

## INFO 6660 READINGS IN INFORMATION SCIENCE

### Standardized Syllabus

(Last updated May 21, 2023)

#### Contact Information

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<b>Course Meetings</b>	Weekly or bi-weekly meetings with instructor: face-to-face or online in Zoom  1 (one) meeting with instructor and entire dissertation committee (see the schedule below): face-to-face or online oral qualifying examination

#### Course Description

3 graduate credit hours. Readings in a defined area of Information Science related to the student's research interest and areas of specialization. Requires the selection and critical evaluation of highly relevant sources with particular emphasis on research problem, methodological and theoretical issues.

Prerequisite(s): This course is intended for students of Information Science (IS) Ph.D. program and is to be taken in conjunction with the qualifying examination in the last semester of course work, with the student's major professor. Prior to registering for INFO 6660, a student must have:

- completed all other required core and methods courses with the course grades of either A or B,
- successfully completed a total of at least 42 graduate credit hours of the IS Ph.D. Program (at least 51 graduate credit hours of the 72-hour program option), and
- officially designated a dissertation committee by completing and submitting to IS Ph.D. Program Office (ci-iisphd@unt.edu) the Committee Designation Form found at <http://informationscience.unt.edu/advisors-committees-and-defenses>.

#### Course Objectives

The objectives of this course are to help and strengthen students' understanding of the research process and its components and skills in planning research projects and to prepare for dissertation research.

By the end of the course, students should develop the ability to prepare a viable research proposal grounded in Information Science:

- define a topic for the dissertation, formulate a problem statement and research questions and address the significance of the proposed research
- conduct an in-depth review of literature for the research proposal, including identification and critical evaluation of authoritative research papers, including a detailed critique of the 5 topmost relevant papers to their topic.
- identification and critical evaluation of models, frameworks, theories as well as research gaps
- prepare and present preliminary research in the form of an oral presentation.

### **Course Activities and Evaluation**

The course activities will include the following:

#### **Part I: Written Critique of Relevant Research or Papers (50% of semester grade)**

The student will identify and critique the 5 (five) research papers that are the most relevant to the proposed study.

- This exercise is designed to test student's ability to define a topic, implement a search for literature, and to identify studies relevant to the proposed study.
- The critiques should demonstrate the student's critical thinking and analytical skills
- The critiques should examine components such as the problem statement, research questions, suitability of literature cited, methodology, data analysis, discussion, and conclusion.

#### **Part II: Written Report in the Form of Pre-Proposal (30% of semester grade)**

The pre-proposal component of the Qualifying Examination is designed to test the ability to embark on individual independent research. Each student will identify a research topic relevant to their specialization, prepare a written report, and submit it to the instructor and committee members via the UNT course management system.

It is important to recognize that the pre-proposal is not a replacement of the proposal defense. The proposal defense should be an expanded and enhanced version of the pre-proposal.

The report should include the following:

- a research topic
- a problem statement

- one or more research questions
- an in-depth literature review of relevant literature grounded in Information Science, which should include the following types of resources:
  - The five (5) most relevant studies or papers identified for the written critique in Part I of the exam may be incorporated (if approved by the committee)
  - A discussion of existing model(s), theory(-ies), and/or framework(s) applicable to the proposed research study
  - A theoretical justification and description of a theory or model relevant to the proposed topic and research problem.
  - The discussion of the significance of the proposed study.

### **Part III: Pre-Proposal Oral Defense (10% of semester grade)**

- **Oral Qualifying Examination (10% of semester grade)**  
 The student will prepare a pre-proposal oral defense by presenting a PowerPoint. The PowerPoint should reflect the topic used for Parts 1 and 2 of the written exam. The presentation will include, but is not limited to the following:
  1. Research Topic
  2. Problem Statement and research questions
  3. A sample of literature including the critique of the 5 papers most relevant to the study
  4. A brief explanation of gaps in research relevant to the study
  5. Theories and models relevant to the study
  6. Proposed research plan

The student will meet with the dissertation committee before the end of the semester and present using the listed oral qualifying exam presentation components. See the semester schedule.

### **Part IV: Participation (10% of semester grade)**

- **Participation (10% of semester grade)**  
 Each student is required to meet with the course instructor (major professor) regularly, on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, to report preliminary results and progress on the written report and to receive feedback.

The semester schedule is included below.

