

# Information Behaviour

INF2332 ■ Winter 2017 ■ Monday, 9:00-12:00 ■ Dr. Jenna Hartel

## COURSE OVERVIEW

*Information behaviour* is the currently preferred (but contested) term to describe the many ways in which human beings interact with information, in particular, the ways in which people seek and utilize information. For more than 75 years information behaviour research has been conducted in the field of library and information science and forms a rich, central research tradition. Practically speaking, an understanding of information behaviour helps information professionals to design information resources, services, and systems that are well-calibrated to users. For Winter semester of 2017, INF2332 takes participants *deep* into a small set of landmark books and ideas about information behaviour. Along the way, emphasis will be placed upon methodological aspects, that is, *how* information behaviour research is conducted. Likewise, the learning experience will be centered upon a substantial original Research Project or “mini-thesis,” utilizing the *information horizon interview* technique (Sonnenwald, et al., 2001). The Research Project will be implemented step-wise, as Part 1 and Part 2, with ample supportive staging provided through in-class workshops and discussions. Since time will *not* be spent surveying foundational concepts, prior exposure to information behaviour scholarship (through INF1300 or INF1310) is recommended; alternatively, introductory readings will be available. INF2332 is ideal for precocious learners who harbor a personal research question about information behaviour and/or those who wish to advance a concatenated research career. Of note, INF2332 will be emergent and participant-directed, unfolding in synch with student interests and progress, hence the schedule that follows (on page 3) is subject to change.

## COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completing the course participants will have gained:

- An awareness of the contribution of information behaviour research to library and information science and its professional realms.
- Familiarity with the central concepts of information behaviour, namely: information practice, information need, information seeking, information searching, browsing, information encountering, information use, and so on.
- An appreciation for the whole human experience of information, which can be marshalled into the design of information resources, services, and systems.
- Rudimentary knowledge of seminal models of information behaviour.
- A mindfulness of the diversity and complexity of information behaviour within various situations, social worlds, and contexts.
- Mastery of the important theoretical and methodological contributions by Anders Hektor, Elfreda Chatman, Diane Sonnenwald, and Carol Kuhlthau, and an inkling of their implications for practice.
- Exposure to research ethics and the use of an ethical protocol.
- The ability to design and conduct a Research Project based upon the information horizon interview and to write-up the findings.

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES AND PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES [TEXT ADAPTED FROM PROF. KIELTY]

The issues covered in the course will allow students to become “conversant with fundamental concepts, theories, practices, and the diverse horizons of information disciplines”, so that they “can respond to changing information practices and needs of society” (SLO 1); the course will allow them to develop social responsibility as information professionals through the development of “knowledge and values appropriate to their future exercise of economic, cultural, and/or social leadership” (SLO 2). Assignments will allow “students [to] develop the ability to contribute through research and publication, to the continuous expansion and critical assessment of the body of knowledge

underlying the information”(SLO 3); “develop an understanding of the development of theory concerning information, where it is found, and how it is used” (SLO 4), and provide students the ability to “continue in life-long intellectual growth beyond graduation” (SLO 5).

#### **INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES**

This is an advanced seminar aimed at theoretical, methodological, conceptual, and personal discovery. Learning in the course will be achieved through readings, in-class discussion *lead by students*, in-class Workshops, an original Research Project, and occasional lectures by the instructor.

#### **INSTRUCTOR OFFICE HOURS & CONTACT INFORMATION**

The instructor is Dr. Jenna Hartel who is best reached by email ([jenna.hartel@utoronto.ca](mailto:jenna.hartel@utoronto.ca)). Office hours are by appointment only and scheduled via email; brief consultations can occur after class time or during class break.

