INFO 6700.501
Seminar in
Communication and Use of Information
Spring 2021
(To be delivered virtually via Zoom and
in person on 3 Saturday dates: January
16, February 13, and March 27, 2021)
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At UNT, our first priority is keeping our Mean Green Family safe and healthy.
Please, follow the Covid 19 updates

CATALOG DESCRIPTION
The nature of information as a phenomenon and of the communication processes.
Conceptual linkage to treatments in various fields. The role of information and
communication in individual, social, and institutional behavior.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1
To introduce you to a range of interdisciplinary research on human behavior concerning
communication and use of information.

Objectives
You should be able to:

- Understand and apply specific theories and models of information and
  communication behavior.
- Develop a balanced understanding of the roles and relationships of people and
  information systems in communication processes.
- Identify relationships among theoretical concepts in information science and
cognate disciplines.
- Understand the intellectual process of research from theory through research
design.
- Recognize and evaluate research methods for studying communication and use of
  information.

Goal 2
To encourage you to develop personal and professional confidence in your ability to
conduct and present research.
Objectives

You should be able to:

- Select and evaluate scholarly literature using appropriate bibliographic resources and tools.
- Understand and apply the process of analytic and constructive criticism in peer discussions.
- Explore selected topics independently and creatively, with a view of your own potential role as contributor to scholarly knowledge.
- Analyze and synthesize information and express ideas in an orderly, concise fashion in both written and oral presentations.
- Cite scholarly sources completely and accurately.

SEMINAR FORMAT

This seminar is intended to provide a forum in which you can explore selected topics, present your findings, and participate in open discussions. Most class periods are divided into two parts. Most of the class is devoted to a discussion of readings and assignments.

The course begins with overview lectures on approaches to research in human information behavior and on types of research conducted at the individual level (internal, cognitive), organizational level (group, institutional), and societal level (cultural, socioeconomic).

Additional instruction is provided in literature analysis and synthesis, writing, citation style, and oral presentation. Assignments are discussed thoroughly in class.

REQUIREMENTS

Literature critiques: Two short critiques of scholarly articles, one focusing on a single article and one comparing two articles. The critiques form the basis of class discussions.

Research review: Overview of scholarly research in a major topic area chosen by you and approved by the instructor(s). Formal paper and class lecture.

Research proposal: Original proposal for research on a topic chosen by you and approved by the instructor(s). Formal written proposal and class presentation.

Examinations: There are no examinations.

Readings: There is one required textbook, in addition to assigned readings (provided in print or electronic formats). The following textbooks are highly recommended—they are either on Reserve or in the Reference section at the Discovery Park Library or in the collection as an e-book:
REQUIRED

Recommended:


Style manual: Written reports must follow the writing and citation style in the APA style manual:

GRADING
Grading distribution

| Literature Critique 1 | 10% |
| Literature Critique 2 | 10% |
| Research review      | 40% |
| Research proposal    | 40% |
Grades evaluate the quality of your work and adherence to the assignment, not only written assignments, but also formal presentations and presentation handouts. Grades are determined on a 100-point scale with 10 points per grade (90-100 = A, 80-89 = B, etc.).

Grading rubric

Content: All topics must relate to human information behavior. Technology topics are appropriate, but must be approached from a user perspective.

Deadlines: To facilitate timely grading, all assignments must be emailed before midnight on the due date to the instructor and (for some assignments) to other students. Half a grade (5 points) will be deducted for each day an assignment is late. An exception can be made if you absolutely cannot meet the deadline and notify the instructor in advance.

Completeness: Assignments are detailed. Avoid losing points for incompleteness or failure to follow instructions. If you do not understand the assignment, ask for help prior to the deadline.

Writing: Both substantive content and quality of writing are considered. Substantive content includes demonstrated knowledge of appropriate concepts, strong supporting material, reasonable conclusions or solutions, and completeness. Quality of writing covers organization and clarity of expression, appropriate use of references, and correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. References must be in APA style. Up to half a grade (5 points) will be deducted for inaccurate references.

