

# Spring 2016: PhD 612: Human Information Behavior

**Class meetings:** Tuesday, 3:10pm-5:50pm, [CI-304](#).  
**Instructor:** [Dr. Chirag Shah](#)  
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**Office hours:** Tuesday 2pm-3pm, or by appointment

## Course Description

This course will focus upon the relations between information behavior and information systems design. Students will analyze philosophical, cognitive, interpersonal, organizational, social, political and cultural theories and empirical investigations, within the framework of the following topics:

- Understanding why and how humans engage in information behaviors
- Characterizing human information behaviors
- Relating information use to other forms of information behavior
- Relating information behavior to information system design (both social and technical)
- Analyzing existing information systems according to these relations

## Prerequisites

16:194:610 or the instructor's permission

## Course Materials

Many readings for this course will be posted on Sakai. Readings which are directly available electronically (e.g. web sites, electronic journals) will be listed in the course schedule with appropriate location information. There are a couple of books which students should seriously consider purchasing for this course:

- Theories of information behavior, K.E. Fisher, S. Erdelez & L. McKechnie (Eds.). Medford, NJ: Information Today, 2005. (ASIST members get a discount)
- Case, D.O. (2006). Looking for information: a survey of research on information seeking, needs and behavior, 2nd ed. New York: Academic Press. (First edition was much more expensive; this edition adds some 400 new references).

There is one other book which I highly recommend for purchase:

- Boulding, K.E. (1956) The image: knowledge in life and society. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. The first five chapters will be on Sakai, but since it is a rather inexpensive paperback, and well worth reading in too (it's also rather short), please do consider it for purchase.

### **Learning Objectives**

In this course, students learn, read original research, discuss and write about the practice, study and theory of human information behavior. Human information behavior is the study of the interactions between people, the various forms of data, information, knowledge and wisdom that fall under the rubric of “information” and the situations (contexts) in which they interact. This course provides students an introduction to the human aspects of the world of library and information services, feedback on how to interact with the literature in our field, a greater awareness of the human information behavior around us and an opportunity to work with peers to analyze and present additional relevant research.

Specific objectives of this course are to:

- Provide a perspective on the wide range of processes involved in human information behavior;
- Undertake an overview of diverse theories and models related to human information behavior, and the context of their evolution;
- Outline the problems and issues addressed over time and contemporarily in empirical research, stressing the approaches and methods used;
- Discern the contemporary directions, and identify disciplinary and interdisciplinary relationships and practical applications of such research, particularly in design of information systems; and
- Prepare to undertake research in this area.

### **Instructional Methods**

Class meetings will be in the format of a seminar. After the first few class meetings, students will each lead a seminar discussion on the topic at the beginning of class. This will be followed by a general discussion of readings and the topic. Finally, the instructor will provide an introduction to the readings for the following week.

Our campus classes will be supported by Sakai, where all course resources, learning materials, readings will be housed. Weekly learning tasks will be posted so that you are well prepared for weekly class sessions.

### **Assignments**

There are four types of assignment for this course. The first, and perhaps most important, is to be prepared for, and actively to participate in the weekly discussions.

The second type of assignment is related to the first. No later than 5pm on the day prior to the next class meeting, each student will submit through Sakai a paper, two pages in length, single spaced, discussing the readings for that week. The discussion should include, but not be limited to, a summarization of the main points made in the readings. In addition, when appropriate, it should try to relate the readings to one another and to the topic of the week. Most importantly, it should include questions, problems, arguments you have with the readings. The function of the paper is to guide discussion during the class meeting. APA citation and reference style should be used in all submitted work for this course.

The third assignment is to lead the discussion for one week’s topic. This will require reading at least a couple of papers other than those assigned as required reading. Those

leading the discussion are not required to submit a review paper that week.

The fourth assignment is to plan, conduct and present a small research project investigating some aspect of human information behavior. This can be a group project (no more than two people per group), and, in general, the appropriate scale and goals are of a pilot project for a larger subsequent investigation. In order to complete this assignment, students need to:

- Formulate a research problem
- Choose a methodology to pursue an investigation
- Design the data collection or research strategy
- Carry out the project
- Analyze the results
- Write up the results in the form of a conference paper in this area (maximum 20 pages)
- Present the results in class (20 minutes maximum) and
- Entertain questions/discussion on the project as part of the presentation (five minutes).

