FOUNDATIONS OF INFORMATION STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE
VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY
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ABOUT THE COURSE

INTRODUCTION

Foundations is a course designed to introduce the student to the fundamental roots and concepts of the library and information sciences disciplines. The term "disciplines" is used purposefully. Ours is a profession undergoing as ever profound and sweeping changes. In recent years some have argued that the library and with it librarians have become anachronistic. Others argue that the structure and form libraries take and their functions in society have and will continue to change. I incline toward the latter because libraries and librarians are far more than "brick and mortar" repositories of unread books and "markers and parkers" of monographs.

And just FYI, take a look at
http://www.cnn.com/2000/CAREER/trends/11/28/librarians/index.html

The course is further elaborated on-line.

TEXT BOOKS

There is one required, assigned textbook. It is the second edition of Richard Rubin's *Foundations of Library and Information Science, 2 ed* (2004)

And two required articles. To identify the key contemporary literature, we will depend upon Howard D. White and Katherine W. McCain,"Visualizing a Discipline: An Author Co-Citation Analysis of Information Science, 1972---1995," *JASIS 49*, 4 (1998): 327-355 to define the information science discipline. It maps information science sub-disciplines through co-citation analysis.

You are also to read my paper "Information science as 'little science': The implications of a bibliometric analysis of the Journal of the American Society for Information Science," *Scientometrics 51*, 1 (2001): 117-32. There are two reasons for this. The first is that the paper argues that a transition has taken place in information science. The second is that the paper discusses bibliometrics as a research methodology.

I also require that students in this class become very familiar with Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, various editions). It is sometimes

argued that our discipline has or is undergoing a paradigm shift. It is indeed possible that it has experienced several in the near to distant past. I am not assigning Kuhn for any specific week, but you can expect to be asked to apply his work in response to some question on the Final Exam. In a "Foundations" class it is not unreasonable to speculate and analyze whether the foundations of our field have or have not shifted. If indeed there has been a shift, what are the extent, breadth, and limits of that shift? If we are indeed in the middle of a shift, what might be the implications of that shift?

RECOMMENDED READINGS

I also want you to use June Lester and Wallace Koehler, *Fundamentals of Information Studies*, NY: Neal-Shuman (2003). This is **not** assigned as a required text. A number of libraries in have it. The book and its Web updates provide extensive coverage of the field. Select from the book's bibliography at the end of each chapter one or two readings of interest.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There are five requirements and exams required for this course described below. These are (1) a take-home or "do-at-home" Exam, (2) a History Report – oral and written, (3) a Career Report – oral and written, (4) a State of the Discipline Paper -- written and (5) a "Living Librarian" report

Half of your grade is based on individual efforts and half is based on group assignments. Requirements 1 and 2 are to be individual assignments; items 3 and 4 are group projects. Each student is required to prepare a brief (not to exceed one page) description of the group process in each of the two assignments one week following oral presentations.

Assignments Defined

   Living Librarians References -- 5 percent of final grade -- Due September class.

Somewhere in the print media (newspapers, magazines, journals), find non-fiction stories that include references either to practicing librarians or to individuals who have completed library training (MLIS, BLIS, equivalent degrees). **OR** you may interview a librarian you know and write up that person's experience. Find material that focuses on the impact of the work history or the library training they received. For example, Laura Bush holds an MLIS. What effect did that have on the direction of her life?

You are not strictly speaking limited to "living librarians." But choose someone living or not who is contemporary.

 History Reports – Individual effort -- 20 percent of final grade

A list of "Key People and Events" is provided in this syllabus. Each student will select one of these people or events and prepare a written and oral report. Selection will be performed the first class meeting. Written reports are to be turned into the instructor one week prior to the oral presentation in digital format (pdf, html, or Word). These will then be posted to the class Web site.

   Career Report --Group effort -- 25 percent of grade

Contemporary librarianship and the information sciences cover a multitude of different but overlapping careers and professions. If anything, these professions and approaches to the issues are undergoing continuing differentiation and diversification.

The purpose of the career report is to expand our understanding of the scope and practice of the information profession and to provide practical information on career possibilities. In addition, you will gain experience in-group report preparation, a bane of your future professional life.

The topic for the career report is to be selected from the positions listed below – one to a group. Each team is to gather information from a variety of sources, compile that information into a written report, and make an oral presentation in class.

Written and oral presentations should include the following:

- A generic job description, including typical requirements for and responsibilities of such a position and other possible titles for the position
- Environment in which the position exists; e.g. public or private sector, organizational setting, etc.
- Characteristics of the career that make it part of the "information profession."
- A general profile of a "typical" practitioner. This should include typical education, years in the field, background, and age.
- Expected compensation
- Opportunities for career advancement and diversification

The written report should not exceed six pages. The oral report should not exceed thirty minutes. In both cases, if the necessary ground can be covered in a shorter format, so much the better. Remember to use visuals and other support technologies for the oral presentation.

State of the Discipline Paper

Group effort -- 25 percent of grade.

This assignment has both a written and oral component. The written part is best considered a group term paper. The oral in class requirement is far less rigorous.

During the in class presentation, each student will "represent" a researcher or point of view and argue from the perspective of that individual or school of thought. In effect, you will act as a surrogate for your "perspective." It is the instructor's hope to prompt in class discussion of and about the various theories presented in the literature. The instructor will moderate and lead each discussion and will initially give precedence to the in class experts. The decision as to which group member will represent which researcher is to be a group decision. There are no formal requirements, except to be current on the positions taken by your expert during the oral presentations.

Take Home COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

There will be one exam in this course. It will be a comprehensive, do-it-at-home, open book exam. You may use any resource you wish to complete the exam with the EXCEPTION OF DIRECT COMMUNICATION WITH OTHER PEOPLE. You may not collaborate with other

students, you may not ask me or other experts. In short, you are limited to texts, notes, articles, and books.

Everything offered or required in this course is fair game for the Final Exam. This includes lectures, oral and written presentations by you and your peers, and assigned required readings. The exam will consist of five questions; you will answer any four of them. I give you one question to consider and develop over the course. The other four will be handed out on the last day of class.

Individual Effort --25 percent of grade.

Your first question: Define the relationship between library science and information science. Have library science and/or information science undergone a paradigm shift. Discuss the paradigm shift issue in the context of Kuhn's concepts. Koehler has argued that information science is in transition. How do Koehler's arguments support (if they do) a Kuhnian interpretation?

Finally, when the strain gets to be too great, check out

http://www.excite.co.uk/directory/Reference/Libraries/Library_and_Information_Science/Librariana

And

http://www.wam.umd.edu/~aubrycp/project/jeopardy.html