Speaking: Again, substantive content and quality of presentation are considered. Substantive content includes the same criteria as for writing above. Quality of presentation includes clarity and audibility of speech, smooth organization and flow of points, clarity and appropriateness of audiovisual aids (e.g., handouts), and positive interaction with audience.

Peer review: The ability to give and receive constructive criticism in an open forum is a given in scholarly work. Participation in peer review of classmates' ideas and presentations is assumed. Peer evaluations are not formally required or graded, but can add to the richness of class interactions.

Grading

Please allow two (2) weeks for all assignments to be read, evaluated, and returned.

Grade options

Extra credit: Assignments for extra credit will not be made under any circumstances. If you are having trouble with regular assignments, consult the instructor as soon as possible.
Incomplete: See UNT Graduate Catalog for policies and semester schedule for deadlines. A grade of incomplete (I) will be given only for justifiable reason and only if you are passing the course. It is your responsibility to contact the primary instructor to request an incomplete and discuss requirements for completing the course. If you do not remove the incomplete within one calendar year, you will receive a grade of F.

Withdrawal: See UNT Graduate Catalog for policies and semester schedule for deadlines. A grade of withdraw (W) or withdraw-failing (WF) will be given depending on your participation and grades to date.

If you simply disappear and do not file a formal UNT withdrawal form, you may receive a grade of F.

COVID-19 Impact on Attendance
While attendance is expected as outlined above, it is important for all of us to be mindful of the health and safety of everyone in our community, especially given concerns about COVID-19. Please contact me if you are unable to attend class because you are ill, or unable to attend class due to a related issue regarding COVID-19. It is important that you communicate with me prior to being absent so I may make a decision about accommodating your request to be excused from class.

If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html) please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or askSHWC@unt.edu) or your health care provider PRIOR to coming to campus. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Hotline at 844-366-5892 or COVID@unt.edu for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure. While attendance is an important part of succeeding in this class, your own health, and those of others in the community, is more important.

Class Materials for Remote Instruction
Remote instruction may be necessary if community health conditions change or you need to self-isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19. Students will need access to a webcam and microphone to participate in fully remote portions of the class. Information on how to be successful in a remote learning environment can be found at https://online.unt.edu/learn.

Statement on Face Covering
Face coverings are required in all UNT facilities. Students are expected to wear face coverings during this class. If you are unable to wear a face covering due to a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Access to request an accommodation. UNT face covering requirements are subject to change due to community health guidelines. Any changes will be communicated via the instructor.
Policies

ADA Accommodation

If you have a disability and require accommodation under the terms of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you must present a written accommodation request to the instructor by the end of the second week of the semester.

You should submit a request even if it is possible that accommodation may not be necessary later in the semester. You should register with the UNT Office of Disability Access (ODA; http://www.unt.edu/oda/ or 940-565-4323), which provides many kinds of support services.

Procedures are explained in the Disability Accommodation Policy 16.001 in the UNT Policy Manual (https://policy.unt.edu/policy/16-001)

Classroom Etiquette

Free of Disruptions – Students have the right to pursue an education without disruption or interference and to expect enforcement of norms for acceptable classroom behavior that prevents disruption of the teaching/learning process.

Responsibility: Students may not disrupt class or any other University process by any means whatsoever (including sideline conversations, comments, arguments, noise of any kind or other activity which would hinder access to or utilization of academic information)

--#8 from "The Ten Student Academic Rights and Responsibilities", UNT Code of Student Conduct

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT.

Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be barred from the classroom/course website and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

Only topics related to the course content should be discussed during class time. Talking out-of-turn during a lecture/chat or engaging in inappropriate discussions in the Discussion boards is distracting to others in the class.
Failure to follow these guidelines will result in your:

- being asked to leave the classroom and/or instructor barring you from the course website,
- receiving a “zero” on class activities (assessment, assignment, test, etc.), and
- possibly being referred to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities (see above information and web address)

Therefore, be respectful of the instructor and other students around you.

