# LIS 651: THEORIES OF INFORMATION

Section: LIS–651–03
Semester: Fall 2012
Meeting Information: Thursday, 3:30–5:50 pm
Location: PMC, Room 612
Credits: 3
Prerequisites: None

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines broad frameworks for information, librarianship, and the information professions. Course material covers the philosophy of information, utilitarianism/social choice theory, humanism, political economy, critical theory, constructivism, evolutionary psychology, pragmatism, and other theories, as well as their relation to collections, preservation, classification, information policy, information seeking behavior, and other topics. Ethical issues, including research and professional ethics, are also discussed. Three hours of field observation is required.

## COURSE GOALS + LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The goals of this course are to:
* explore various theoretical perspectives related to LIS including the philosophy of information, cultural informatics,
* develop familiarity with ethical issues related to LIS

By the end of this course, students will be able to:
* critically discuss LIS-related issues in light of broad theories
* identify ethical issues in LIS and develop appropriate responses
* articulate historical issues and trends in LIS

## REQUIRED TEXTS

* André Cossette, *Humanism and Libraries: An Essay on the Philosophy of Librarianship*, trans. Rory Litwin (Library Juice, 2009) [978-1-936117-17-8]
* Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (Vintage, 1972) [ISBN 978-0-394-71106-5]
* Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Harvard, 1970) [ISBN 0674276604]
* Alison Lewis, ed. *Questioning Library Neutrality: Essays from Progressive Librarian* (Library Juice, 2008) [ISBN 978-0-9778617-7-4]
* Additional readings [available on LMS]

## COURSE WEBSITE

All students enrolled in the course have access to course materials on Pratt's Learning Management System (a Moodle installation) available at my.pratt.edu. Please make sure you know how to access LMS and use Moodle. Also, please note that LMS facilitates communication using Pratt e-mail only. If you do not use your Pratt account, please use webmail to forward your Pratt e-mail to an account that you do use.

## COURSE FORMAT

This course is a seminar. Each student is required to read the articles assigned on a weekly basis in advance of the session for which they are assigned. Each class will be devoted to discussion of the required readings for that week, as well as student work pertaining to those readings. Students will bring their own ideas, experience, and interpretations to class and will learn from contributing and hearing others.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS + ASSIGNMENTS

Your grade in the course will be based on the following:

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|---|---|
| #LIStheory discussion | 30% |
| Current issues articles (3) | 30% |
| Research paper | 40% |

**#LIStheory discussion (30%)**
Throughout the course, students are expected to participate in an ongoing Twitter discussion using the #LIStheory hashtag. At minimum, you must follow the discussion throughout the course and make at least one tweet per week. Your tweet may ask a critical question about the readings, apply them to issues in the LIS professions, and/or reply substantively to other tweets on the thread. Good contributions will show careful reading of the texts and creativity in applying those ideas to current issues in the field. By making thoughtful contributions to the hashtag, you will act as ambassadors for these theoretical issues to the larger LIS community.

**Current issues articles (3, 10% each)**
At three points of your choice during the semester, you should submit a 500-word article that addresses a focused issue in current LIS work in light of one or more readings. You are encouraged (but not required) to submit this article to an LIS blog or periodical, or to post it publicly on your own. In any case, you should write your articles for a general member of the LIS community, not classmate or someone who is extremely familiar with the course readings and concepts. One of your articles must focus specifically on ethical issues related to your field observation.

**Research paper (40%)**
As a final assignment, students will complete a research paper using primary and secondary sources on a topic of their choice. Topics must be approved via email before November 21, 2012, and the research paper should be approximately 10–12 pages in length (5,000–6,000 words).

## GRADING

All graded assignments are due on the date indicated. The date of submission, your name, the course number, and the title of the assignment should be included at the top of each assignment. A detailed description of each assignment will be provided separately and made available online. **Written assignments must be uploaded to LMS by the beginning of the session in which they are due**. Non-graded assignments and in-class exercises will be also administrated over the semester and evaluated as part of participation and attendance.

Grades will be awarded as follows:
- A    sustained level of superior performance demonstrated in all areas of course requirements
- B    consistent level of performance that is above average in a majority of the course requirements
- C    performance that is generally average and course requirements are achieved
- D    below average performance and achievement of the course requirements
- F    accomplishment of the course requirements is not sufficient to receive a passing grade

Late work will not be accepted.

## E-PORTFOLIO

Starting Fall 2012, all students entering the MSLIS degree program are required to complete an e-portfolio that must be approved by their advisor before graduation. The e-Portfolio provides students with an opportunity to showcase their best work from the courses they have taken at SILS, and an opportunity to demonstrate they have met the learning objectives of a Master of Information and Library Science. Work completed for this course may be included in the e-portfolio. Students must demonstrate that their work fulfills at least one of the following learning outcomes:
1. Students carry-out and apply research
2. Students demonstrate excellent communication skills and create and convey content
3. Students use information technology and digital tools effectively
4. Students apply concepts related to use and users of information and user needs and perspectives
5. Students perform within the framework of professional practice

Detailed information on the learning outcomes, requirements and how to create your e-portfolio is available from: http://www.pratt.edu/academics/information_and_library_sciences/degree_programs/sils_eportfolio

## POLICIES

### Academic Integrity
Students are expected to adhere to the Academic Integrity Code and Judicial Process of the Pratt Institute available online at http://www.prattsenate.org/learning/02-academic.htm. All infractions will be reported, and I am disposed to fail all violators for the entire course.

### Disabilities
Students who require special accommodations for disabilities must obtain clearance from the Office of Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. For further information, contact the Coordinator of Disability Services in the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs at 718.636.3711.