### Semester Schedule for INFO 6660

Course activities and deliverables	Deadlines
Stage 1: discussion of course participation expectations, topic, and research problems (Part 4),	May 28, 2023
Stage 2: discussion of research and paper critique draft (Part 1)	June 4, 2023
Stage 3: discussion of the literature review and methodology drafts (Part 2 draft)	June 18, 2023
Stage 4: submission of the finalized written report assignment to instructor and committee (Part 2 final)	July 2, 2023
Stage 5: feedback from instructor and committee on written report	July 9, 2023
Stage 6: set up oral qualifying examination date and submit the final written report rubric to the IS PhD office	July 2- July 12, 2023
Stage 7: oral qualifying examination (Part 3)	No later than July 26, 2023

### Grading

The written report and oral exam presentation will be evaluated based on the following three major criteria:

- Completeness
- Accuracy
- Quality of presentation and acknowledgement of sources.

The UNT scale for grading is as follows. An A or B is a passing grade. For the purpose of this course, grades of C,D, or F are failing grades.

A = 90-100	B = 80-89	C = 70-79	D = 60-69	F = 59 and below.
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An **Incomplete Grade ("I")** is a non-punitive grade given only during the last one-fourth of a term/semester and only if a student (1) is passing the course and (2) has a justifiable and documented reason, beyond the control of the student (such as serious illness or military service), for not completing the work on schedule. The student must arrange with the instructor to finish the course at a later date by completing specific requirements. Please refer to <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/academic-record-incomplete.html> for more information.

The UNT Graduate Catalog describes and explains **withdrawal** policies and deadlines. The UNT Registrar's Website <http://registrar.unt.edu/registration/spring-registration-guide> lists specific deadlines regarding withdrawal, including the deadlines to withdraw from a course with an automatic grade of **W** and to withdraw from entire semester. Please note that a student who

simply stops attending class and does not file a withdrawal form may receive a final course grade of F.

### **Suggested Information Science Core Readings**

**IMPORTANT:** This is only a starting place for readings in **Information Science** in general and **information behavior** in particular. It is **not** intended to be comprehensive and does not cover the core readings for specific concentration topics (e.g., consumer behavior and experience management, cybersecurity, data science, health informatics, journalism, linguistics, etc.)

- Allen, B. L. (1996). *Information tasks*. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Bates, M. J. (1989). The design of browsing and berrypicking techniques for the online search interface. *Online Review* 13(5), 407–424.
- Bates, M. J. (1999). The invisible substrate of Information Science. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 50(12), 1043-1050.
- Bates, M. J. (2002). Toward an integrated model of information seeking and searching. Keynote address at the Fourth International Conference on Information Needs, Seeking and Use in Different Contexts, Lisbon, Portugal. Retrieved from [http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/bates/articles/info\\_SeekSearch-i-030329.html](http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/bates/articles/info_SeekSearch-i-030329.html)
- Belkin, N. J., Oddy, R. N., & Brooks, H. M. (1982). ASK for information retrieval: Part I. Background and theory. *Journal of Documentation*, 38(2), 61-71.
- Black, A. (2006). Information history. In B. Cronin (Ed.), *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology* (Vol. 40, pp. 441-473). Medford, NJ: Information Today.
- Buckland, M. K. (1991). Information as thing. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 42(5), 351-360.
- Burke, C. (2007). History of Information Science. In B. Cronin (Ed.), *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology* (Vol. 41, pp. 3-53). Medford, NJ: Information Today.
- Bush, V. (1945). As we may think. *Atlantic Monthly*.
- Bystrom, K., & Hansen, P. (2005). Conceptual framework for tasks in information studies. *Journal of the American Society For Information Science and Technology*, 56(10), 1050-1061.
- Case, D. O. (2006). Information behavior. In B. Cronin (Ed.), *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology* (Vol. 40, pp. 293-327). Medford, NJ: Information Today.
- Case, D. O. (2012). *Looking for information: A survey of research on information seeking, needs, and behavior* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Bingley, UK: Emerald.
- Chang, Y. & Huang, M. (2012). A study of the evolution of interdisciplinarity in library and Information Science: Using three bibliometric methods. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 63(1), 22-33.