**Participation**
A seminar requires a high level of participation in all activities in order to fully benefit students. Participation includes meeting deadlines, being prepared for class, attending class, responding to email, and joining class discussions. Class attendance is assumed: if you cannot attend class, notify the instructors prior to the class. You are responsible for obtaining information from any missed meetings.

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**UNT Policy**

**Academic Integrity**

UNT has established a student academic integrity policy, which can be found at the website: [https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003)

The 2019 policy called Student Standards of Academic Integrity in the UNT Policy Manual (https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.003.AcadIntegrity.Final_.pdf), defines seven examples of academic misconduct: cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic misconduct, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. Most common among our graduate students is plagiarism, defined as follows:

Use of another’s thoughts or words without proper attribution in any academic exercise, regardless of the student’s intent, including but not limited to:

1. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement or citation, or
2. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in selling term papers or other academic materials.

Enrollment in any DIS course is considered implicit acceptance of all LIS and UNT student policies. It is the responsibility of the student to understand and adhere to these policies.
Human subjects
Surveys, interviews, experiments, and other methods for collecting data from people must be carefully designed to avoid not only unscientific biases in the data, but also unethical or illegal treatment of respondents. No actual data collection is required for assignments in this course. For purposes of future research projects, however, you should be aware that there are legal restrictions on collecting and disseminating data in human subjects research and ask your instructor or advisor before proceeding.

Instructor availability
The instructor is available for consultation online, after class, by appointment, and by phone. You are asked not to detain her immediately before classes or during class breaks. You are expected to check email and the Canvas course website between classes to see whether the instructor or others are trying to reach you, and to understand that others are not online 24/7 to respond immediately.
ASSIGNMENTS

LITERATURE CRITIQUES

Overview

Two short critiques of theoretical or research articles, one focusing on a single article and one comparing two articles. The critiques form the basis of class discussions.

The purpose of these assignments is to prepare you for writing literature reviews at the doctoral level. Beyond the objectives listed for the course (p. 1), the objectives of the critiques are to help you:

- Think creatively in writing provocative questions for class discussion.
- Gain useful perspectives and insights from class discussions.
- Benefit from literature and other resources discovered by classmates.

CRITIQUE 1

Content

Articles may come from information science or any related field. They should be recent: within about five years, except for historical or foundational sources. They should define, develop, or test information behavior or communication concepts or models in some way that contributes meaningfully to the course.

Most critiques focus on scholarly journal articles, but they may focus on credible publications in any form or format (e.g., series of articles, theme issue of journal, book, book chapter, website). They may not include assigned course readings but may include recommended readings listed in this syllabus.

Organization

Begin the critique with a descriptive title, such as "Web searching." Use the five headings below:

1. Summary

Begin by briefly describing the type of article (or book chapter, whatever) and its purpose. For example, is it a theoretical essay, introduction or test of a new behavior model, report of an empirical study, description of a system design, or evaluation of an existing system? Then briefly summarize the content (e.g., background, research problem, research questions/hypotheses, methods, results).
Cite the article in the first or second sentence. Throughout the critique, you may also cite sources that appear in the article. Do not repeat the published abstract; rather, paraphrase briefly in your own words. This section is description only; reserve analysis and criticism for the critique section.

2. Key contribution

In one or two sentences, distill the key theory, model, result, or conclusion.

3. Actual Critique

This is the most important part of the assignment because it demonstrates your ability to comprehend the research literature, assess its quality and validity, and synthesize your observations in succinct language.

Critically evaluate strengths and weaknesses of the article. The following questions are intended as guidelines, so address only those that are appropriate for the article. Do not write the questions themselves into your critique; simply state your observations based on the questions.

☐ Is the article primarily scholarly or professional in nature? How do you know this? How authoritative or credible is the article? (Clues are frequently published and/or cited author(s), author affiliation(s), and journal or publisher reputation). Note that, while scholarly articles are preferred, professional articles can offer good ideas for scholarly research.

