University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee
School of Information Studies

L&I SCI 691
Special Topics in Information Science:
Introduction to the Social Studies of Information
3 Credits
Spring 2013

Instructor:
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Description:

This course provides an introduction to the study of information drawing on theories from the fields of sociology, communication and critical media studies.

Course Summary:

Information is a key resource in contemporary societies: it structures our economies, it shapes our cultures and social habits, and it influences politics. This course approaches information societies from multiple perspectives, providing the tools to analyze their social, political and cultural transformations. The course is divided in three parts. The first closely engages some of the key discussions on the role of information as a material and immaterial good that is inextricably linked to the exercise of various forms of power. The second part looks at the role of networks and social media platforms in shaping contemporary society through counter-cultural formations and creative activism. The final part explores the role of information through the lens of critical software studies: a cutting edge approach to the study of code as a cultural text in itself, helping us think about the relationship between information and critical issues like race and gender.

Course Goal:

To review different analytical frameworks and explore how information functions as a material resource, as a driver for the expansion of various kinds of infrastructure and knowledge economies, and as a catalyst for social change.

Student Learning Objectives:
Upon successful completion of the course, students will:
1. Understand a variety of approaches to the social studies of information
2. Understand the origins, economic basis, processes of social and cultural change, and dominant sites of power in information societies.
3. Identify and analyze crucial features of their own information societies.

Method of Instruction & Learning:
• Classroom lecture, video screenings, in-class presentations and discussion.

Prerequisites:
• Junior standing (undergraduates), L&I SCI 501 (graduate students), or permission of instructor

MLIS Core Competencies Addressed:
Foundations of the Profession:
- 1F: National and international social, public, information, economic, and cultural policies and trends of significance to the library and information profession.

Course Schedule: (subject to change)

1. **Introduction to the Course: What is social about information?**
   An introduction to three approaches to understanding information and information societies: information as power; information as a force shaping digital culture; and information as social text.

Suggested readings:
- Frank Webster (1995) *Theories of the Information Society*, Rutledge, pp. 1-32.

INFORMATION AS POWER: MATERIALITY & CONTROL

2. **Information and Control**
- Alexander R. Galloway (2004) *Protocol How Control Exists after Decentralization*. MIT Press, 1-53.

Case Study: information highway; the Internet

Suggested readings:
- Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker (2007) *The Exploit. A theory of Networks.* Minnesota, 23-53.

3. **The Materiality of Information**
- Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker (2007) *The Exploit. A theory of Networks.* Minnesota, 54-80.
- Wendy Hui Kyong Chun (2006) *Control and freedom: power and paranoia in the age of fiber optics*. MIT Press, vii-viii; 1–30.

Case Study: the network society

Suggested readings:
- Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker (2007) *The Exploit. A theory of Networks.* Minnesota, 53-102.

4. **Digital Economies***
*Student presentations begin
- Gilles Deleuze, (1995) "Postscript on Control Societies" *Negotiations*, translated by Martin Joughlin, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 177-182.
- Dyer-Witheford, Nick & Greig De Peuter (2009) "Immaterial Labour: a workers' history of videogaming" in *Games of Empire: Global Capitalism and Video Games* University of Minnesota Press, pp. 3-34

Case Study: knowledge economies; gaming industries

Suggested readings:

- Gigi Roggero (2011) *The Production of Living Knowledge: The Crisis of the University and the Transformation of Labor in Europe and North America*, Temple University Press, vii-xiv; 87-11.

THE POWER OF INFORMATION: SHAPING DIGITAL CULTURES

5.   Information Commons*
*First short paper due
- Armin Medosh (2004) "Society in Ad-hoc Mode: Decentralised, Self-organising, Mobile," *Data Browser 02* (2005) *Engineering Culture: on 'the Author as (Digital) Producer*, Autonomedia, 135-160.
- Brian Holmes (2004) "The Flexible Personality: for a New Cultural Critique," *Data Browser 01* (2004) *Economising Culture: on the (Digital) Culture Industry*, Autonomedia, 23-47.

