UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK

Information Users in Social Context (INFM 220)
3 credit hours
Spring 2008 Syllabus

Jennifer Golbeck, Ph.D. (jgolbeck@umd.edu)
Assistant Professor, College of Information Studies
2118F Hornbake Building

Catalog Description of Course
Uses and users of information, including where, by whom, for what purposes, and by what technical means information is used. Information needs and behaviors of social groups in workplace, the home, their communities, and government.

Announcements, assignments, readings, and lecture notes for the course will be posted on the website at http://www.cs.umd.edu/~golbeck/INFM220/

Goals of Course
Upon successfully completing this course, the student will be able to:
- Identify how and why various social groups use information
- Develop and articulate a personal perspective on information use and users
- Analyze how social groups use information to meet specific needs

Course Approach and Expectations of Student Participation
This course meets twice a week on Tuesday and Thursday from 3:30 to 4:45 p.m. The course will be conducted with lecture on Tuesday and discussion on Thursday. It is imperative that every student participates in the discussions of course materials. Based on critical examination of course readings, each student should develop an analytical stance concerning the issues in the course.

Assignments and Grading
Your grade will be based on five items.

1. Classroom participation. Part of this class is seminar and discussion-based. You are expected to read all of the assignments, to think through the issues they raise, and to articulate your thoughts on the materials. In this course, each week's assignments include both reading assigned articles and examining assigned websites. Clearly, you need to attend class to participate in the discussions. Attendance will be taken every week, with absences being excused in cases of illness, religious observances, and other reasons in line with university policies, or if the university is closed due to inclement weather or emergency. Classroom participation will constitute 10% of your final grade.

2. In-Class Presentation: During the semester, you will be required to prepare a 20-minute presentation on an assigned reading. The presentation should give a brief overview of the content of the paper, and focus mainly on issues of users and information needs raised in the text. This

presentation will be used to facilitate class discussion, so it is important that it raises points for discussion. This presentation will constitute 15% of your final grade.

3. Homework: In addition to readings, there will be a few small homework assignments throughout the semester. You will have a week to complete each of these as they are assigned. Homework constitutes 10% of your final grade.

3. Midterm exam: 15% of your grade.

4. Final Exam: The final will be comprehensive. 25% of your grade

5. Final Project: Students may work alone or in small teams to build a final project. Each project should choose a user group and a specific set of information needs, and focus on the information systems and environments that affect the use of information. The product of this project could be a report, a prototype of a new system, or some other form agreed upon with the instructor. Projects require an in-class presentation at the end of the semester. This project will constitute 25% of your final grade.

Paper Guidelines
Papers for this course should be double-spaced, using 12-point Times New Roman font. The margins should be 1 inch exactly on each side. Pages will be numbered and format will be consistent. Papers are to be submitted in paper form at the beginning of the class meeting that they are due.

Classroom Environment
The classroom environment should be professional and respectful. Discussions should be based on course readings and critical thinking. Remember--your classmates may have different perspectives on issues than you, but they still deserve your respect. As another aspect of respect in the classroom environment, turn off or mute all phones and other communication devices during each class session. If you use your laptop in the classroom, limit the usage of the computer to course-related reasons (i.e., taking notes).

Students with Disabilities
Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Disability Support Services office, and (2) discuss any necessary academic accommodation with their teachers. This should be done at the beginning of the semester.

Extensions
Timeliness is extremely important in graduate work, and extensions will only be available during personal emergencies. Students who need to request an extension should discuss the matter in advance with the professor. If an extension is granted, the work must be submitted within the extension period to avoid grade penalties. Unexcused delays in submission of the paper will result in a deduction of half of a letter grade for each day the project is late, while unexcused delays in presentations will result in a deduction of half a letter grade for each class meeting the presentation is late.

Academic Honesty
Work submitted in this course will be individual and original, in line with the University's Academic Honor Code and Honor Pledge. Engaging in any academic dishonesty will result in consequences in line with university policies. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to plagiarism, cheating, buying work, multiple submissions of the same paper, forging signatures, submitting fraudulent documents, and facilitating the academic dishonesty of others. When writing papers, be sure to carefully and thoroughly cite all materials you use in writing your paper and make sure all ideas and quotations are properly acknowledged.

Emergency Preparedness
Information about the status of the campus is available at http://www.umd.edu/emergencypreparedness/. If the campus is closed, please make sure to stay safe. Information about possible rescheduling of course activities will be provided via e-mail once the campus has reopened.

Office Hours & Contact Information
My office hours for Spring 2008 are Thursday from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., and I can be contacted via phone (301-405-7185) or email (jgolbeck@umd.edu).

The TA for the class, Benjamin Brown, can be reached at bzbrown@umd.edu.

Weekly Topics and Assignments
(ORDERING IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTORY MATTERS
    A. Introduction to course and discussion of course expectations
    B. Overview of topics and concepts to be covered
    C. Preliminary discussion of information users and social context

WEEK 2: SCHOLARS AND PROFESSIONALS: THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY

WEEK 3: SCHOLARS AND PROFESSIONALS: POLITICIANS

WEEK 4: COMMUNITIES: VOTERS

WEEK 5: SCHOLARS AND PROFESSIONALS: FIRST RESPONDERS

WEEK 6: COMMUNITIES: CONSUMERS

WEEK 7: MIDTERM REVIEW AND EXAM

(SPRING BREAK)

WEEK 8: SCHOLARS AND PROFESSIONALS: DOCTORS

WEEK 9: COMMUNITIES: PATIENTS

WEEK 10: SCHOLARS AND PROFESSIONALS: LAWYERS

WEEK 11: SCHOLARS AND PROFESSIONALS: TEACHERS

WEEK 12: COMMUNITIES: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

WEEK 13: SYNTHESIS

WEEK 14: PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

WEEK 15: FINAL REVIEW

Syllabus Change Policy
This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.