☐ What is the most valuable contribution of the article to this seminar? What is its potential benefit to other students (e.g., a foundational behavior model, a good argument for the research method, potential for future research, historically significant)?

☐ Does this article represent a first or unusual perspective in its theoretical premises, research questions, or method?

☐ What is the size and quality of the literature review? Is the content adequately grounded and positioned with regard to previous research?

☐ Does it deliver on the promise of its title and abstract? Are the arguments or research questions/hypotheses supported by evidence?

☐ Is the research method sound? For example, are participant demographics appropriate and sample sizes sufficient? Are appropriate techniques used for data collection and analysis?

☐ Are limitations of the study stated? What are they?
Are the conclusions valid?

Is the article understandable? Is the writing clear and well organized? Are the illustrations helpful and appropriate?

4. Discussion questions

Write one or more questions or comments to provoke class discussion. These may be purely academic, concerning the article content, ideas for future research, or this research area in general. They may also be more personal, expressing your gut reaction to content or challenges of understanding the research, etc. We may or may not address all of your questions in class, but this will give us a start.

5. References

State the number of items in the article's reference list. Then list the main article and any other sources referenced in your critique as full citations in APA style. Check references for text-reference list matches and for APA style.

If you want to list other sources that you do not reference in the text, create a separate section called Selected Sources. You may also include an appendix (e.g., table, illustration); see APA for format and reference style.

Format

Word or RTF file, named in this style: Lastname_Critique1. Length 1-2 pages, not including references and any appendixes. Spell-check!

Margins 1 inch on each side. Body type 12-point Times New Roman or Cambria. Headings slightly larger and boldface. Text single-spaced (indent paragraph first lines or double-space between paragraphs). No cover page. At top right on page 1, type on separate lines: your full name, course number, and date. Type this in; do not insert a running header on page 1. Beginning on page 2, insert a running header at top right with last name and page number (e.g., Lastname / p. 2).

Submission

Attach the critique file to a message with a descriptive subject line including course, assignment, and topic, such as 6700 Critique 1: Web searching. Send by midnight on the assigned due date to the discussion forum “Critique 1” in the Canvas class website.

Also attach the article itself in digital form (usually PDF; do not attach files that can be accessed from URLs in citations). Name the attached file using this style: Author_year. Keep it short: one or two author names will suffice as in Foster_Ford_2003. If the article is available only in print, scan it to make it a PDF.
Discussion

Be prepared to lead the discussion during any class after the critique is due, but be aware that we may not have time for every critique to be discussed. This is not a formal presentation, but rather an open and informal exchange of ideas.

CRITIQUE 2

Content

Choose two articles on the basis of some common theme for comparing and contrasting their content. (Do not reuse the article from critique 1. Do not use a two-part report for a single study because this does not allow a comparison).

Suggestions for themes:

- Competing theories or models (e.g., explaining same phenomenon in different ways or from perspectives of different disciplines)
- Complementary theories or models (e.g., explaining same phenomenon at macro and micro levels)
- Different perspectives on the same topic, such as scholarly vs. professional
- Different research methods used to study same phenomenon
- Good vs. poor research design for studying a similar phenomenon or user group
- Same topic and/or researcher over time, as in evolution of a concept or model

This is a comparative analysis, so do not write separate analyses of each article. Rather, integrate the discussion of the two articles in a logical order according to the theme. You may begin your thinking by analyzing each article according to the points in critique 1. In critique 2, however, you write only about points that are pertinent to your theme or that help describe the relative quality and credibility of the articles.

For example, if you are comparing two models, it is important to note that one is merely proposed, whereas the other is supported by empirical evidence. Or you may note that one research study was conducted for the purpose of contributing to scholarly knowledge, while the other was conducted for the purpose of creating marketable software. Study the literature for examples.
Organization

Write your own headings for the body of the review, in addition to the five headings below.