Please note that completion of this assignment may require approval or exemption from the Institutional Review Board for Research on Human Subjects. Obtaining this approval or exemption may take up to six weeks. In order to support the research projects, students will be expected to report weekly on their progress after the spring break. The research projects will be presented on April 30th, and the final papers will be due May 5th.

## Assessment

Grading is based on four aspects of the course described below.

- Class participation, including weekly assignments and online threaded discussions (40%)
- Seminar presentation (10%)
- Research project presentation (10%)
- Research project paper (40%)

Course grades are assigned according to the following:

- **A (91-100%): Outstanding and excellent work** of the highest standard, mastery of the topic, evidence of clear thinking, good writing, work submitted on time, well organized and polished.
- **B+ (85-90%): Very good work**, substantially better than the minimum standard, very good knowledge of the topic; error free.
- **B (80-84%): Good work**, better than the minimum standard, good knowledge of the topic.
- **C+ (74-79%): Minimum standard work**, adequate knowledge of the topic.
- **C (70-73%):** Work barely meeting the minimum standard, barely adequate knowledge of the topic; errors.
- **D (65-69%)** Writing not up to standard, disorganized, many errors

- **F (< 65%):** Unacceptable, inadequate work

Please note that only alpha grades will be assigned, and not numerical points. A brief note about grades: Incomplete grades will not be given for this class. Depending on negotiated circumstances, incomplete work will receive a Temporary Grade (usually an F, D, or C) that will change after you submit the required work. It is your responsibility to check with the registrar's office and the department to ensure you meet the deadlines for this type of grades.

### Course Policies

**Announcements:** Students are responsible for all announcements made in class, whether or not they are present when the announcements are made.

**Late submissions:** Deadlines are your responsibility. Late submissions may be accepted with a penalty. In the case of unforeseen emergencies (e.g. with a doctor's note), or with a prior permission from the instructor (obtained before the due date), late submissions will be graded normally. Late submissions will not receive any verbal or written feedback.

**Communication:** For emails, Rutgers accounts preferred. Always include your name (esp. if emailing from non-Rutgers account) and always include the course number (PhD 612) in subject line. If you don't, your email most likely will not be read. This course uses [Sakai](#), primarily for submitting assignments and posting grades. Speaking of communication, please turn off or silent your cellphones and anything that can spontaneously make noise before entering the class.

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend all classes. If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. Note that class participation accounts for 5% of the final grade (see the grading policy above). You are responsible for obtaining any material that might have been distributed in class the day when you were absent.

### Academic Integrity

Academic integrity means, among other things:

- Develop and write all of your own assignments.
- Show in detail where the materials you use in your papers come from. Create citations whether you are paraphrasing authors or quoting them directly. Be sure always to show source and page number within the assignment and include a bibliography in the back.
- Do not look over at the exams of others or use electronic equipment such as cell phones or MP3 players during exams.
- Do not fabricate information or citations in your work.
- Do not facilitate academic dishonesty for another student by allowing your own work to be submitted by others.

If you are doubtful about any issue related to plagiarism or scholastic dishonesty, please discuss it with the instructor.

The consequences of scholastic dishonesty are very serious. Rutgers' academic integrity policy is at <http://ctaar.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>. An overview of this policy may be found <http://cat.rutgers.edu/integrity/student.html>. Multimedia presentations about academic integrity may be found <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/multimedia.shtml> and <http://www.scc.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/intro.html>.

### **How to Succeed in this Course**

- Successful students will attend class regularly. If you know you must miss a class, please contact the instructor in advance, either by phone or email. You can obtain assignments or notes from a fellow classmate or from the instructor. In the case of a prolonged absence from class, you should schedule an appointment with the instructor so we can discuss the course material and concepts that you missed.
- Successful students will pay close attention to the course goals and objectives, because they will help you master the course material. If you have any questions about any of the objectives, please ask the instructor. Questions are encouraged during class for clarification. Remember that you're probably not the only one in the class with the same question. If you have questions about material from previous classes, please email me prior to the next class session, and I'll address your question at the beginning of the class session, prior to any quizzes.
- Successful students will talk to their classmates about the course material. You will find that they can help you understand many complex issues.
- Successful students will come prepared to the class with assigned readings for that class. This will help you comprehend the material for that class better. Regular assignments will also be given at the end of each class. Doing these assignments and turning them on time (typically before the next class), will help you obtain higher-order learning goals for this course.