#### **COURSE PROTOCOLS**

Sessions will last 2.5-3 hours and include a short break. Class will begin at 9:10, *sharp*; please arrive at 9:00 to get settled and gather handouts. Assigned readings must be read *in advance* of class. Phones should be silenced during class time. Laptop use is not recommended in class. *Internet surfing, email, and other forms of multi-tasking while the instructor or other students are speaking will be considered impolite and inappropriate.*

#### **STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL LAND**

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

#### **WRITING SUPPORT**

As stated in the iSchool’s Grade Interpretation Guidelines, “work that is not well written and grammatically correct will not generally be considered eligible for a grade in the A range, regardless of its quality in other respects”. With this in mind, please make use of the writing support provided to graduate students by the SGS [Office of English Language and Writing Support](#). The services are designed to target the needs of both native and non-native speakers and all programs are free. Please consult the current [workshop schedule](#) for more information.

#### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Please consult the University’s site on [Academic Integrity](#). The iSchool has a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism as defined in section B.I.1.(d) of the University’s [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#). You should acquaint yourself with the Code. Please review the material in Cite it Right and if you require further clarification, consult the site [How Not to Plagiarize](#). Cite it Right covers relevant parts of the U of T Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (1995). It is expected that all iSchool students take the Cite it Right workshop and the online quiz. Completion of the online Cite it Right quiz should be made prior to the second week of classes. To review and complete the workshop, visit the orientation portion of the iSkills site.

#### **ACCOMMODATIONS**

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability or a health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the [Accessibility Services Office](#) as soon as possible. The Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner you let them and I know your needs, the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

## WEBSITE ON BLACKBOARD

A course website will be maintained on Blackboard and include the syllabus, selected readings in PDF, handouts, lecture slides, and a discussion board (as needed). Blackboard will also be used to send email announcements, post grades, and calculate final grades.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

This course will focus on three important monographs of information behaviour. These items will be kept on reserve at the Inforum, may be found as e-books online, or can be purchased (recommended) new or used from online or local retailers.

Hektor, A. (2001). *What's the use? Internet and information behaviour in everyday life*. Linköping: Linköping University. [[free e-book](#)]

Chatman, E. (1992). *The information world of retired women*. New York: Greenwood Press. [[Inforum reserve](#)]

Kuhlthau, C. C. (2004). *Seeking meaning: A process approach to library and information services* (2nd ed.). Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited. [[Inforum reserve](#)]

## INTRODUCTORY MATERIALS

Substantial time will *not* be spent introducing foundational concepts of information behaviour. For rapid acclimation to the topic, read the two items below prior to Session 1.

Bates, M. J. (2010). Information behaviour. In M. J. Bates, & M. N. Maack (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of library and information sciences* (3rd ed., pp. 2381-2391.). Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press. [Blackboard]

Case, D.O. (2007). Information behaviour: An Introduction. In *Looking for information: A Survey of research on information seeking, needs, and behaviour* (2nd ed., pp. 3-35). London: Elsevier. [Inforum reserve and Blackboard]

Also, the instructor's online [Reading Guide to Information Behaviour](#) guides newcomers into the information behaviour literature.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

The schedule for INF2332 will be emergent and participant-directed; it will be synchronized to student interest and progress, and students will play a role in directing the tempo, class discussions, and class activities. Therefore, the topics and assigned readings listed below are subject to change.

SESSION & DATE	TOPICS	READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS
① January 9	Overview of the course The information behaviour/practice debate	Savolainen (2007) Wilson & Savolainen (2009) See "Introductory Materials," above Bring a photo to class*
② January 16	<i>What's the Use?</i> Research Project Workshop (overview and launch)	Hektor (2001), Ch. 1 – 3 Bates (2005)
③ January 23	<i>What's the Use?</i> (cont'd) Research Project Workshop (discussion of RQs & target population)	Hektor (2001), Ch. 4 – 7 Hektor (2001), Ch. 8 – 9 (optional)
④ January 30	<i>The Information World of Retired Women</i> Research Project Workshop (presentation on research ethics by Dr. Dean Sharpe)	Chatman (1992)
⑤ February 6	Synthesizing Chatman Research Project Workshop (student presentations)	Chatman (1996) Chatman (1999) Savolainen (2009) <i>Research Project Part 1 due</i> <i>Selected presentations due</i>
⑥ February 13	The information horizon interview	Sonnenwald & Iivonen (1999)