1. Introduction

In a brief paragraph, state the purpose of the critique. Cite the two articles with a short description of the subject, purpose and/or contribution of each article. Name your theme(s), or base(s) for comparison. Remember that the purpose is to compare the articles, not to critique them individually. Note that the introduction is usually written last.

2. [Body]

Create your own headings to reflect your thematic points. The content should be a combination of description, analysis, and criticism related to the theme.

3. Conclusion

Summarize the comparative analysis. Describe current or potential contributions of these articles to knowledge in information science. Discuss the potential for future research, such as a possible research agenda on this topic or specific research questions. Include your personal reactions to the material (first-person "I" is acceptable).

4. Discussion questions

Write one or more questions or comments to provoke class discussion.

5. References

Create a reference list in APA style, including full citations for the two main articles and any others referenced in the text. (Do not state total number of references for any articles.) If you want to list other sources that you do not reference in the text, add a separate section called Selected Sources.

You may also include an appendix. See APA for format and reference style.

Format, Submission, Discussion

Similar to critique 1 (see p. 8), submit the attachment to the discussion forum “Critique 2” in the Canvas class website, except that critique 2 length may be 2-4 pages, not including references and any appendixes.
Exploratory RESEARCH REVIEW

Overview

This exploratory paper will provide an overview of scholarly research in a major topic area chosen by you and approved by the instructor(s). Formal paper and class lecture.

The purpose of this assignment is to provide experience in writing an exploratory scholarly research review and to provide suitable lecture content for the class. Beyond the objectives listed for the course (p. 1), the objectives of the research review are to help you develop the abilities to:

□ Present your findings in a focused and cohesive review of publication quality.
□ Deliver a clearly conceived teaching lecture to a class.
□ Interact effectively with classmates in teaching and learning.

Steps

This assignment requires that you:

1. Choose an appropriate lecture topic for this course.

2. Conduct a preliminary literature search to identify and obtain major sources.

3. Write an outline for approval by the instructor. More detail will yield more feedback. Email to instructor within Canvas and then bring a printout to class for individual discussion.

4. Complete the literature search. Do this early enough to allow time to obtain any hardcopy documents.

5. Write the paper.

6. Write the presentation and handout based on the review paper.

7. Deliver the lecture.

Content

The variety of topics and of theoretical and empirical approaches in the literature is enormous. Your topic and your general approach, breadth of coverage, and depth of detail must be appropriate for the course.
Suggested starting points are the assigned readings and published research reviews such as those in the Annual Review of Information Science and Technology (ARIST). A variety of literature and citation indexes in information science and related disciplines should be searched. Sources should be recent: within about five (5) years, except for historical or foundational sources. The reference list should include a minimum of three (3) sources beyond the required course readings; it may also include course readings. The number of sources depends on the amount of literature available on the topic.

You may choose for example, to explain one or more phenomena or process models of information behavior or communication, the behavior of certain types of users or users in certain environments, or research approaches in more than one field. You may decide to pursue one or more themes such as those suggested for critique 2.

Here are some questions to help your thinking about a topic:

- When did this topic become prominent, and in what disciplines?
- How are the behavior processes or relationships described or modeled?
- What characteristics of people and/or of information systems affect human success in information seeking, searching, or use?
- Would this review be more manageable if I restrict it to a certain type of information environment, user group, or behavior situation?
- What conceptual and methodological approaches to research (basic or applied) contribute to answering the questions above?
- How would I like this topic taught to me?

**Organization**

The paper should include the following parts under these five (5) main headings:

1. **Introduction**

   Introduce the research area and explain its importance. This is typically written last.

2. **[Body]**

   This is the largest part of the review; write your own headings to clarify the organization of your points. In a thorough review, you should try to . . .

   - Describe the research area in terms of its historical and disciplinary roots, major researchers, concepts and models, and research methods.

   - Explain what is known/not known or accepted/not accepted in this area. Cover any intellectual "camps" or controversies that exist.
3. Research potential

Critically assess strengths and weaknesses of research in the area. Describe potential contributions of the research to knowledge in information science (basic and applied). Highlight particularly promising research areas (hot dissertation topics).

