

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
Faculty of Information  
PhD Seminar  
INFO 3002 -- Research in Information: Contemporary Issues  
Location: BL 312  
Tuesdays 1 pm ~ 4 pm  
Winter 2017

Instructor: Siobhan Stevenson

Office: 140 St. George, #613 BL

Phone: 416.978.8285 (best not to leave messages...)

Office hours: Mondays 4-6, Wednesday 12-1

Email (Best mode of communication) [siobhan.stevenson@utoronto.ca](mailto:siobhan.stevenson@utoronto.ca)

Note: I will return your emails within 24 hours, also I cannot guarantee a response between Friday 5:00 pm and Monday 9:00 am

Office hours: By appointment

### Course Description

In-depth critical discussion of a number of broad questions currently drawing the attention of information researchers. These questions will be explored using a range of analytic tools and theoretical frames currently at play within contemporary information research projects. Topics vary from year to year, chosen not only in terms of importance, contemporary impact, and theoretical salience, but also so as to provide full representation of a diversity of methods, frameworks, literatures, and epistemic styles.

The questions we will explore this term struggle with the following concepts: surveillance, privacy, intellectual property, identity, and class power to name just a few. Some of the analytic tools we will engage include: political economy, critical theory, information theory, institutional ethnography, and the sociology of knowledge.

### Course Objectives

Through critical reading, intensive participatory discussions and weekly written reflections, will be able to:

- Appreciate some of the major research themes, issues, questions, and approaches that comprise today's information research agenda(s)
- Examine and discuss critically the potential of today's dominant information research agenda(s) to contribute to the amelioration of society's most pressing problems.
- Identify theoretical concepts and analytic tools of possible relevance/ or not to those questions of most interest to the student.
- Strengthen your unique scholarly voice (written and spoken) in a safe and open environment.
- Lead engaging discussions
- Practice nascent teaching skills

### Format

The class will meet for two hours each week (except if there is a guest) to engage in seminar style sessions, which includes active in-class discussions, guest lectures, seminar presentations,

and intensive interaction with readings and with each other. It is essential that everyone comes to class well prepared to discuss the readings and to contribute to the discussion.

#### Prerequisites

This course is for those students enrolled in the Ph.D. program (or by permission of the instructor). The pre-requisite for the course is INF3001 or equivalent.

#### Course Materials

This course will be book based although complementary articles will round out our readings.

#### Expectations with respect to the readings

We will be doing a close reading of one book each week. The selection of readings was based on a survey of iSchool faculty ("If you had to name one book that has had a lasting impact on your work, what would it be?"); consideration of the group's individual interests as gleaned from SSHRC applications and emails; the instructor's own knowledge of contemporary research in the multi- and inter- disciplinary field of study.

We will read with the following goals in mind

- (1) Identify within each week's readings, ideas/concepts/questions of relevance to your research interests. For the record, "not relevant" or "of minimal relevance" are not options. Rather, students are encouraged to embrace the ideas, find engagement with them, and speak to them as if you plan to use them in your own work. Two questions you might ask yourself are: how have your ideas shifted as a result of the reading? What are your key takeaways?
- (2) Consider the relevance of the ideas for the generic questions posed in this course outline and/or a topical issue in the media that week.
- (3) Value of items or those found in reference lists for your comprehensive exam reading lists.

#### Deliverables

The seminar (40%)

- (1) Find one article (scholarly or popular; contemporary or historical) that in some way speaks to the week's reading/theme and be prepared to discuss your selection with
- (2) Write a 750 word scholarly reflection on the week's reading which may include a discussion of your choice of complementary article (why that piece? what thinking went into your choice?, etc) DUE: Monday noon before Tuesday class

As a doctoral seminar, your full engagement in all aspects of the course is required if you are to gain mastery over the material and realize the course outcomes referenced above. Active participation in each seminar is essential. To facilitate rigorous and meaningful discussions, each student is asked to write a weekly reading reflection based on their experience with that week's readings, including questions the readings generated for you and intellectual connections with past scholarly materials.

- (3) Participate actively in the seminar. Students are expected to make cogent and thoughtful contributions, be open, respectful to the opinions of their colleagues, prepared to be challenged.

Leading 3 Seminars (30%)

Between week 3 and week 11, each student will be responsible for 2 seminars.

- (1) As seminar leaders, you need to provide a critical appraisal of the reading. Critiques can include an appraisal of the potential of the theoretical frames/analytic tools for questions in information research of interest to the group/ or not, as the case may be.