- Chatman, E. A. (1996). The impoverished life-world of outsiders. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 47(3), 193-206.
- Chatman, E. A. (1999). A theory of life in the round. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 50, 207-217.
- Choo C. W., Detlor, B., Turnbull D. (2000). Information Seeking on the Web: An Integrated Model of Browsing and Searching. *First Monday*, 5(2). Retrieved from
- <http://www.firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/729/638>
- Choo, C. W. (2001). *Information management for the intelligent organization: The art of scanning the environment* (3rd ed.). Medford, NJ: Information Today.
- Choo, C. W., Detlor, B., & Turnbull, D. (2000). *Web work: Information seeking and knowledge work on the World Wide Web*. Boston: Kluwer.
- Cool, C. (2001). The concept of situation in Information Science. In M. E. Williams (Ed.), *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, (Vol. 35, pp. 5-42). Medford, NJ: Information Today.
- Courtright, C. (2007). Context in information behavior research. In B. Cronin (Ed.), *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology* (Vol. 41, pp. 273-306). Medford, NJ: Information Today.
- Dervin, B. (1998). Sense making theory and practice: An overview of user interests in knowledge seeking and use. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 2(2), 36-46.
- Dervin, B. (1999). Chaos, order, and sense-making: A proposed theory for information design. In R. E. Jacobson (Ed.) *Information Design* (pp. 35-57). Boston: MIT Press.
- Dervin, B., & Nilan, M. (1986). Information needs and uses. In M.E. Williams (Ed.), *Annual review of information science and technology*, Vol. 21 (pp. 3-33). White Plains, NY: Knowledge Industry Publications.
- Detlor, B. (2003). Internet-based information systems use in organizations: An information studies perspective. *Information Systems Journal*, 13(2), 113-132.
- Dillon, A., & Morris, M. G. (1996). User acceptance of information technology: Theories and models. In M. E. Williams (Ed.) *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology* (Vol. 31, pp. 3-32). Medford, NJ: Information Today.
- Ellis, D. (1989). A behavioral model for information retrieval system design. *Journal of Information Science*, 15, 237-247.
- Ellis, D. (2005). Ellis's model of information-seeking behavior. In K. E. Fisher (Ed.), *Theories of Information Behavior*. Medford, NJ: Information Today, Inc.
- Fidel, R. (2012). *Human information interaction: An ecological approach to information behavior*. Cambridge, MA. : MIT Press.
- Fidel, R., & Pejtersen, A. M. (2004). From information behaviour research to the design of information systems: The Cognitive Work Analysis framework. *Information Research*, 10(1). Retrieved December 3, 2004 from <http://informationr.net/ir/10-1/paper210.html>

- Fisher, K. E.\*<sup>1</sup>, Durrance, J. C., & Hinton, M. B. (2004). Information grounds and the use of need-based services by immigrants in Queens, New York: A context-based, outcome evaluation approach. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 55(8), 754-766.
- Fisher, K. E., Erdelez, S., & McKechnie, L. (Eds.) (2005). *Theories of information behavior*. Medford, NJ: Information Today.
- Fisher, K.E. & Julien, H. (2009). Information behavior. In B. Cronin (Ed.), *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology* (Vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 1-73). Medford, NJ: Information Today.
- Haythornthwaite, C., & Hagar, C. (2005). The social worlds of the Web. In B. Cronin (Ed.), *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology* (Vol. 39, pp. 311-346). Medford, NJ: Information Today.
- Houston, R.D., & Harmon, G. (2007). Vannevar Bush and Memex. In B. Cronin (Ed.), *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology* (Vol. 41, pp. 55-92). Medford, NJ: Information Today.
- Ingwersen, P. & Järvelin, K. (2005). *The turn: Integration of information seeking and retrieval in context*. Secaucus, NJ: Springer-Verlag New York, Inc.
- Ingwersen, P. (1999). Cognitive information retrieval. In M. E. Williams (Ed.), *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology* (Vol. 34, pp. 3-52). Medford, NJ: Information Today, Inc. [1999-2000 vol.]
- Jansen, B., & Rieh, S. Y. (2010). The seventeen theoretical constructs of information searching and information retrieval. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 61(8), 1517-1534.
- Kuhlthau, C. C. (2004). The information search process. In *Seeking meaning: A process approach to library and information services* (2nd ed., pp. 29-52). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Lariviere, V., Sugimoto, C. R., & Cronin, B. (2012). A bibliometric chronicling of library and information science's first hundred years. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 63(5), 997-1016.
- Leckie, G.J., Pettigrew, K.E., & Sylvain, C. (1996). Modeling the information seeking of professionals: A general model derived from research on engineers, health care professionals, and lawyers. *Library Quarterly*, 66(2), 161-193. [PDF] [Note: Pettigrew is Fisher's previous name.]
- Mac Morrow, N. (2001). Knowledge management: An introduction. In *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, 35, 381-422. Medford, NJ: Information Today.

