Z520: Information Seeking and Use

Summer II 2014

Instructor: Madelyn Sanfilippo
Day and Time: Monday & Wednesday 9:00am-12:00pm; June 23-July 30, 2014
Location: LI 001
Office Hours: Monday 12:15pm-2:15pm or by appointment
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Course Summary
This course will provide students with theoretical models and practical examples of how people contribute, seek, find, manage, evaluate and use information related to their everyday lives and in highly specialized contexts, such as in professional lives, crises, and medical emergencies. These topics will be considered in both digital and non-digital environments, from the perspectives of users and information professionals seeking to help users, and be presented from both practitioner and research perspectives. This course will incorporate recent Library and Information Science literature, as well as communication research, in order to cover information behaviors in a variety of contexts. Students will learn how to observe, analyze, and think about information behavior among a variety of groups, in a variety of contexts, and from multiple perspectives. This will enable students to develop skills and knowledge that can be applied to user research, user-centered design and information systems development, and information services provision. In this sense, the course is useful for a variety of students, including those interested in public libraries, academic libraries, school media, special libraries, systems analysis, user technology support, and applied information services.

Course Objectives:
By the end of the course, participants will:
1. Differentiate between and apply theoretical frameworks for studying information behavior in a variety of environments.
2. Be aware of research methods and practitioner heuristics that provide insight into the information behaviors of individuals and groups.
3. Identify and analyze the factors that influence a users’ information needs, search processes, uses, and perceptions.
4. Explain how information professional’s awareness of information needs and behaviors enables them to provide information services and resources in particular contexts.

Assignments
Grades for this course will be based on two papers, reading reflections for each class, a presentation of one of the theoretical models covered in the readings, and engagement during sessions.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Portion of Final Grade</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation, Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Ongoing basis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Reading Reflections</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>7:00pm the night before each class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation of Model</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>By sign up</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Behavior Model</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>July 9, 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>30%</td>
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**Participation and attendance (10%)**
Attendance is very important and will affect grades in this course. Students must notify the instructor in advance, if they are unable to attend a session. One excused absence will not negatively impact a students’ final grade, however multiple absences or an unexcused absence will be noted in participation grades. Students are also expected to contribute to the discussion during sessions.

**Critical Reading Reflections (30%)**
For each session of the course (excluding the first and last sessions), students are expected to post, using the OnCourse Wiki, at least 1 paragraph of critical reflections AND 1 question developed from the assigned readings. These will be due by 7:00pm the night before each class, so that student comments and concerns can be integrated in discussion. This is not designed to be summary, but rather an opportunity for students to agree or disagree, identify areas of confusion, or make connections between readings or with outside topics for discussions. Students should feel free to make personal connections between their experiences and the models and theories discussed in the readings.

**Presentation of Model (10%)**
Each student will present one theoretical model covered in the reading in class. Models will be selected during the first session of the semester. Presentations should be at least 15 minutes, but not longer than 30 minutes. Presentations should include: a summary of the model, discussion of a case in which the model was applied or derived from, and at least one question for discussion for the class. A reference should be provided for the case discussed to the class via the OnCourse message function.

**Self-Behavior Model (20%)**
This assignment will require each student to document three distinct information seeking processes within their own behavior and then use this documentation as data against which to evaluate the models described in class and in the readings. The behaviors documented can be as short and simple as checking a bus schedule or as complex and long as gathering literature for a paper. Behaviors documented do not have to resolve an information need, but should be a distinct searching session, and can be collaborative. Documentation should include the steps taken, duration of time, thoughts and emotional state, and details of the problem, resources, boundaries, and outcomes.

Evaluation of individual behavior should assess how the details of personal activities can be explained through the models included in the syllabus. Students should discuss at least...
two models. This discussion can be comparative, critical, or a synthesis. In the case of a comparative assessment, students will provide the strengths and weaknesses of each model in conceptualizing your behaviors, including aspects of contextual applicability if the behaviors documented were very different. In the case of a critical analysis, students will explain why the models fail to describe their behavior and provide a model of their own. In the case of a synthesis, students will identify relevant aspects of two models and represent their own interpretation of how they can be integrated into one model, based on personal behaviors.

The paper that will be turned in should be 5-8 pages, double-spaced, size 12, Times New Roman font. References should be documented in APA style. Students must include the references from the syllabus and are welcome, but not required, to include outside references.

**Research Proposal (30%)**
For the final assignment, each student will write a research proposal based on their own interests in relationship to information behaviors. This is an opportunity to design a study that would empirically test a model or explore the information needs or uses of a particular group of people. Students should notify the instructor of their topic no later than July 9, 2014, either in person or by email.

This proposal should include a literature review, discussing both the problem space and the theory to be employed, and research question(s), as well as a description of methodology that would allow you to investigate the question(s) identified. The purpose of this project is to envision how information behavior could be applied to better understand the information needs of particular users or in a specific context, so as to inform both scholars and information professionals.

The proposal should be 8-10 pages, double-spaced, size 12, Times New Roman font. References should be documented in APA style. Students must include references both from class and from external sources.
Calendar/Readings

Required Text:
You can obtain this book as an e-text from Barnes & Noble, the iTunes bookstore, and Smashwords for $9.99.

The remaining readings will be made available online on OnCourse.

**Session 1 – Monday, June 23, 2014**

*Introduction: What is information behavior?*

**Session 2 – Wednesday, June 25, 2014**

*Theoretical models, part 1*
Reading Reflection due June 24th by 7:00pm


**Session 3 – Monday, June 30, 2014**

**Theoretical models, part 2**

Reading Reflection due June 29th by 7:00pm


**Session 4 – Wednesday, July 2, 2014**

**Context**

Reading Reflection due July 1st by 7:00pm


Session 5 – Monday, July 7, 2014

Research methods and information behavior
Reading Reflection due July 6th by 7:00pm


Session 6 – Wednesday, July 9, 2014

Identifying user characteristics and needs
Reading Reflection due July 8th by 7:00pm

Self-Behavior Model due


Session 7 – Monday, July 14, 2014

Institutions and organizations
Reading Reflection due July 13th by 7:00pm


Patterson, L., & Martzoukou, K. (2012). An examination of canadian information professionals' involvement in the provision of business information synthesis and analysis services. *Journal Of Librarianship And Information Science, 44*(1), 47-64.


**Session 8 – Wednesday, July 16, 2014**

**Libraries**

Reading Reflection due July 15th by 7:00pm


**Session 9 – Monday, July 21, 2014**

**Vulnerable populations**

Reading Reflection due July 20th by 7:00pm


**Session 10 – Wednesday, July 23, 2014**

**Health information seeking**

Reading Reflection due July 22nd by 7:00pm


Session 11 – Monday, July 28, 2014

Crises

Reading Reflection due July 27th by 7:00pm


Session 12 – Wednesday, July 30, 2014

Information literacy

Research Proposal due