Case studies: Open source and piracy

Suggested readings:
- Gabriella Coleman. (2009). Code is Speech: Legal Tinkering, Expertise, and Protest Among Free and Open Source Software Developers. *Cultural Anthropology* 24(3): 420-454.

6.   Pathologies of Information Societies
- Franco Bifo Berardi (2009) *Precarious Rhapsody. Semiocapitalism and the pathologies of the post-alpha generation* London, <.:.Min0r.:.> c0mp0siti0ns, 8-56.

Case study: Artivism

Suggested readings:
- Tiziana Terranova (2004) *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age,* Pluto Press, 73-97.

7.   Knowledge Commons and Information Monopoly
- Ned Rossiter (2006) *Organized Networks. Media Theory, Creative Labour, New Institutions.* NAi Publishers, 133-163
- Cesare Casarino (2008) "Surplus Common," Cesare Casarino & Antonio Negri (2008) *In Praise of the Common. A Conversation on Philosophy and Politics*, Minnesota, pp. 1-40.

Case studies: Radical librarians and open access

Suggested readings:
- Alexios Zavras (2009) "The trouble with wiki politics: Lessons learned from open source software communities," *Re-public. Re-imagining Democracy,* http://www.re-public.gr/en/?p=149

8.   Information and Social Change from the Grassroots
- Ulises Mejias (2010) "The Limits of Networks as Models for Organizing Sociality," *New Media & Society, (12)* 4, 603-617
- Ned Rossiter (2006) *Organized Networks. Media Theory, Creative Labour, New Institutions.* NAi Publishers, 46-69.

Case studies: Platforms & network culture

Suggested readings:
- Ulises Mejias (2011) "The Twitter Revolution Must Die," http://blog.ulisesmejias.com/2011/01/30/the-twitter-revolution-must-die/

- Clay Shirky (2011) "The Political Power of Social Media. Technology, the Public Sphere, and Political Change," *Foreign Affairs,* Jan./Feb. 2011.

9. Repurposing Media

- Ned Rossiter (2006) *Organized Networks. Media Theory, Creative Labour, New Institutions*, NAi Publishers, pp. 166-186.
- Alessandra Renzi (manuscript) "From Collectives to Connectives," pp. 1-30

Case studies: Media activism

Suggested readings:
Brian Holmes (2008) *Unleashing the Collective Phantoms*, Autonomedia

INFORMATION AS SOCIAL TEXT: CRITICAL CODE STUDIES

10. From New Media to Software Studies*
**Second short paper due
- Lev Manovich (2001) *The Language of New Media*. MIT Press, 2-17.
- N. Katherine Hayles (2004) "Print Is Flat, Code Is Deep: The Importance of Media-Specific Analysis," *Poetics Today*, 25:1 (Spring, 2004), 67-90.

Case studies: New media art

Suggested readings:
- Lev Manovich (2001) *The Language of New Media*. MIT Press, 62-114.

11. Software Culture
- Matthew Fuller (2003) *Behind the Blip: Essays on the Culture of Software*. Autonomedia, 11-49; 99-120.

Case studies: Software

Suggested readings:
- Mark Marino (2006) "Critical Code Studies" http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/electropoetics/codology.

12. Anomalous Code
- Jussi Parikka and Tony D. Sampson (2009) On Anomalous Objects of Digital Culture: An Introduction. in Parikka, J., and T. Sampson, eds. *The Spam Book: On Anomalous Objects of Digital Culture*, J. Parikka and T. Sampson Eds, Hampton Press, pp. 1-18.
- Jussi Parikka (2009) BAD OBJECTS. Archives of Software--Malicious Codes and the Aesthesis of Media Accidents in Parikka, J., and T. Sampson, eds, pp. 101-123.

Case studies: Malicious code and viruses

Suggested readings:
- Greg Elmer (2009) Robots.txt: The Politics of Search Engine Exclusion, in Parikka, J., and T. Sampson, eds., pp. 217-227.