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<sup>1</sup> Fisher's earlier work is under the name K. E. Pettigrew.



- Marchionini, G. (1995). *Information seeking in electronic environments*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Markey, K. (2007). Twenty-five years of end-user searching: Part 1: research findings. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 58(8), 1071-1081.
- Miller, K. (2006). *Organizational communication: Approaches and processes* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Morris, R. C. T. (1994). Toward a user-centered information service. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* 45(7), 20-30.
- Morrison, E. W. (2002). Information seeking within organizations. *Human Communication Research*, 28, 229– 242. [PDF]
- Nahl, D. & Bilal, D. (Eds). (2007). *Information and emotion: The emergent affective paradigm in information behavior research and theory*. Medford, NJ: Information Today.
- Nonaka, I. (1994). A dynamic theory of organizational knowledge creation. *Organization Science*, 5(1), 14-37.
- Pettigrew, K. E., Fidel, R., & Bruce, H. (2001). Conceptual frameworks in information behavior. In M. E. Williams (Ed.), *Annual review of information science and technology*, (Vol. 35, pp. 43-78). Medford, NJ: Information Today. [Note: Pettigrew is Fisher's previous name.]
- Rogers, E.M. (1995). *Diffusion of innovations* (4th ed.). New York: The Free press.
- Saracevic, T. (1999). Information science. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 50(12), 1051-1063.
- Schamber, L. (1994). Relevance and information behavior. In M. E. Williams (Ed.), *Annual review of information science and technology*, (Vol. 29, pp. 3-48). Medford, NJ: Learned Information.
- Shneiderman, B. (2004). *Designing the user interface* (4th ed.). Reading, MA: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Taylor, R. S. (1986). *Value-added processes in information systems*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex.
- Vakkari, P. (2003). Task-based information searching. *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, 37, 413-464.
- White, H. (2010). Bibliometric overview of Information Science. In *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences*, Third Edition., 1: 1, 534- 545. DOI: 10.1081/E-ELIS3-120044527
- Wilson, T. D. (1999). Models in Information Behavior Research. *Journal of Documentation*, 55(3), 249-270. [PDF]
- Wilson, T. D. (2000). Human information behavior. *Informing Science*, 3(2), 49-55.



- Wilson, T.D. (2006). On user studies and information needs. *Journal of Documentation*, 62(6), 658-670.
- Zins, C. (2007). Knowledge map of information science. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 58(4), 526-535.

### **Suggested Research Prospective Readings**

*Paradigms and assumptions underlying research in information science and related disciplines.*  
*Foci of scholarly and professional literature. Quantitative and qualitative research methods.*  
*Development of research questions and research agendas.*

- Allen, D., Karanasios, S., & Slavova, M. (2011). Working with activity theory: Context, technology, and information behavior. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science & Technology*, 62(4), 776-788. doi: 10.1002/asi.21441
- Chou, J., & Tsai, H. (2009). On-line learning performance and computer anxiety measure for unemployed adult novices using a grey relation entropy method. *Information Processing & Management*, 45(2), 200-215. doi: 10.1016/j.ipm.2008.12.001
- De Beer, C. S. (2009). Method/beyond-method: The demands, challenges and excitements of scholarly information work. *South African Journal of Library & Information Science*, 75(1), 12-19. Retrieved from [http://www.journals.co.za/ej/ejour\\_liasa.html](http://www.journals.co.za/ej/ejour_liasa.html)
- Fidel, R. (1993). Qualitative methods in information retrieval research. *Library & Information Science Research*, 15(3), 219-247.
- Ford, N. (1999). The growth of understanding in Information Science: Towards a developmental model. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 50(12), 1141-1152.
- Gioia, D., & Pitre, E. (1990). Multiparadigm perspectives on theory building. *Academy of Management Review*, 15(4), 584-602.
- Harter, S. P., & Hert, C. A. (1997). Evaluation of information retrieval systems: Approaches, issues, and methods. In M. E. Williams (Ed.), *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, (Vol. 32, pp. 3-94). Medford, NJ: Information Today.
- Haythornthwaite, C. (1996). Social network analysis: An approach and technique for the study of information exchange. *Library & Information Science Research*, 18(4), 323-342.
- Julien, H. & Duggan, L. (2000). A Longitudinal analysis of the information needs and uses literature. *Library and Information Science Research*, 22(3), 291-309.
- Kishida, K. (2011). Historical overview and issues of evaluation methods in information retrieval. *Journal of Information Processing & Management*, 54(8), 439-448. doi: 10.1241/johokanri.54.439
- Krathwohl, D. (1998). Finding research problems. In *Methods of educational and social science research: An integrated approach* (2nd ed., pp. 79-99). New York, NY: Longman.