4. Conclusion

Summarize progress and potential in the research area. Describe implications for end users and information professionals. Include any personal or subjective reactions (first-person "I" is acceptable).

5. References

All sources referenced in the text, following APA style. Check references for accuracy and consistency.

Writing

See APA style manual, other guides, and published work for help with organization, writing, and references. For this assignment, pay particular attention to the following.

- Approach this as an introductory overview of the topic, supported by certain works in the literature. Integrate references to the literature in this discussion (do not simply review articles one by one). If appropriate, provide an illustration of the history and/or interdisciplinarity of the research area.

- Present the review in a consistently organized fashion. Write appropriate headings for the body of the review in addition to the assigned main headings.

- Define major concepts in the introduction and throughout the report. Write out acronyms (except for the most common) on first mention, followed by the acronym in parentheses.

- Paraphrase (don't quote) sources when possible. If you do quote, cite the page number. Integrate text references smoothly into sentences.

- Include appendixes if necessary to supplement the main text. Refer to these in the text and cite their sources using APA style. Also use APA style for tables and figures.

Paper format

Word or RTF file, named in this style: Lastname_ResearchReview. Length depends on content; about 15-20 pages, not including references and any appendixes. Spell-check!
Margins 1 inch on each side. Body type 12-point Times New Roman; title and headings slightly larger and boldface. Text double-spaced throughout (indent paragraph first lines; no extra line spaces between paragraphs). No cover page. At top right on page 1, type on separate lines: your full name, course number, and date. Type this in: do not insert a running header on page 1. Below this, type title (name of topic, not assignment) in larger boldface type. Beginning on page 2, insert a running header at top right with your name and the page number (e.g., Lastname / p. 2).

**Paper submission**

All papers are due on the last day of presentations. Attach your file to Canvas assignment dropbox 6700 Research Review: Web searching. Send by midnight on the due date (This is not be distributed to the whole class). It is not necessary to submit a hardcopy paper.

**Presentation handout**

Hardcopy handouts are due on the day of your presentation: one per student and instructor. These are usually PowerPoint slide handouts (3 or 6 slides per page) or Word outlines. They must include references and may include illustrations, exercises, etc.

Also send email to the instructor with the handout file attached within 24 hours before or after your presentation. You may choose whether you also want to send it to the whole class.

You are also encouraged to send key articles if available in digital format (usually PDF; do not attach files that can be accessed from URLs in citations). These are likely to be large files, so send each article attached to a separate message. Name the attached file using the same Author_year style as for the critiques. You may choose whether to give hardcopies of articles to the class.
Presentation delivery

Research review presentations are expected to make up a significant and enjoyable portion of the course. Plan for 20 minutes of presentation, followed by 10 minutes of discussion (Maximum 30 minutes).

You are expected to devote some effort to quality of presentation. Because this is a lecture, you want to capture audience attention and inspire participation. Using audiovisual aids well, speaking from an outline (instead of reading every word from notes), and rehearsing in advance can help greatly.

Lectures are simpler than papers; do not try reiterating all the sources in your full reference list. Focus on the big picture instead: the position of the research area in scholarly work, major concepts and models, major researchers, and implications for information science. Use this as an opportunity to highlight and explicate the most interesting parts, such as controversies or hot new research questions. Leave the class with fodder for discussion.
RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Overview

Original proposal for research on a topic chosen by you and approved by the instructor. Formal written proposal and class presentation.

The goal of this assignment is to provide experience in developing a plan for an original contribution to the discipline. Beyond the objectives listed for the course, the objectives of the proposal are to develop the abilities to:

- Pursue a topic of personal interest centered on a concrete research question and project.
- Interact effectively with classmates in developing research ideas.
- Practice writing a research proposal in conventional scholarly format.
- Present and defend a research proposal in a public forum.

Steps

The steps for this assignment are similar to those for the research review. In this case, the outline for instructor approval should use the assigned headings for the proposal.

