

Spring 2022

INSC 534 Government Information Sources

The School of Information Sciences

The University of Tennessee

Class Meetings: Thursday, 5:05-6:20 pm

ZOOM Course ID/Link:

<https://tennessee.zoom.us/j/91399229044?pwd=b2I5eHJTRUF0cG1PSmFrMWZyQkE5Zz09>

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Selection, acquisition, ~~organization~~, and utilization of government information in a variety of formats from legislative, judicial, and executive branches of federal, state, local, and international governments and inter-governmental agencies.

II. STUDENT OUTCOMES:

Upon taking this course, you should be able to:

- Discuss the importance and utility of government information sources;
- Select appropriate sources to meet particular needs (becoming familiar with the basic tools);
- Identify and discuss activities involved in making these sources available for use;
- Identify and discuss the elements of an effective government information program in a library or information agency;
- Package and bundle government data/information for stakeholder use;
- Integrate government data/information into professional practice and research; and
- Thoughtfully discuss the future of government information in light of present trends.

III. COURSE DESIGN

The course adopts an active learning approach. Students are required to complete all required readings, attend all class lectures, perform all graded and ungraded activities and assignments, and participate actively in all class activities, including teacher-led and student-led discussions, and small-group and individual activities. All required readings are listed in "Modules" on the Canvas course site. Optional readings are also provided. While not required, you may find it helpful to consult these optional readings when completing select assignments.

This hybrid course consists of **a synchronous, live class meeting component and an asynchronous component with various learning activities**. Each week, we will meet online using the Zoom platform for 1 hour and 15 minutes. Before each class meeting, you will complete the readings and specially designed learning activities (such as online discussions and watching lecture videos) that will also take approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes. All activities are listed in "Modules" on the Canvas course site.

The sessions of this course consist of lectures, demonstrations, discussions, individual and group work, exercises, presentations, and other activities. Listening to lectures and participating in class discussions are essential to effective learning. Be sure to watch the lecture playback on the class site if you have to miss a class.

IV. REQUIRED TEXTS:

Hartnett, C. J., Sevetson, A. L., & Forte, E. J. (2016). Fundamentals of government information: Mining, finding, evaluating, and using government resources (2nd e.d.). Chicago, IL: Neal-Schuman. ISBN-13: 978-0-8389-1395-6 (available from the UT electronic collection; 3 concurrent users only, so it might be best if you get your own copy)

READINGS ON CANVAS:

In addition to the required textbook, we have some class readings available on the Canvas course site, downloadable from each class module. Your computer must have Adobe Acrobat or a comparable pdf reader installed.

V. POLICIES

COMMUNICATION

I encourage you to ask questions and give me feedback at any time so that I may assist you or adjust my teaching plan. The best way to reach me is by email (xzhu12@utk.edu). I usually answer emails within 24 hours, but it does take longer during weekends. You are welcome to make appointments and meet with me in person or chat with me via Zoom (6086585155).

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.

Content on Canvas course site may change without further notice. You should regularly visit our Canvas course site for class announcements, updates, assignments, and class discussions. You should also set up your Canvas account correctly so that you can receive class announcements via email.

COMPUTING REQUIREMENTS

This course relies heavily on technology. It is expected that students have adequate computing skills, including but not limited to use of word processing, PowerPoint, 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 are required to purchase a headset with microphone to participate actively in the class. It is your responsibility to ensure your technology is working. If you encounter technical problems during class meetings, please post questions on the text chat and you will receive feedback from Tech Support. For immediate Zoom support, call 865-974-3117 or 1-877-974-3117.

You must obtain a UT 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 in order to download the lecture notes from Canvas.

CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY

It is assumed that each student be present and speak in class, as well as completing the asynchronous learning activities on time—the equivalent of a "B" grade for "participation." Missing classes or failing to participate will lower your grade; frequent participation and engagement will raise the grade.

Regular attendance is required and necessary. Unexplained absences will affect your grade; there will be a penalty of three (3) points for each class you miss without acceptable reasons. 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

- View the class recording
- Obtain notes, handouts, etc. from Canvas
- Check with classmates for notes, announcements, etc.

Acceptable reasons for absence from class include:

- Illness
- Serious family emergencies,
- Special curricular or job requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences),
- Military obligation,
- Severe weather conditions,
- Religious holidays
- Participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate
- Obligations for court imposed legal obligations (i.e., jury duty, subpoena)

INCLEMENT WEATHER

“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 made, information is distributed to the campus community, shared with local media, and posted on the front page at <http://utk.edu>.”
[\(http://safety.utk.edu/emergency-management/inclement-weather-policy/\)](http://safety.utk.edu/emergency-management/inclement-weather-policy/). SIS will cancel classes when UT is closed. Please check the SIS student listserv (UTKSIS-L@LISTSERV.UTK.EDU) for messages about closing.