	Research Project Workshop (discussion of access plans)	Sonnenwald et al. (2001) Savolainen (2008)
☺ February 20	Reading Week – Class does not meet	
🕒 February 27	Dr. Hartel is away. Class will feature guest lectures by doctoral candidates Elysia Guzik and Brian Griffin, who will focus on research design and interview techniques.	TBD
🕒 March 6	The information horizon interview (cont'd) Research Project Workshop (practice interviews)	Hartel (in press) Huvila (2009) Savolainen & Kari (2004)
🕒 March 13	<i>Seeking Meaning</i>	Kuhlthau (2004) Ch. 1-5 Wilson (2004) <i>Presentations due</i>
🕒 March 20	<i>Seeking Meaning</i> (cont'd) Research Project Workshop (student presentations)	Kuhlthau (2004) Ch. 6-8, 11 <i>Selected presentations due</i>
🕒 March 27	Research Project Workshop (student presentations)	<i>Selected presentations due</i>
🕒 April 3	Research Project Workshop (student presentations) and course Conclusion	<i>Selected presentations due</i> <i>Research Project assignment due</i>

\* To help the instructor learn your name, please bring a photo (headshot) *on paper* with your full name on it, to be submitted (and not returned).

### ADDITIONAL ASSIGNED READINGS

- Bates, M. J. (2005). An introduction to theories, metatheories, and models. In K. E. Fisher, S. Erdelez, & L. McKechnie (Eds.), *Theories of information behaviour* (pp. 1-24). Medford, NJ: Information Today. [Blackboard]
- Chatman, E. (1996.). The Impoverished life-world of outsiders. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* 47(3), 193–206. [link]
- Chatman, E. (1999). A theory of life in the round. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 50(3), 207–217. [link]
- Hartel (in press). The Information horizon interview: Three ways. In *Information Research*. [link]
- Huvila, I. (2009). Analytical information horizon maps. *Library & Information Science Research*, 31(1), 18-28. [link]
- Savolainen, R. & Kari, J. (2004). Placing the Internet in information source horizons. A study of information seeking by Internet users in the context of self-development. *Library & Information Science Research*, 26(4), 415-433. [link]
- Savolainen, R. (2007). Information behaviour and information practice: Reviewing the “umbrella concepts” of information-seeking studies. *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy Information* 77(2), 109-132. [link]
- Savolainen, R. (2008). Conceptualizing everyday information practices. In *Everyday Information practices: A social phenomenological approach* (pp. 37-75). Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press. [Inforum reserve]
- Savolainen, R. (2009). Small world and information grounds as contexts of information seeking and sharing. *Library & Information Science Research*, 31(1), 38-45. [link]
- Sonnenwald, D. H. & Iivonen, M. (1999). An integrated human information behaviour research framework for information studies. *Library and Information Science Research*, 21(4), 429-457. [link]
- Sonnenwald, D. H., Wildemuth, B. M., & Harmon, G. L. (2001). A research method using the concept of information horizons: An example from a study of lower socio-economic students’ information seeking behaviour. *The New review of information behaviour research*, 2, 65-86. [link]
- Wilson, T. & Savolainen, R. (2009). The behaviour/practice debate: a discussion prompted by Tom Wilson's review of Reijo Savolainen's *Everyday information practices: a social phenomenological perspective*. *Information Research*, 14(2). [link]
- Wilson, T.D. (2004) Review of *Seeking meaning: a process approach to library and information services* (2nd. ed.). *Information Research*, 9(3). [link]