Content

Research Questions

The topic concerns a problem or question of practical or theoretical interest related to information and communication behavior. The critical and central part of this assignment is the research question. Suggestions for using existing literature to decide on a research question:

- For potential research questions, focus on the problem statement and background literature at the beginning of an article, and the conclusion and implications ("need for further research") at the end.

- Pay special attention to any research labeled "exploratory" or "preliminary." It ought to be full of ideas. Were factors identified but not yet tested? Was a model tested using only one method, or a limited sample?

- Follow the work of a prominent researcher or research team in articles over several years. For example, you might look at a series of studies attempting to develop a certain behavioral model. Then propose the next logical step in the research agenda.
• Do researchers in two different disciplines appear to be studying the same or similar phenomena from different viewpoints? You may be able to propose an interdisciplinary study, for example, by testing a model or method from one discipline on a phenomenon in another discipline.

• Does the research have identifiable weaknesses, such as a poor problem statement, artificial test setting, unreliable results, or faulty conclusions? You may propose to address the same research question, but with a different hypothesis, method, sample, etc.

• Most studies pertain to relationships between or among variables. For two or three variables that particularly interest you, what is the possible relationship? How would you study this relationship?

• Check the professional literature (or even the mass media) for problems that may warrant empirical research. A practical problem may suggest a more conceptual, theoretical question about information and communication behavior.

Organization

Scientific research proposals, reports, and articles follow a standard order that describes support for the study, method, results, and conclusions. The following headings are required; you are encouraged to provide your own subheadings as appropriate, particularly in the longest section, the literature review.

Abstract

The abstract is short (about 150-250 words) but vital because it is intended to capture the reader's interest and describe the entire study. This should be written last.

Introduction

The introduction must be very carefully conceived and worded.

 □ Begin with a problem statement that describes the need for research, or the gap in knowledge that the research is intended to fill (e.g., users' difficulties in coping with information retrieval, or poor information flow in a certain setting).
 □ Explain implications of the study: why it is important, or the consequences of finding (or not finding) answers, or how the results will be used.
 □ Provide brief conceptual definitions of key terms. Identify contributing factors or variables.
 □ Finally, state the research question. (Keep it simple: just one question may suffice.)

The introduction should not contain details, just enough information for the reader to understand the study and why it is worthwhile. Reserve all or most citations for next section. This also should be written last.
Literature review

This section provides background to support your statements above. Generally, it positions your study in the research world. Describe major models and studies in various disciplines that set the stage for your study. Clarify and expand on the importance of or need for this research and, if appropriate, on conceptual definitions. Add subheadings to distinguish major themes.

Limit this section to literature that supports your study. This is a literature-based course, so this section is likely to be the longest. You may have fewer sources than in your research review, however, and some of the same sources if your proposal is on the same topic.

Method

Here you explain the techniques you will use to collect data.

- Begin by stating the general methodological approach (e.g., experimental, quasi-experimental, exploratory, descriptive).
- Provide operational definitions for variables, that is, definitions that explain how variables will be observable or measurable.
- Describe sampling frame: respondent demographics and sample size.
- Describe data collection instrument(s), such as interview questionnaire, survey questionnaire, field observation, or transaction log.
- Describe setting and/or conditions under which data will be collected.

Note that this section does not presuppose nor require a background in research methods. However, you must be able to describe the instrument sufficiently for the reader to see that it will collect data that directly address your research question. You can give a short (paragraph or two) but concrete description based on methods commonly employed for this type of study. Do not, for example, write a questionnaire: simply present an overview of question content or a few sample questions. If a suitable questionnaire already exists, however, append it with appropriate citation.

Data analysis and results

State how you will analyze the data: what variables you will test or compare using what techniques. Then separately describe your expected results.