13. Code or Text
- Steve Ramsay and Geoffrey Rockwell, "Programming as Writing as Programming." http://www.otal.umd.edu/~mgk/wap.pdf

- Alan Sondheim (2006) "Part 1: On Code and Codework" http://www.clc.wvu.edu/projects/plaintext_zwiki1/codework/part_1_on_code_and_codework_by_alan_sondheim and "Part 2: Coding, encoding, confusion" http://www.clc.wvu.edu/projects/plaintext_zwiki1/codework/part_2_coding_encoding_confusion_by_alan_sondheim
- John Cayley (2002) "The Code is not the Text (unless it is the text)" *Electronic Book Review*. 10 September 2002. http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/electropoetics/literal

Case studies: Cultural implications of programming

Suggested readings:
- Geoff Cox (2006) "Software Actions," Data Browser 03 (2006) *Curating Immateriality*, Autonomedia, 69-79.

14. Aesthetics of Code
- Florian Cramer (2005) *Words made flesh Code, Culture, Imagination*. Piet Zwart Institute, 7-11; 81-125. http://www.netzliteratur.net/cramer/wordsmadefleshpdf.pdf
- Geoff Cox, Alex McLean, and Adrian Ward (2006) "The Aesthetics of Generative Code" *Generative Art 00 conference*. Politecnico di Milano, Italy http://www.generative.net/papers/aesthetics/

Case studies: Malicious code and viruses

Suggested readings:
- Warren Sack (forthcoming) "Aesthetics of Information Visualization," *Context Providers*, Christiane Paul, Victoria Vesna, and Margot Lovejoy, Eds, Intellect, http://danm.ucsc.edu/~wsack/Writings/wsack-infoaesthetics.pdf

15. Digital Bodies*
*Final paper due
- Mark b. n. Hansen (2006) *Bodies in Code. Interfaces with Digital Media*. Routledge, pp. 221-252.
- Micha Cardenas (2010) "Becoming Dragon: A Transversal Technology Study" *Code Drift: Essays in Critical Digital Studies*. http://ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=639
- Sadie Plant (1996) "Binary Sexes, Binary Codes," http://www.t0.or.at/sadie/binary.html.

Case studies: race and gender in cyberspace

Suggested readings:
- Moya Z. Bailey (2011) "All the Digital Humanists Are White, All the Nerds Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave" *Journal of the Digital Humanities* Vol. 1, No.1 Winter 2011, http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/1-1/all-the-digital-humanists-are-white-all-the-nerds-are-men-but-some-of-us-are-brave-by-moya-z-bailey/

Required Texts:

- Alexander R. Galloway (2004) *Protocol How Control Exists after Decentralization*. MIT Press.
- Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker (2007) *The Exploit. A theory of Networks*. Minnesota Press.
- Additional readings via D2L

Deliverables:

The course is organized as a seminar where we will discuss, question, and think collectively about the weekly readings. Students are expected to ask questions and participate in class discussion. Students will lead part of the class discussion, taking turns introducing the material and facilitating discussion. I will prepare guiding sheets to support students willing to present on denser material.

Students are required to read closely all the material assigned weekly (ca. 40-55 pages) and to attend all classes.

Class presentations:
Starting with the fourth week, graduate students will make one presentation about class readings (individually or as part of a group depending on class size). The presentations are not designed to summarize or repeat the readings but to critically and creatively engage them. In addition to presenting the material, the assigned student should develop a minimum of two questions or concerns to spark additional discussion. These questions should be posted to D2L by 5:30pm the night before class.
Students are encouraged, though not required, to bring additional materials that relate to the weekly topic to facilitate discussion. Presentations should last about 20 minutes and set up a subsequent one-hour discussion. Discussion leaders will be graded based on quality of the questions posed, preparation, and overall performance. (Undergraduate students can opt to be discussion leaders for extra credit, if slots are available, but it is neither required, nor guaranteed).