### Incompletes
The professor is allergic to incompletes. Incompletes will not be awarded except in cases of documented medical reasons and at the discretion of the professor.

### Institute-Wide Policies
Students must adhere to the Pratt Community Standards listed in the current Student Handbook available online at http://www.pratt.edu/uploads/Online_Student_HandbookFINAL.pdf.

**Participation in Faculty Research**
Students taking this class may be asked to participate in faculty-sponsored research; all contributions will be appropriately credited.

**Photography and Recording**
Students taking this class may be photographed or recorded while participating in class projects or presentations. Pictures may be used in presenting work associated with SILS. If you object to having your picture taken, please notify me.

**Revisions to the Syllabus**
While this syllabus provides a reliable framework for the course, including readings and assignments, it is subject to change pending notice in class and on the course website.


## LMS ADDENDUM

This course addresses the following New York State Regents guidelines:

**Content Core/NYS LMS CST #74 Frameworks**
*Subarea II: Demonstrate understanding of characteristics, uses, procedures regarding library resources*
- Understand the relationship between the library media program and information resources and services beyond the school.
- Understand types and characteristics of print, nonprint and electronic resources.
- Understand issues and procedures related to collection development.

*Subarea III: Demonstrate understanding of the principles of Information Literacy and teach these skills to children*
- Understand how to determine information needs and initiate searches and how to teach these skills to students.

*(1) Pedagogical Core/Pedagogical knowledge, understanding and skills:*
(v) curriculum development, instructional planning, and multiple research-validated instructional strategies for teaching students within the full range of abilities—and skill in designing and offering differentiated instruction that enhances the learning of all students in the content area(s) of the certificate;
(vi) uses of technology, including instructional and assistive technology, in teaching and learning—and skill in using technology and teaching students to use technology to acquire information, communicate, and enhance learning;

LMS Program students:  If you conduct field observation in a school library as part of this course, you may be eligible to receive credit toward your 100 hours of observation. If you have questions about whether an observation counts toward this requirement, please contact Professor Jessica Hochman, LMS coordinator, at jhochman@pratt.edu.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

This is a tentative outline of topics, readings, and assignments. On occasion, I may add, delete, or substitute topics or readings. Changes will be announced in class and posted to LMS; no printed updates will be given.

| WEEK | DATE | TOPICS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS |
|---|---|---|

**INTRODUCTION**

| 1 | 8/30 | **Course Introduction** |
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- Bates, Marcia J. (2005). "An Introduction to Metatheories, Theories, and Models," in *Theories of Information Behavior*, eds. Karen E. Fisher, Sandra Erdelez, and Lynne (E. F.) McKechnie. Medford, N.J.: ASIST Monograph Series

**VALUES IN THE INFORMATION PROFESSIONS**

| 2 | 9/6 | **The Purposes of Libraries** |
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- Cossette, *Humanism and Libraries*

| 3 | 9/13 | **Libraries and Political Values** |
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- Lewis, ed. *Questioning Library Neutrality*

| 4 | 9/20 | **Labor in Libraries** |
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- Nauratil, Marcia J. (1989). *The Alienated Librarian*. New York: Greenwood Press

| 5 | 9/27 | **Effecting Change in Institutional Settings** |
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- Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*

**PHILOSOPHY OF INFORMATION**

| 6 | 10/4 | **LIS and the Philosophy of Information** |
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- Furner, Jonathan (2010). "Philosophy and Information Studies" in *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, ed. Blaise Cronin. Medford, NJ: Information Today: 161–200
- Floridi, Luciano (2002). "On Defining Library and Information Science as Applied Philosophy of Information" *Social Epistemology* 16(1): 37–49
- Floridi, Luciano (2004). "Afterword: LIS as Applied Philosophy of Information: A Reappraisal" *Library Trends* 52(3): 658–65

| 7 | 10/11 | **Problems in the Philosophy of Information** |
|---|---|---|

- Floridi, Luciano (2011). *The Philosophy of Information*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chs. 2–3
- Adams, Frederick (2003). "The Informational Turn in Philosophy" *Minds and Machines* 13: 471–501

| 8 | 10/18 | **Evolution and Human Information Behavior** |
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- Spink, Amanda (2010). *Information Behavior: An Evolutionary Instinct*. New York: Springer

## FOUNDATIONS FOR CULTURAL INFORMATICS

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|---|---|---|
| 9 | 10/25 | **Knowledge and Subjectivity** |

- Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge,* Parts I–II

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| 10 | 11/1 | **Constructing the Archive** |

- Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge,* Parts III–IV
- Derrida, Jacques and Eric Prenowitz (1995). "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression" *Diacritics* 25(2): 9–63

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| 11 | 11/8 | **Introduction to Critical Theory** |

- Vaidhyanathan, Siva (2005). "Critical Information Studies: A Bibliographic Manifesto," *Cultural Studies* 20(2/3): 292–315

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| 12 | 11/15 | **Applied issues in Critical Theory** |

- Leckie, Gloria J., Lisa M. Given, and John E. Buschman, eds. (2010). *Critical Theory for Library and Information Science: Exploring the Social from across the Disciplines*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Libraries Unlimited

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| 13 | 11/22 | **No Class**—Thanksgiving Recess |

## BROADER ISSUES IN TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION

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|---|---|---|
| 14 | 11/29 | **Communication and Commerce** |

- Alberts, David S. and Daniel S. Papp, eds. (1997). *The Information Age: An Anthology on Its Impact and Consequences*. Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, Vols. 1–2

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| 15 | 12/6 | **Government and Military** |

- *Ibid.*, Vol. 3

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| 16 | 12/13 | **International Affairs** |

- *Ibid.*, Vol. 4

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| | 12/16 | *Research paper due* |