### **Professionalism**

1. Access the class material promptly and on time.
2. Respect yourself, classmates, and the instructor.
3. Participate in class discussions.
4. Display preparedness for class through completing reading assignments.
5. Present content knowledgeably with supported reasoning.

## Schedule (Tentative)

Date	Topics and Readings
January 19	<p>Introduction to the course. The concept of information, the relationships between information and human behavior, and the notion of human information behavior. Levels at which information behavior may be analyzed. Relations between information behavior and social, political and technical systems. Information systems as responses to information behavior, and as environments for information behavior. Introduction to Schutz &amp; Luckmann, <i>The structures of the life world</i>.</p> <p><i>Readings for the next two weeks:</i></p> <p>Schutz, A. &amp; Luckmann, T. (1973) <i>The structures of the life world</i>. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. Preface, etc., Chapters 1 and 3.</p> <p>Wagner, H.R. (1970) Introduction: The phenomenological approach to sociology. In: Schutz, A. <i>On phenomenology and social relations. Selected writings</i>, H.R. Wagner, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1-50, 316-323.</p> <p>Boulding, K. (1956) <i>The image: Knowledge in life and society</i>. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. (Chapters 1-5 required)</p> <p>Ng, K.B., Nordlie, R., Paris, C.G., Park, S., Rieh, S.Y., Savage, P. &amp; Belkin, N.J. (1996) On the relevance of “Structures of the Life World” to library and information science. Unpublished paper, School of Communication, Information &amp; Library Studies, Rutgers University.</p>
January 26	<p>Self, society, knowledge and information behavior. Why people engage in information seeking behavior, and how these conditions can be characterized and classified.</p> <p>(Readings continuing from the previous class.)</p>
February 2	<p>The communicative framework of information behavior. Individual and social levels of this behavior.</p> <p><i>Readings for this week:</i></p> <p>Giddens, A. (1984) <i>The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration</i>. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Introduction &amp; Chapter 1, Elements of the theory of structuration.</p> <p>Grice, P. (1989) <i>Studies in the way of words</i>. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 2, Logic and conversation.</p> <p>Douglas, M. (1986) <i>How institutions think</i>. New York: Syracuse University Press. Chapters 1 and 4.</p> <p>Watzlawick, P., Beavin, J.H. &amp; Jackson, D.D. (1967) <i>The pragmatics of human communication</i>. New York: Norton. Chapters 1 and 2.</p>
February 9	<p>Classifying information-related behaviors: rationales and methods. The abstract/theoretical schemes that can be used to organize and understand information-related behavior; classification as the first step in relating behavior to prospective information systems.</p> <p><i>Readings for this week:</i></p> <p>Dervin, B. (1992) From the mind’s eye of the user: The sense-making qualitative-quantitative methodology. In J.D. Glazier &amp; R.R. Powell, eds. <i>Qualitative research in information management</i>. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 61-84.</p>

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Cool, C. & Belkin, N.J. (2002) A classification of interactions with information. In H Bruce, R. Fidel, P. Ingwersen & P. Vakkari (eds.) *Emerging frameworks and methods. Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Conceptions of Library and Information Science (CoLIS4)*. (pp. 1-15).Greenwood Village, CO: Libraries Unlimited.

*Initial discussion of research project proposals*

February 16 The systems concept: behavioral constraints on information systems. Ideal information systems and real-world contexts: implications for design. Situated versus planned information behavior.

*Readings for this week:*

Suchman, L. A. (1987). *Plans and Situated Actions: The Problem of Human Machine Communication*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Winograd, T. & Flores, F. (1987). *Understanding Computers and Cognition*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

February 23 How people and society in general interpret and construct the systems in which they live and act.

*Readings for this week:*

Berger, P. L. & Luckmann, T. (1966 or later editions). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City, NY: Anchor.

*Research project proposals due*

March 1 Research project proposal presentations and discussions

March 8 Influence of information-related behavior on information system components. How people behave within the context of information systems, how systems evolve under the influence of this behavior.

*Readings for this week:*

Ellis, D. (1989) A behavioural approach to information retrieval system design. *Journal of Documentation*, v. 45: 171-212.