Assignments:
In addition to the presentation, there are three written assignments:
   1. Two reflection papers due at the beginning of the 5th and 10th session (max 5 pages). One of these short papers can later be expanded into a final paper.
   2. A final paper/project where students address the issues, concepts and questions discussed in class. *Undergraduate students* will be required to write 8-10 pages, which will be more descriptive in nature. *Graduate students* will be required to write 12-15 pages, and will need to articulate and defend *their own* position on the topic, thus, a more normative paper. The paper is due at the beginning of the final session.

More detailed information about the assignments will be provided in class.

Credit Breakdown:	**UG**	**GR**	**Grading Rubric:**	
			A	94-100
Attendance and participation	20%	10%	A-	91-93
Discussion leadership		15%	B+	88-90
Short paper #1	20%	15%	B	84-87
Short paper #2	20%	15%	B-	81-83
Research paper	40%	45%	C+	78-80
			C	74-77
			C-	71-73
			D	60-70
			F	0-59

Class Policies:

- Attendance:

    Students are expected to attend each class, arriving prepared to participate in discussions of the class material, respond to direct questions, and, when appropriate, engage in constructive and collaborative group work.

    Absences require the instructor's approval in advance, and may require written documentation of medical or family emergencies. Note: Simply providing advanced notice to instructor of an absence does not mean it was an approved/excused absence. Multiple unexcused absences will be noted and will impact your "Attendance and participation" grade.

- Participation:

    Each student is expected to actively and constructively participate in class. I will note contributions by each student in each class meeting to guide the assessment of the "Attendance and participation" grade element. If you make well-informed and relevant contributions to at least half the sessions then you should score very well. There is no need to hog the discussion, and a few quiet days will not hurt your score.

    In order to accomplish this objective, it is imperative that you prepare for class – do the readings beforehand.

    For class meetings dedicated to group work, your participation will be assessed based on the constructive and collaborative use of this in-class time to work on group assignments.

    If you feel uncomfortable talking in class, credit may be awarded for meetings during office hours, or for answers submitted in writing before the section meets (this consideration requires advance notice and approval by the instructor).

- Atmosphere for Learning:

    Students are encouraged to participate in open and frank discussions of the course material, but are also expected to respect the opinions of other students and to engage in discussion and debates in a sensitive and respectful manner.

    Before class begins, please turn off all cell phones, instant messengers, and any other items that might ring, buzz, play "My Humps," or otherwise call attention to themselves and disrupt class.

    Laptop computers may be used to assist in note taking. But please check email, chat, and Facebook on your own time, not during class.

    Fair warning of things I will take note of: Coming to class late, leaving class early, sleeping in class, excessive eating in class, playing on your laptop or texting during class, doing work for other courses in class, etc. These, or similar, activities will negatively affect your participation grade.

    Assignments:

    All written assignments must be turned in on time, at the beginning of class on the due date. Late submissions will not be allowed except for a confirmed emergency with instructor's pre-approval. All assignments are due in class at the specified time and date. Late submission will result in a 5% deduction (of each assignment's total grade) per business day, excluding weekends. In the case of illness or other special circumstance, notification should be given to me as soon as possible and before the deadline in question.

Assignments are to be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins. Use a 12-point kerned font such as Times New Roman. Multi-page documents should have page numbers and be stapled. *Don't forget your name, the course number, an assignment description, and the date.* Assignments turned in via D2L should be in .doc, .docx, or .rtf format.

Rules of academic conduct require that you not use the work of others without clearly indicating it as such (using proper and consistent citation formats). Academic misconduct may result in a lowered grade, no credit for a given assignment, or failure of the course.

- Contacting Me:

I will be available for *short* discussions immediately before and after class.

By email: I will respond to class-related emails during normal work hours, and will generally reply the same day as received (an e-mail sent after working hours, however, may not be replied to until the next morning). Please be sure to use your UWM e-mail account, identify yourself and the course, and *always* use proper and professional e-mail etiquette. (There's a good guide to student email etiquette here: http://www.ust.udel.edu/action/Current%20Students/Academics/email.aspx)

In person: I will be in my office and available to talk to you during my scheduled office hours (see above). Other times may be available via prior arrangement.

