MLIS 7000 FOUNDATIONS OF INFORMATION STUDIES

MASTER OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE PROGRAM
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

WebCT

WebCT is the course-ware adopted by the University System of Georgia for online course delivery. We will use WebCT to augment in class instruction. And we will use it for purposes of in course communications and online discussions.

To that end, the course is further elaborated on-line.

TEXT BOOKS

There two assigned textbooks. These are:

1. Richard Rubin *Foundations of Library and Information Science, 2nd edition*

2. Kate Turabian, et al. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 7th edition.*

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?

I suggest you might also find June Lester and Wallace Koehler, *Fundamentals of Information Studies, 2 ed.*, 2007 of interest and use. This work is *not* required. You may wish to acquire it as a reference.

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 February 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. It can be a famous librarian (James Billington, Librarian of Congress, for example. Or your local children's librarian who turned you on to Dewey Decimals)

History Reports --Individual effort -- 20 percent of final grade -- Due March class

A list of "Key People and Events" is provided in the WebCT online class site. Each student will select one of these people or events and prepare a written and oral report. Selection will be performed prior to the first class meeting. Note: This one assignment we will do across all Foundations sections. In so doing, both sections can help educate each other.

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 WebCT site.

Career Report --Group effort -- 25 percent of grade -- Due March class

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 -- Due April class

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 made available April 25. The exam be due May 1 at 11:59 pm as a Word or RTF upload to WebCT. Remember Turabian!

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?

SECTIONS

This course meets face-to-face in two sections: Atlanta and Valdosta. If you anticipate that you will need to miss a given weekend class session, you may attend its analog at the other class site.

Atlanta (Atlanta Fulton County Library)	Valdosta (Odum Library VSU)
Jan 26-27	Jan 19-20
Feb 23-24	Feb 16-17
March 22-23	March 29-30
April 26-27	April 19-20

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

As you are no doubt aware, the VSU MLIS Program is a non-thesis, non-comprehensive exam program. It does have exit requirements. These are brought together in the Program's final course Capstone. Among the requirements for Capstone are (a) preparation of a publication quality paper and (b) submission of a developed portfolio. One might begin considering a Capstone paper subject as early as now.

The portfolio requirement begins in the Foundations course. It will be discussed during the first class meeting. Information is also posted at the Foundations WebCT Vista site. You should also discuss it at least once a semester with your adviser.

Writing and Citation Style

I have assigned Turabian to guide both your writing and your use of citations. This manual of style will benefit you through several courses. It can help guide you as you formulate hypotheses for papers. It can help guide you as you develop the paper.

WARNING: Turabian is but one approach to style and format. It is an abridged version of the Chicago Style as required by the University of Chicago Press. Even Turabian requires decisions. As is provided in section 15.3 (p 135) there are several ways to cite materials within a given style or system. Section 15.3 discusses note-bibliographic and parenthetical styles. The choice is yours but be consistent.

As you are no doubt aware there are several other major approaches to writing and citation style, to format. These include APA and MLA in the humanities and social sciences and a variety of approaches in the sciences. All are valid. We will limit ourselves to the guidance Turabian offers for this course. Other MLIS professors may require other formats and styles in their courses. Once you master the principles of one system it is easier to master the principles of another. Do not mix them up.

For an idea of the degree of variety, examine professional journals not only in library and information science but in other fields as well (for a list of LIS journals see Rubin, appendix A). In the end, if you write for a professional journal use the format as the journal's editor indicates. Most journals provide instructions for potential authors.

READING -- be prepared to discuss in the designated month in class and online.

January -- Carefully explore Turabian, particularly Part II, beginning with Chapter 15.

Read -- White and McCain

Rubin, Ch 1-3

February --Carefully explore Turabian, particularly Part I and Part III.

Read Koehler' s *Scientometrics* article.

Rubin, Ch 4-6

March --

Rubin Ch 7-8

April --

Rubin, Ch 9-10