

Fall 2020
INSC 534 Government Information Sources
The School of Information Sciences
The University of Tennessee
Class Meetings: Thursday, 7:55-9:10 pm eastern
ZOOM Course ID/Link: <https://tennessee.zoom.us/j/2091575547>

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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, as well as and non-governmental organizations.

II. STUDENT OUTCOMES:

After taking this course, you should be able to:

- Discuss the importance and utility of government information sources;
- Select sources to meet given needs;
- Identify and discuss activities involved in making these sources available for use;
- Identify and discuss the elements of effective government information programs in libraries and/or information agencies;
- Package and bundle government data/information for stakeholder use;
- Integrate government data/information into professional practice and research;
- Understand the role Federalism plays in shaping how U.S. government information is created and disseminated;
- Have knowledge about government information in an international context; and
- Thoughtfully discuss the future of government information.

III. COURSE DESIGN

The course uses an active learning approach. Students are required to complete all required readings, attend lectures, perform all graded and ungraded activities and assignments, and participate in class activities, including teacher-led and student-led discussions and small-group activities. All required readings are listed in the “Modules” section on Canvas. Optional readings are also provided. Although not required, you may find it helpful to review 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 using Zoom for 1 hour and 15 minutes. Before each class meeting, you will complete the readings and 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 synchronous, live class.

IV. REQUIRED TEXTS:

Hartnett, C. J., Severson, 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

READINGS ON CANVAS:

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

V. POLICIES

COMMUNICATION

I encourage you to ask questions and give me feedback so I may assist you or adjust my teaching plan. The best way to reach me is by email (amillion@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 (2091575547).

I am required to communicate with you via your UTK email address. If you prefer another address, consult the [OIT Helpdesk](#) to obtain directions for forwarding your UTK mail to your preferred address if you do not want to check both accounts.

Content on the Canvas course site may change. You should regularly visit our Canvas course site for announcements, updates, assignments, and class discussions. You should also set up your Canvas account 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 for varied technologies to students at no charge (advance registration is required).

You should purchase a headset and microphone to participate in the class. It is your responsibility to ensure that your technology is working. If you encounter technical problems during class, please post questions to the text chat and you will receive feedback from Tech Support. For 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 to download the lecture notes from Canvas.

CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY

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

Regular attendance is required and mandatory. Unexcused absences will affect your grade and there will be a penalty of three 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:

- 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.

Acceptable reasons for absence from class include:

- Illness
- Serious family emergencies
- Special curricular activities or job requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences)
- Military obligation
- Severe weather conditions
- Religious holidays
- Participation in official university activities like music performances, athletic competitions, or debate
- 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/>).

SIS will cancel classes when UT is closed. 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 a learning community. Our learning community consists of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and campus visitors. Community members affect each other’s well-being and they have an interest in creating and sustaining an environment where all 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 principles of civility and community adopted by the University of Tennessee: <http://civility.utk.edu/>.

CCI DIVERSITY STATEMENT

The College of Communication and Information recognizes that a college that is 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 life. All members of the College benefit from diversity. The quality of learning, research, scholarship and creative activities is enhanced by a climate of inclusion, understanding and appreciation of differences among individuals, and the full range of human experience. As a result, the College is committed to both diversity and equal opportunity, and it recognizes it must represent the diversity in American society. The College is acutely aware that diversity and fairness are foundations that unite the College’s faculty, staff, students, and the communication and information community.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students should be familiar and maintain their *Academic Integrity*, which is described 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.”

(<http://hilltopics.utk.edu/academics/>).

Students should abide by the **Honor Statement** described in the same Hilltopics:

“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 form is intolerable. Attention to matters of documentation in all written work is expected and required. Inadvertent plagiarism, 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 or used without attribution (e.g., paper, speech, bibliography, or photograph).

Students who may be unsure about what constitutes plagiarism should consult the instructor or a guide for writing research reports. Resources are available at <http://www.lib.utk.edu/instruction/plagiarism>.