DISABILITIES THAT CONSTRAIN LEARNING

Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 865-974-6087 in 100 Dunford Hall to document their eligibility for services. ODS will work with students and faculty to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

CIVILITY

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: <http://civility.utk.edu/>.

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.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students should be familiar and maintain their *Academic Integrity* described in <http://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** described in the same Hilltopics, <http://hilltopics.utk.edu/academics/>:

“An essential feature of The University of Tennessee 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.”

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:

- Copying without proper documentation (quotation marks and a citation) written or spoken words, phrases, or sentences from any source;
- Summarizing without proper documentation (usually a citation) ideas from another source (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge);
- Borrowing facts, statistics, graphs, pictorial representations, or phrases without acknowledging the source (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge);
- Collaborating on a graded assignment without the instructor’s approval;
- 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."**

VI. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Student work is assigned a grade based on quality of thought and writing style, thoroughness of research and of references, and appropriateness of length. Only exceptional work will receive an "A" grade. Assignments that are received after the due date will be assigned a lower grade than would otherwise be received. All sources must be cited, quotations must be in quotation marks and attributed correctly. Not doing so constitutes plagiarism.

WRITING STYLE

- All writing assignments should be in .docx format, letter size, with 11 or 12-point Calibri or Times New Roman font and 1" margins on all sides. Use **single line spacing and appropriate paragraph spacing** (no more than 12pt). Include page numbers.
- Assignments should be named as *Lastname_FileDesignation*, e.g., *Zhu_Ex2*, *Zhu_BP Idea*, and *Zhu_Essay*. Be sure to properly name each file you submit; incorrectly named files will have a one-point grade deduction. Note that the file designation for each assignment is specified in section VII.

- Follow general conventions of academic writing, e.g., use clear and concise sentences, avoid slang, keep one idea to one paragraph, and use proper transitional words/phrases (good resource of academic writing: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/2/>).
- Whenever you use external material for a course assignment, follow the APA Style Manual or the Chicago/Turabian style guide for citing sources and be consistent in formatting the citations.
- Run spelling check and grammar check before submitting each assignment.
- Name all assignment documents following the file name designation specified in section VII.
- Assignments that do not follow the writing style requirements or have typos and grammatical errors will earn reduced credit of at least one grade step (i.e. an "A" becomes a "B+").

DUE DATES AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Most assignments should be submitted to the "Assignments" area of Canvas and are due (officially) at 11:59 p.m. EST on the due date specified on the course site. If your assignment is not ready by the deadline...

- You must send me an email informing me that your assignment will be late.
- After submitting your assignment to Canvas, send me an email informing me that your assignment has been submitted.
- One point will be deducted for each 24-hour hour period the assignment is not turned in.
- Late submissions will not be credited if the graded assignments have already been returned to the rest of the class.

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. Plan your semester's course of study carefully to ensure sufficient time to complete the required work.

For students who simply "disappear" without contacting the instructor and without completing the required form, an "F" is submitted.

ASSIGNING GRADES

Please note that I do not assign letter grades for individual assignments but will mark your paper with my comments and provide a point score based on the possible points earned for that assignment. If you'd like to compute a letter grade based on the score provided, divide your score by the total points possible for the assignment and refer 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. Your final grade will be based on total points earned/total possible points over the course of the semester.

GRADING DISPUTE

Grading by its very nature is a subjective process, and it is virtually impossible to design exercises that can be objectively quantified with precise numeric scores. If you need clarification for the grade you receive, please make your request immediately after the distribution of the assignments; after one week, the grades reported to you are final.

EVALUATION

Grades will be assigned according to the following 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 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.

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.

VII. ASSIGNMENTS: DESCRIPTION

Documents/reports should be submitted electronically to the course site. Submissions without identity cannot be credited. Due dates are stated in the Course Calendar and Modules on Canvas.

Total Points: 100 points

- **PARTICIPATION 15%**
- **REFERENCE MANUAL 10%**
- **PROJECT, WRITING 25%**
- **PROJECT, ORAL PRESENTATION 10%**
- **EXERCISES 40%**

PARTICIPATION (15 POINTS)

Participation will be evaluated based on the student's performance on the asynchronous activities in addition to class attendance and participation. The asynchronous activities are not "assignments" but class activities, and therefore they will **not be graded**. However, the timeliness and quality of completion and the level of engagement in these activities are good indications of class participation. Completing all the activities on time is necessary for a "B" grade; a grade above B requires active participation and engagement. Also see "Class Attendance Policy."