## ASSIGNMENTS

ASSIGNMENT	DESCRIPTION	VALUE	DUE
<b>Research Project</b>	Design and implement an original information behaviour study utilizing the information horizon interview technique; the project has two parts.	60%	Session 12
Part 1	In 1,500 words, articulate research question(s); create a working definition of your target population; conduct a literature review of that population, covering LIS literature and beyond.	[25%]	Session 5
Part 2	In 2,000 words, explain your research method; write-up the findings of your information horizon interview; merge Part 1 and 2 into a single document, which should be 4,000-5,000 words.	[35%]	Session 12
<b>Presentation/Discussion Lead</b>	Deliver a 15-minute presentation on your Research Project at Session 5, 10, 11, or 12 OR lead a discussion of the readings.	20% (pass/fail)	Session 5, 10, 11, or 12 for presentations; otherwise discussion leads occur throughout
<b>Class Participation</b>	Attend class and contribute to discussions.	20%	throughout
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>	

### COMMENTS ON GRADING

Evaluation of student work will conform to guidelines found in the [Faculty of Information Guidelines to Grade Interpretation](#). According to this source: A+ is truly exceptional; A is a high level of excellence; A- is excellent; B+ is very good; B is good; and B- is adequate.

### Research Project

Sonnenwald's information horizon interview is an important methodological advance in information behaviour research. It allows the researcher to capture a visual conception of human information behaviour with a particular setting, population, or problem. The technique has been taken up by several scholars and produced a small literature of new insights. The goal of this assignment is for you to design and conduct an original exploratory study utilizing Sonnenwald's approach.

The project requires interaction with human subjects and has been approved by the University of Toronto's Office of Research Ethics. Therefore, you must follow the protocols of ethical research in the [Guidelines and Practices Manual for Research Involving Human Subjects](#), which will be reviewed in class.

The assignment is divided into Part 1 (due Session 5) and Part 2 (due Session 12). Part 1 is created and graded independently but integrated into Part 2 for submission at the end of the semester. Key elements of the Research Project will be discussed in workshops, where students can learn from each other, and feedback can be gathered from the instructor and peers.

For starters, read the methodological statement on the method by Sonnenwald et al. (2001) so that from the beginning you have a general sense of the method.

**Part 1:** Select an information behaviour setting, population, or problem that can be explored using the information horizon interview method. The crux of your inquiry is to acquire a better understanding of the information resources, services, and systems people use in a particular situation. Your project should be summed up in a research question(s) [RQ]. Example RQs may be, "How do iSchool students gain new technological skills, such as making a video?" Or, "What do people do to learn a new hobby, like knitting?" Or, "What are the key steps of a job search outside one's current career (focus on information resources)?" Or, "How does a family respond (informationally) to the diagnosis of an illness?" Or, "What information plays a role in planning a wedding?" For these RQs, and others, it is important to select a relatively precise question and an accessible population within the

GTA. (You may focus on an online population or process if you also have in-person access to that community.) Importantly, the target population must be 18+ and qualify as “low risk” (non-vulnerable) per ethical protocols. Your preliminary RQ and target population will be discussed with peers in Session 3. The deliverable for Part 1 is a 1,500-word paper that is due in Session 5. The paper will articulate RQs; establish a working definition of your target population; and review the literature on the population, covering LIS literature and beyond. The document should have these sections: Introduction, Research Question(s), Target Population, Literature Review, and Conclusion. Apply APA guidelines for writing the paper and citing references, except that it should be single-spaced.