- Lopatovska, I., & Arapakis, I. (2011). Theories, methods and current research on emotions in Library and Information Science, information retrieval and human–computer interaction. *Information Processing & Management*, 47(4), 575-592. doi: 10.1016/j.ipm.2010.09.001
- Ondrusek, A. L. (2004). The attributes of research on end-user online searching behavior: A retrospective review and analysis. *Library & Information Science Research*, 26, 221-265.
- Orlikowski, W. J., & Baroudi, J. J. (1991). Studying information technology in organizations: Research approaches and assumptions. *Information Systems Research*, 2(1), 1-28.
- Pettigrew, K. E., & McKechnie, L. (2001). The use of theory in Information Science research. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 52(1), 62-73.
- White, Howard D.(2010). Relevance in theory. In Bates, M. (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences*, (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Vol. 1:1, pp. 4498-4511).
- Widén-Wulff, G., & Davenport, E. (2007). Activity systems, information sharing and the development of organizational knowledge in two Finnish firms: an exploratory study using Activity Theory. *Information Research*, 12(3), 19.

### UNT Acceptable Student Behavior and Academic Integrity Policy (Including Plagiarism)

Students are expected to be engaged with the course throughout the semester and to demonstrate professional behavior. This means interacting in a supportive and tactful manner based on mutual respect for each other's ideas and approaches.

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. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students 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. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>.

Standards of academic integrity are maintained and enforced by UNT faculty and administrative authorities. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism and other unethical and illegal activities. The instructor of this course abides by and enforces the UNT policies on academic misconduct. The instructor assumes you have read and understood the UNT's Student Standards of Academic Integrity Policy ([http://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/untpolicy/pdf/7-Student\\_Affairs-Academic\\_Integrity.pdf](http://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/untpolicy/pdf/7-Student_Affairs-Academic_Integrity.pdf)).

The term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to

- the use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests or examinations;
- dependence upon the aid of sources specifically prohibited by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems or carrying out other assignments;

- dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s)
- the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university.

The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to:

- the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement;
- the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

Penalties range from reducing the grade for a test or assignment to revoking an academic degree already granted. Specific policies, penalties, and the appeals process are explained in UNT's Code of Student Conduct and Discipline, Graduate Catalog, and the Policy Manual, all of which are available online.

**In this course, written report will be submitted via the assignment link, which incorporates Turnitin to ensure academic integrity.**

### **UNT Policy on Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, & Assault**

UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

UNT's Dean of Students' website offers a range of on-campus and off-campus resources to help support survivors, depending on their unique needs: [http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources\\_0](http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources_0). Renee LeClaire McNamara is UNT's Student Advocate and she can be reached through e-mail at [SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu](mailto:SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu) or by calling the Dean of Students' office at 940-565-2648. You are not alone. We are here to help.

### **UNT Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance Statement**

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability

Accommodation website at <http://disability.unt.edu/>. You may also contact them by phone at (940) 565-4323.

### **UNT Department of Information Science Diversity Equity & Inclusion**

The University of North Texas (UNT) prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The university takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate. Direct questions or concerns to the equal opportunity office, 940-565-2759, or the dean of students, 940-565-2648. TTY access is available at 940-369-8652, <http://www.unt.edu/ada>.

While the freedom to express yourself is a fundamental human right, any communication that utilizes cruel and derogatory language based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law will not be tolerated.