Again, research methods are not the focus of the assignment, so you can describe analytic techniques in general terms (e.g., content analysis of open-ended responses, tests of covariation between certain variables) based on those used in similar studies in the literature. However, it should be clear that the technique is appropriate for the kind of data collected: quantitative data (e.g., from Likert-scale survey items) require different techniques than qualitative data (e.g., from open-ended survey items).
Deliverables

These can be simple, for example, technical report, conference papers, or journal articles. The statement can be made stronger by naming specific conferences or journals.

Schedule

Present a short description of various stages of the study, followed by a schedule table depicting stages and time frame in terms of the number of weeks or months. Use APA table style.

Budget

This is perhaps the most challenging section to write in any proposal. The items most likely to be funded are equipment (computer, printer, camera), software, supplies (paper, letterhead), expenses (telephone, postage, copying, printing), conference travel, wages for assistant, and incentive fees or services for respondents. Explain the items in a short paragraph, followed by a table of items and expenses.

Conclusion

Summarize the proposal. Restate the importance of the study, or its potential contribution to knowledge in the field. Discuss the extent to which you feel the results will address the research question. Describe implications of findings, or potential impacts on end-users, information professionals, and/or institutions. Generally, use this section to make a strong and persuasive closing statement.

References

All sources referenced in the text, following APA style. Check references for accuracy and consistency.

Writing

In addition to suggestions for the research review, for this assignment:

Keep the proposed project to a manageable size. This assignment is an exercise, not your dissertation! The topic should be relatively narrow and the research question answerable.

Write succinctly. A reader who is not familiar with the research area should be able to scan the proposal and understand what your study is about, why it is important, and what you intend to do.

Make sure everything is in its proper section. Do not, for example, mix data collection methods with data analysis methods.

The sections for deliverables, schedule, and budget are mostly for the exercise, but try to be realistic.
Paper format and submission

Same as for research review except name the file in this style: Lastname_ResearchProposal.

Presentation handout and delivery

Same as for research review except you should focus more on what you propose to do than on the literature review. For a PowerPoint presentation, create roughly one to three slides per section of the written proposal.
**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

- All written assignments are due in email on dates shown; see assignments regarding print handouts.
- Research review and proposal topics are discussed with individuals between, during, and after class.
- Critiques are discussed during the class they are due and subsequent classes as time permits.
- Research review and proposal presentations are individually scheduled.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wk</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>What is Due</th>
<th>Class Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/16</td>
<td>Introduction; Basic Concepts, Theories &amp; Models in Information Search &amp; Info Behavior</td>
<td>———</td>
<td>Syllabus, readings, etc. Frisco meeting 1 - 4 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1/23</td>
<td>Research concepts; Major behavior models and theories: their development, structures, and assumptions</td>
<td>———</td>
<td>Instructor lecture Zoom, example article critique,</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1/30</td>
<td>Research design, evaluation, and reports</td>
<td>Critique 1</td>
<td>Instructor lecture on Zoom, meeting time TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>Models and barriers of Information seeking</td>
<td>Research review paper topic approval</td>
<td>Instructor lecture on Zoom, meeting time TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>Information needs and user interfaces</td>
<td></td>
<td>Instructor lecture, Frisco meeting 1 - 4 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2/20</td>
<td></td>
<td>Critique 2</td>
<td>Writing workshop 1, meeting time TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2/27</td>
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<td>Student Research review presentations, meeting time TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3/6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Research proposal outline, including Research question(s)</td>
<td>Student Research review presentations, meeting time TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3/13</td>
<td></td>
<td>———</td>
<td>Writing workshop 2, meeting time TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3/20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Office hour. No class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3/27</td>
<td></td>
<td>Research review paper due</td>
<td>Research review presentations, Frisco meeting 1 - 4 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>4/3</td>
<td></td>
<td>iConference week</td>
<td>(no class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>4/10</td>
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<td>Zoom research proposal presentations, meeting time TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>4/17</td>
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<td>Zoom research proposal presentations, meeting time TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>4/24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Zoom research proposal presentations, meeting time TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>5/1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Research proposal paper due</td>
<td>at 11:55pm</td>
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