Part 2: Building on Part 1, you will refine and implement a research design that employs the information horizon interview with 3 members of your target population. Make sure that you can access the target population within the expedited timeframe of this course and project. Interviews should be scheduled during Sessions 5-8 and conducted between Sessions 8-10. You will have an opportunity to practice the information horizon interview in class, with peers, at Session 8. The interviews must occur face-to-face and follow the appropriate procedures to acquire verbal consent. It is recommended that you tape record and transcribe the interviews (recording equipment is available at the Inforum). Then, independently analyze the data, that is, the horizon drawings and interview transcripts. Your analysis technique may follow any of the precedent studies, with the goal being to answer your original research question(s). Because of the compressed timing for this project and its exploratory spirit the analysis process does *not* have to be overly formal. Write up your findings into a final 4,000 - 5,000 word report that integrates the document produced in Part 1. To restate, the final paper should include Part 1 and also sections on Theoretical Framework, Research Method, Findings, Discussion/Implications, Methodological Reflections, and Conclusion. It is likely you will include information horizon diagrams in your paper. Continue to follow APA guidelines throughout.

The evaluation criteria for Part 2 of the Research Project will consider the entire document (Parts 1 & 2) and include: successful adaptation and implementation of the information horizon interview method; the originality and substance of the findings; and the sophistication and effectiveness of your thinking, acting, and writing across the whole project and final report.

### **Presentation/Discussion Lead**

Everyone will contribute once as the leader for 15 minutes of the class. This may occur in the form of a presentation on your Research Project, or as a discussion leader for the assigned readings. Sign-up for a specific contribution will occur at Session 1. This element of the course is graded pass/fail without the instructor’s feedback. The two options are outlined below:

- A presentation on your Research Project can occur in Session 5, 10, 11, or 12. The Session 5 presentations will focus on RQs, target population definitions, and literature review; those at the end of the semester will focus on methodological reflections and findings. PowerPoint is recommended, and it is important to present in a confident, compelling manner--staying within the available time. Please do not introduce wholly new content from outside the course.
- Alternatively, you may take the lead in the discussion of weekly assigned readings. (Please coordinate with students assigned to the same week to equally cover of all the material.) You should be leading the discussion for at least 15-minutes. The purpose of a discussion is to expand the class' understanding of the material. How you do that is up to you. You may begin with a synthesis of key points, and then pose questions; or you may share your own critical assessment of the article; or you may link the reading to other themes or ideas in the course. Aim to get the class engaged in a lively discussion about the topic and readings. Please also produce a one-sided handout that summarizes the material and your approach (bring 35 copies for all, or email the file to the instructor in advance for photocopying).

## Class Participation

This is a discussion seminar. It is expected that everyone will actively participate in class discussions; the class will only be successful if everyone takes part in the learning. Participation is not the same as showing up for class. Participations means that you engage in the material and contribute to the class' collective work in a constructive and critical way.

Your participation will be evaluated per two principles: *quantity* and *quality*. Quantity addresses how often you engage in discussions, how often you start a discussion, how often you comment on other people's discussion contributions, etc. It is important to contribute often - but it is equally important that you don't dominate or take over the discussions. Quality is a matter of whether you offer insights that bring discussions forward, whether you ask questions that help the class think constructively about the issues, whether you offer insights when the discussion is stuck or off on a tangent, etc. The guidelines below, borrowed from Haverford College, outline my expectations for class participation and reflect the grading criteria that will be applied:

*Outstanding Contributor [A+]*: Contributions in class are frequent and reflect exceptional preparation in nearly every class. Consistently volunteers answers and asks questions that assist the learning of the class as a whole. Class activities are always approached with enthusiasm and diligence. Attends every class session. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of the course as a whole would be diminished significantly.

*Good Contributor [A-]*: Contributions in class are frequent and reflect thorough preparation in nearly every class. Often volunteers answers to questions. Frequently asks questions that assist the learning of the class as a whole. Class activities are almost always approached with seriousness and diligence. Attends nearly every class session. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of the course as a whole would be diminished.

*Adequate Contributor [B]*: Contributions in class are infrequent but reflect adequate preparation. Rarely volunteers answers to questions. Infrequently asks questions, but they are appropriate and helpful to class. Class activities are usually approached with diligence. Absent from a few class sessions. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would not be changed.

*Non-Participant [B-]*: This person participates not at all. Absenteeism is a problem. Hence, there is not an adequate basis for evaluation. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would not be changed