(2) Leaders must be creative, engaging and challenging.

Tip: Exploit the rich content contained within the weekly reading reflections and responses by using them to help shape and organize your seminar. Acknowledging people's contributions goes a long way towards ensuring lively engagement and a meaningful discussion that resonates with the interests of the group as a whole.

Final take home exam (30%) DUE

There will be 6 questions from which you will chose three to answer. Each answer should be no longer than 2,500 words (not including references) and no shorter than 2,000. Tuesday April 18 (1:00 pm) Email pdf

#### Seminar Schedule

Week	Topics	Seminar Leaders	Guest speakers
1 Jan 10	Information Philosophizing Gleick, James. (2011) <i>The Information: A History, A Theory, A Flood</i> . Bown, Alfie. (2015). <i>Enjoying It: Candy Crush and Capitalism</i> . Zero Books.	Siobhan	
2 Jan 17	Fuchs, Christian. (2011). <i>Foundations of Critical Media and Information</i> . Parts 1 & 2 (Available as ebook @ UoT Libs)	Siobhan	
3 Jan 24	Fuchs, Christian. (2011). <i>Foundations of Critical Media and Information</i> . Part 3 (Available as ebook @ UoT Libs)	Student lead	
4 Jan 31	Theoretical Frames: Information Societies Dyer-Witheford, Nick. (1999). <i>Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High Technology Capitalism</i> . University of Illinois Press. (Available as a .pdf @ <a href="http://www.fims.uwo.ca/people/faculty/dyerwitheford/">http://www.fims.uwo.ca/people/faculty/dyerwitheford/</a> )	Student lead	
5 Feb 7	Theoretical Frames: Cultural Geography Massey, Doreen. (1994). <i>Space, Place and Gender</i> . MN: University of Minnesota Press. (Available as ebook @ UoT Libs)	Student lead	
6 Feb 14	Analytic Tools Fischer, Frank and John Forester. (2012) (eds). <i>The Argumentative Turn Revisited: Public Policy as Communicative Practice</i> . Durham : Duke University Press. (Available as ebook @ UoT Libs)	Student lead	

Week	Topics	Seminar Leaders	Guest speakers
Feb 21	FAMILY DAY & READING WEEK		
7 Feb 28	Theoretical Frames Mouffe, Chantal. (2013). <i>Agnostics: Thinking the World Politically</i> . London: Verso.	Student lead	
8 Mar 7	Analytic Tools Bal, Mieke. (2009). <i>Introduction to the Theory of Narrative, 3rd edition</i> . Toronto: University of Toronto Press.	Student lead	
9 Mar14	Theoretical Frames & Tools Strathern, Marilyn. (1999). <i>Property, Substance, and Effect: Anthropological Essays on Persons and Things</i> . New Brunswick, NJ : Athlone Press	Student lead	
10 Mar21	Theoretical Frames: Information and Culture Said, Edward. (1994). <i>Culture and Imperialism</i> . New York: Vintage Books	Student lead	
11 Mar28	Theoretical Frames: Information and Surveillance Foucault, Michel. (1995) <i>Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison</i> . Vintage Books.	Student lead	
12 Apr4	Information Resistance/ Course synthesis Sandarac, Ravi (2010). <i>Pirate Modernity</i> . New York : Routledge (Available as ebook @ UoT Libs)	Student lead (& Siobhan)	

#### A note about technology

This is a conversation so it is appreciated if students can refrain from using notebooks, i-pads, cell phones, etc. during our class. Paper and pencil should suffice. Seminar leaders may want to use the technology, however, for showing clips, audio recordings, images, etc.

#### Boiler Plate: Course Policies

##### *Grading*

Please consult the iSchool's Grade Interpretation Guidelines (<http://current.ischool.utoronto.ca/grade-interpretation>) and the University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/grading.pdf>). These documents will form the basis for grading in the course.

### *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 (<http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/English-Language-and-Writing-Support.aspx>). 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 (<http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/Current-Years-Courses.aspx>) for more information.

### *Academic integrity*

Please consult the University's site on Academic Integrity (<http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/>). The iSchool has a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism as defined in section B.I.I.(d) of the University's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (if you require further clarification, consult the site How Not to Plagiarize (<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/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: [uoft.me/iskills](http://uoft.me/iskills)

### *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 (<http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>) 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.

Academic Dates: <http://current.ischool.utoronto.ca/studies/academic-dates>

- Final date to drop full-year and winter session half (S) courses without academic penalty: Feb. 27, 2017