Infractions of academic integrity are penalized according to the severity of each 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, appropriateness of length, and originality. Only exceptional work will receive an "A" grade. Papers that are received after the due date will be assigned a lower grade than would otherwise be received. All sources must be cited, and quotations must be in quotation marks and attributed correctly. Not doing so constitutes plagiarism.

WRITING STYLE

- All writing assignments should be submitted in Word format, letter size, with 11 or 12-point Calibri or Times New Roman font and 1" margins on each side. Use **single line spacing and appropriate paragraph spacing** (no more than 12pt). Include page numbers.
- Assignments should be named as *Lastname_FileDesignation* (e.g., *Million_Essay*). Make 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 the conventions of academic writing. Use clear sentences, avoid slang, present one idea in one paragraph, and use proper transitional words/phrases. A good resource for 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 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 insure sufficient time to complete the required work.

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

ASSIGNING GRADES

Please note I do not assign letter grades for individual assignments, but will mark your paper with my comments and provide a 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.

GRADING DISPUTE

Grading is a subjective process, and it is virtually impossible to design exercises that can be objectively quantified with 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 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%
- ESSAY 10%
- PROJECT, WRITING 25%
- PROJECT, ORAL PRESENTATION 10%
- EXERCISES 40%

PARTICIPATION (15 POINTS)

Participation will be evaluated based on the student's performance on asynchronous activities in addition to class attendance and participation. Asynchronous activities are not "assignments" but class activities, and 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."

ESSAY (10 POINTS)

Write an essay about one of your encounter(s) with a government agency. This assignment should encourage you to think thoughtfully about the role of government information in your day-to-day life. You may talk about government information at any level of government. I am looking for:

- An awareness of what government is;
- An awareness of how government information affects everyday life; and
- An evaluation of how this information shapes your life.

Even if you cover more than one topic, this narrative should be cohesive and well-organized (cohesive introduction, body, and conclusion with a connecting central idea). Pay attention to your writing style (section VI).

Length: 1-2 pages. File designation: *Essay*.

PROJECT, WRITING (25 POINTS)

There are three options for this project: a business plan, a research paper, and an essay on Federalism. 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

Create a business plan for a 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. Be realistic. 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 an opportunity to exchange thoughts in class with classmates to improve your ideas. 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: Research Paper

In this research paper you will identify and research an issue related to government information/data. Your paper must involve original research—typically, it should involve raising a valid, original research question, selecting a research method to answer that question, and then collecting and analyzing first-hand data on your own. It is expected that you will use all the resources available to you, including journals, books, websites, and interviews with relevant parties. If you are interested in conducting original research that will involve human subjects (for example, interviewing librarians), then talk to the instructor as soon as possible. The final paper should include the following basic components of a research paper:

- Introduction (1 page*)
- Literature review (1.5-2 pages)
- Research design/methodology (1-1.5 pages)
- Results/findings (2-3 pages)
- Discussions (1-2 pages)
- Conclusion (0.5 page)
- References
- For collaborative 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: *RPIdea*) and receive feedback from the instructor. You will also have opportunities to exchange thoughts in class with your classmates to improve your ideas. Only the final paper (file designation *RPFinal*) will earn you points. More instructions and evaluation criteria will be given in class and on the course site.

* Each page number listed here is the recommended length of the section.

Option three: Essay on Federalism

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 essay, 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.

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

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. More instructions and evaluation criteria will be given in class and on the course site.

PROJECT, ORAL PRESENTATION (10 POINTS)

Business Plan Presentation

In five to ten minutes deliver an oral overview (in PowerPoint) aimed at potential funders, investors, or 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*.

Research Paper 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*.

Federalism Presentation

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

- A clear, easily understood presentation;
- A well-organized presentation with an attention grabbing opening, summary, and closing;
- Clear descriptions of the type of information you discuss;
- A summary of your argument and why Federalism shapes government information collection and dissemination in the area you discuss;
- A well-articulated, well-supported explanation for why this is the case.

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

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, updated course schedule (topics, readings, asynchronous activities, and due dates) is 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 is subject to change.