UWM and SOIS Academic Policies:

The following links contain university policies affecting all SOIS students. Many of the links below may be accessed through a PDF-document maintained by the Secretary of the University: http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf.

Undergraduates may also find the ***Panther Planner and Undergraduate Student Handbook*** useful (http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/OSL/DOS/Handbook2005-06.pdf). For graduate students, there are additional guidelines from the Graduate School (http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Grad_Sch/StudentInfo/), including those found in the ***Graduate Student and Faculty Handbook***: http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Grad_Sch/Publications/Handbook/.

- Students with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in order to meet any of the requirements of a course, please contact the instructor as soon as possible. Students with disabilities are responsible to communicate directly with the instructor to ensure special accommodation in a timely manner. There is comprehensive coverage of issues related to disabilities at the Student Accessibility Center (http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/DSAD/SAC/MainOffice.html), important components of which are expressed here: http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/DSAD/SAC/SACltr.pdf.
- Religious observances. Students' sincerely held religious beliefs must be reasonably accommodated with respect to all examinations and other academic requirements, according to the following policy: http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S1.5.htm. Please notify your instructor within the first three weeks of the Fall or Spring Term (first week of shorter-term or Summer courses) of any specific days or dates on which you request relief from an examination or academic requirement for religious observances.

- <u>Students called to active military duty</u>. UWM has several policies that accommodate students who must temporarily lay aside their educational pursuits when called to active duty in the military (see http://www3.uwm.edu/des/web/registration/militarycallup.cfm), including provisions for refunds, readmission, grading, and other situations.
- <u>Incompletes</u>. A notation of "incomplete" may be given in lieu of a final grade to a student who has carried a subject successfully until the end of a semester but who, because of illness or other unusual and substantial cause beyond the student's control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or some limited amount of other term work. An incomplete is not given unless the student proves to the instructor that s/he was prevented from completing course requirements for just cause as indicated above (http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S31.pdf).
- <u>Discriminatory conduct (such as sexual harassment)</u>. UWM and SOIS are committed to building and maintaining a campus environment that recognizes the inherent worth and dignity of every person, fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect, and encourages the members of its community to strive to reach their full potential. The UWM policy statement (http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S47.pdf) summarizes and defines situations that constitute discriminatory conduct. If you have questions, please contact an appropriate SOIS administrator.
- <u>Academic misconduct</u>. Cheating on exams and plagiarism are violations of the academic honor code and carry severe sanctions, ranging from a failing grade for a course or assignment to expulsion from the University. See the following document (http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/OSL/DOS/conduct.html) or contact the SOIS Investigating Officer (currently the Associate Dean) for more information.
- <u>Complaints</u>. Students may direct complaints to the SOIS Dean or Associate Dean. If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy.
- <u>Grade appeal procedures</u>. A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow SOIS appeals procedures or, in the case of a graduate student, the Graduate School. These procedures are available in writing from the respective department chairperson or the Academic Dean of the College/School (http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S28.htm).
- <u>Examinations, Finals</u>. The Secretary of the University is authorized to prepare the final examination schedule. The time of the final examination for an individual or a class may be changed only with the prior approval of the dean or director of the respective college/school. The change will involve a postponement to a later date. For individuals with exam conflicts, a separate week at the very end of the exam week will be reserved to take one of the conflicting exams (http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad+admin_policies/S22.htm).
- <u>D2L and Student Privacy</u>: Certain SOIS courses utilize the instructional technology Desire to Learn (D2L) to facilitate online learning. D2L provides instructors the ability to view both individual data points and aggregate course statistics, including the dates and times individual students access the system, what pages a student has viewed, the duration of visits, and the IP address of the computer used to access the course website. This information is kept confidential in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), but may be used by the instructor for student evaluation within the constraints of this particular course.