Suchman, L., Blomber, J., Orr, J.E. & Trigg, R. (1999) Reconstructing technologies as social practice. *American Behavioral Scientist*, v. 43: 392-408.

*Recommended additional readings:*

Van House, N.A. (2004) Science and technology studies and information studies. *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, v. 38: 1-86.

March 15 *No class – Spring break*

March 22 *No class – Instructor away for iConference*

March 29 Influence of information-related behavior on information system components. Information behavior in groups.

*Readings for this week:*

Foster, J. (2006). Collaborative information seeking and retrieval. *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, v. 40: 329-356.

Sonnenwald, D.H. & Pierce, L.G. (2000). Information behavior in dynamic group work

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contexts: interwoven situational awareness, dense social networks and contested collaboration in command and control. *Information Processing and Management*, v. 36: 461-479.

Shah, C, and Marchionini, Gary (2010). Awareness in collaborative information seeking. *Journal of American Society of Information Science and Technology*, 61(10): 1970-1986.

*Recommended additional readings:*

Poltrock, S., Grudin, J., Dumais, S., Fidel, R., Bruce, H. & Pejtersen, A.M. (2003). Information seeking and sharing in design teams. In: *GROUP '03, Proceedings of the 2003 International ACM SIGGROUP Conference on Supporting Group Work* (pp. 239-247). New York: ACM.

Shah, C (2014). Collaborative Information Seeking. *Journal of American Society of Information Science and Technology*, 65(2), pp. 215-236.

April 5 Human responses to existing information systems: how people get around them, and why. Information-related behavior and social change: how individuals and groups invent and re-invent systems to support their information behaviors.

*Readings for this week:*

Boczkowski, P.J. (2004) The mutual shaping of technology and society in videotex newspapers: beyond the diffusion and social shaping perspectives. *The Information Society*, v. 20: 255–267.

Kraut, R.E., Cool, C., Rice, R. & Fish, R.S. (1994) Life and death of a new technology: task, utility and social influences on the use of a communication medium. In *CSCW '94: Proceedings of the 1994 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Collaborative Work* (pp. 13-21). New York: ACM.

*Recommended additional readings:*

Lamb, R., King, J.L. & Kling, R. (2003). Informational environments: organizational contexts of online information use. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, v. 52: 97-114.

April 12 Assessment of information systems I: Human-computer interaction and computer-mediated human interaction

*Readings for this week:*

Attfield, S., Blandford, A. (2011). Conceptual misfits in e-mail-based current-awareness interaction. *Journal of Documentation*, 67(1). 33-55.

Kalbach, J. (2006). “I’m Feeling Lucky”: The role of emotions in seeking information on the Web. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 67(6): 813-818.

*Recommended additional readings:*

Herring, S. (2002). Computer-mediated communication on the Internet. In B. Cronin (Ed.), *Annual review of information and science technology* (pp. 109-168). Medford, NJ: Information Today, Inc.

April 19 Assessment of information systems II: Complex, large-scale systems

*Readings for this week:*

Fischer, C.S. (1992) *America calling: a social history of the telephone to 1940*. Chapter 2, The telephone in America (only pp. 54-59); Chapter 3, Educating the public (pp. 60-85, plus illus.); Chapter 6, Becoming commonplace (pp. 175-192); Chapter 8, Personal calls,

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personal meanings (pp. 222-254); Chapter 9, Conclusion (pp. 255-272). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. (This reading is available in Doc Sharing)

Lievrouw, L.A. (2004) What's changed about new media? Introduction to the fifth anniversary issue of new media & society. *New Media & Society*, v. 6: 9-15.

*Recommended additional readings:*

Introna, L.D. & Nissenbaum, H. (2000) Shaping the Web: why the politics of search engines matters. *The Information Society*, v. 16:169-185.

April 26

Context and information system design

*Readings for this week:*

Cool, C. & Spink, A. (2002) Issues of context in information retrieval (IR): an introduction to the special issue. *Information Processing and Management*, v. 38: 605-611.

Courtright, C. (2007) Context in information behavior research. *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, v. 41: 273-306.

*Recommended additional readings:*

Ng, K.B. (2002). Toward a theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between situated action and planned action models of behavior in information retrieval contexts: contributions from phenomenology. *Information Processing and Management*, v. 38: 613-626.

May 3

Presentation of research projects

May 6

*Research project paper due*

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