provide answers to these questions, the more important consideration in completing these assignments is an explanation of your process in pursuing the question’s answer.
- This is a DE course and I understand that your access to print collections varies dramatically by home location; therefore, it will be possible to complete the exercises using free and subscription-based online sources.

Resource Evaluation (one of three options) 11/16

n.b. Cassell and Hiremath’s evaluative criteria:

1. Scope
2. Quality of Content
3. Accuracy
4. Currency
5. Authority
6. Ease of use (incl. usability, interface, and searching capabilities for electronic resources)
7. Arrangement
8. Appropriateness for users (you should identify the type of library and user for which the resource would be appropriate)
9. Format

Option 1: Individual

- You will select an information (reference) resource to evaluate and share with the class in a recorded presentation (10 minutes, maximum).
- If you have access to a screencasting software package like Camtasia, that’s fine; if not, use ZOOM to record your presentation (and convert it to an mp4 file).
- You may consult Cassell & Hiremath, [Choice](#), or another selection tool to choose your resource.
- Your source may be print, electronic, free, or fee-based. Be creative!

During your presentation you should explain why and how you selected your resource, identifying the referring sources, and describe the resource using Cassell and Hiremath's evaluative criteria.

Option 2: Group

Your group of 2-4 students should select at least one resource per student, minimum 3 (i.e., if yours is a group of 2, select at least 3 resources; if yours is a group of 4, select at least 4 resources) focused on similar topics (e.g., "Social Justice Resources for Middle School Students", "Guides for Citizen Science") to evaluate and share with the class in a recorded presentation (15 minutes, maximum).

- If you have access to a screencasting software package like Camtasia, that's fine; if not, use ZOOM to record your presentation (and convert it to an mp4 file).
- You may consult Cassell & Hiremath, [Choice](#), or another selection tool to choose your resource.
- Your sources may be print, electronic, free, or fee-based. Be creative!

During your presentation you should explain why and how you selected your resource, identifying the referring sources, and describe the resource using Cassell and Hiremath's evaluative criteria.

Option 3: Individual

Select and evaluate (briefly) three information resources. Topics may be similar or unrelated. Evaluations should be modeled on those in [Choice](#).

Evaluation can be written (word document) or recorded as a presentation.

DISCLAIMER

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus and schedule as the semester progresses, but I will never make a change that would have a negative impact on student grades, add to workload, or accelerate deadlines.