REFERENCE MANUAL (10 POINTS) (Meets [Program Outcome](#): #1)

In this course, you will get to know a wide range of government information sources. If you do not use them very often, you will soon forget about them. In this assignment, you will gather all the sources introduced in class (lectures, textbooks, and beyond) and organize them in your own way for future access or public access. Share the link to your reference manual early in the semester, the instructor will check it every two weeks.

PROJECT, WRITING (25 POINTS)

There are three options for the project. You may choose to complete the project on your own and team up with a classmate (no more than two people in a team).

Option one: Business Plan (Meets [Program Outcome](#): #1, #3, & #6)

Create a business plan for a (realistic) small business that bundles and packages government data or information. Follow the U.S. Small Business Administration guidelines (<https://www.sba.gov/writing-business-plan>) in writing the business plan. Your business plan should have the following components:

- Executive Summary (1 pages*)
- Company Description (0.5-1 page)
- Market Analysis (0.5-1 page)
- Organization and Management (optional)
- Service and Product Line (2-3 pages)
 - Identify relevant sources
 - Explain the value you add by packaging these sources
- Marketing and Sales (1 pages)
- For team work, a short statement on how you split the work between the two team members

During the semester, you will submit the initial idea (file designation: BPIdea) and receive feedback from the instructor. You will also have opportunity to exchange thoughts in class with your classmates to improve your idea. Only the final business plan (file designation BPFinal) will earn you points. More instructions and evaluation criteria will be given in class and on the course site.

Option two: Paper on Federalism (Meets [Program Outcome](#): #9)

Describe the role of Federalism in shaping government information collection and dissemination in the area of your choice

If you choose this option, you will write a 5–7-page essay about Federalism in the U.S. and the effect it has on a type of government information. For example, the U.S. Weather Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration collects and provides weather data for the public and the entire country. State and local governments rarely sponsor weather data collection. In other areas like transportation or criminology, though, state and local governments sponsor data collection (scientific or otherwise), build online tools, and provide information to the public.

In this paper, you will say what Federalism is, talk about the U.S. Constitution and how the 10th Amendment gives unremunerated powers to the states, and will explain how this relates to the role the U.S. Federal government plays in funding, collecting, and facilitating access to a given type of information. Examples of information “types” you may wish to discuss include: traffic data, crime data, legal proceedings, government spending data, and traditional news reporting. Your essay should draw on primary (e.g., legal statutes) and secondary sources wherever possible to tell a story.

During the semester, you will submit your initial idea (file designation: *FedPaper*) and receive feedback from the instructor. You will also have opportunities to exchange thoughts with your classmates to improve your idea. Only the final paper (file designation: *FedPaper*) will earn you points. Evaluation criteria will be given in class and on the course site.

Option three: Customized Option

If you have other final project ideas/needs, please contact me early in the semester to discuss them. I can also provide a few research participation opportunities for students interested in conducting government data/information-related research.

PROJECT, ORAL PRESENTATION (10 POINTS)

Business Plan Presentation

In five to ten minutes deliver an oral overview (in PowerPoint) aimed at potential funders/ investors/ customers. I am looking for:

- A clear, easily understood presentation;
- A well-organized presentation with an attention-grabbing opening, summary, and closing;
- Clear descriptions of resource(s);
- A clear indication of the economic value of the business venture;
- A clear indication of how communities will be served by this venture.

The evaluation rubrics will be posted to the course site before the presentation. File designation: BPSlides.

Paper on Federalism Presentation

In five to ten minutes deliver an oral overview (in PowerPoint) of your research. I am looking for:

- A clear, easily understood presentation;
- A well-organized presentation with an attention-grabbing opening, summary, and closing;
- Clear descriptions of your research results;
- A clear indication of the significance of your research.

The evaluation rubrics will be posted to the course site before the presentation. File designation: RPSlides.

EXERCISES (40 POINTS)

There are four exercises in total. They will be available on Canvas under “Assignments”. Please note specific instructions and evaluation criteria on the exercises themselves. Exercises will be posted at least one week before their due dates.

File designation: *Ex1-Ex4*.

VIII. COURSE SCHEDULE

The complete, most updated course schedule (topics, readings, asynchronous activities, and due dates) is available on Canvas course site, under “modules”. Asynchronous activities of each week will be available five to six days prior to the due date.

DISCLAIMER

Please be aware revisions may be made to this syllabus and schedule over the course of the semester, and as such, the content contained within may be subject to change.