

**INFM 600: Senior Seminar
Fall 2021
Individual weekly meetings**

Readers

- [Oliver Bonham-Carter](#), Office: Alden Hall 104
- [Amelia Finaret](#), Office: Carr 205
- [Douglas Luman](#), Office: Alden Hall 105
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Grading

This course will use a contract for grading. Please refer to the INFM 600 Grade Contract document.

Course Description

Credits: 4

Preparation for the Senior Comprehensive Project. Students study research methods, conducting exploratory research, developing focused topics, and addressing issues of composition and revision. Much of the work for the seminar is conducted independently; the culminating assignment is a Comprehensive Project Proposal.

Prerequisite: CMPSC 580 or other approved junior seminar and permission of the instructor.

Distribution Requirements: None.

INFM 600 & 610 Joint Learning Outcomes

1. Define a feasible and significant research project.
2. Identify and utilize the appropriate methods and/or techniques .
3. Locate, interpret and analyze relevant literature and other appropriate source material.
4. Complete the proposed work following identified processes.
5. Produce a final product that showcases the findings/output in appropriate, original, practical, and/or creative ways.
6. Articulate the implications of data and information used in the project in different social, historical, political, and/or cultural contexts.
7. Present and communicate complex ideas in a variety of media via proposal, oral defenses, and, if appropriate, exhibits.
8. Describe and analyze a research process, its methods/techniques, and outcomes in the form of a formal thesis document.

Course Information

A senior project experience in Integrative Informatics will give you an opportunity to explore an interdisciplinary topic around digital information. The topic of your senior project should align with your interests/module in the Integrative Informatics major and maybe an individual project, a collaborative project with other students (see “Collaborative Thesis Ideas” document), or a community-based project involving a community partner. For your project, you are solely responsible (with guidance) for developing a research question, identifying supporting literature, establishing an approach to the research, following the developed approach, achieving an outcome, and presenting the process and the outcome both orally and in writing. Even though you are responsible for making most of the decisions and completing your own work, you will not be doing it alone. Your first reader will help by providing you with constructive feedback at each step of the process.

You will set weekly meetings with your first reader at the beginning of the semester. These meetings are designed to provide you with an opportunity to discuss and share ideas, as well as ensure that you are managing your time effectively in order to stay on track and finish your project within the allotted time. To make the most of the meetings with your first reader, you are expected to come prepared to each week’s meeting by having questions to ask for guidance, presenting the progress you have made toward your senior project requirements, sharing the challenges you have faced, and brainstorming ideas to resolve those challenges. Your first reader may ask you questions and provide suggestions, which you need to be ready to listen to and write down. Outside of weekly meetings, your first reader is available via email.

Assignments

The course contains the following assignments. Informatics Thesis 2021 organization (<https://github.com/Allegheny-College-INFM-Thesis-2021>) will be used for faculty to distribute assignments and for students to submit them. Each assignment must be submitted via the assignment’s GitHub repository.

1. Senior Project Proposal

You must develop a senior project proposal, although in most cases you will update/revise your proposal from when you wrote it in Junior Seminar. The better your proposal, the greater your chances for success. Your proposal must contain an appropriate title, abstract, introduction/background, project specification, specific aim(s), methods/approach, project deliverables, a week-by-week timeline, and a brief autobiography (explaining how you are prepared to complete your project and how it fits into your academic/professional narrative). Your proposal should be at least 3000 words in length, with at least 15 references (in APA format).

2. Oral Proposal Defense

Within 2 weeks of turning in your proposal, you will meet with both of your readers in-person for a Comp Proposal Defense. During this meeting, you will be invited to give a five minute presentation describing your proposed work, justifying its feasibility, and describing the plan you develop to complete the proposed work. Then, you will be asked a

series of questions by your readers. It is your job to defend and discuss your proposed project, outline its strengths and limitations and justify what makes your proposed project an Integrative Informatics comp. These meetings typically last 30 minutes. It is common for readers to require further work on your proposal before your proposed work is accepted and you start your project. You will be responsible for scheduling your oral defense; please check the calendars of your readers to start determining dates and times that will work.

3. Progress Portfolio

For your comp progress report at the end of the first semester, you will be submitting an electronic progress portfolio of your work. This portfolio will include the following components (comprised of a single PDF document in the order listed below):

1. A reflection;
2. Your progress document(s); and
3. A realistic timeline and to-do list for Spring 2022.

The Reflection

Although your reflection will be the first document of this portfolio, it should be the last document you write. This reflection is your opportunity to tell your reader about your comping experience – both the good and bad; challenges and parts that have come together with ease; those things that have taken too much time and those that have fallen into place beautifully; the things you have enjoyed and the things you hate. This document should be written in the first person and addressed to your readers. Although this is your opportunity to name the hard parts of comping and things you have hated, the quality and professional tone of your cover letter cannot be compromised. Your readers will use this reflection to contextualize your progress and assess your ability to reflect and write in a professional manner. In addition to sharing your experiences and feelings you have experienced during the first semester, you are to describe what progress you have made, resources you need to be successful next semester, and what you have learned about yourself during the semester.

Progress Document(s)

Together with your first reader, you will determine what you will submit as evidence of your progress this semester. This evidence must come in the form of a written document, ideally a part of your final comp. It must include work that has been completed since your defense. We expect you to set a challenging and attainable goal for this progress document. The document you chose to write should illustrate the progress and high-level thinking you have done this semester. It should also be significant – in both length and depth of knowledge – to showcase that you are in fact completing 600-level course work.

Timeline

In your portfolio, you must also include a realistic timeline of your work, week-by-week, for Spring 2022.

Schedule

The deadlines for Fall 2021 are:

1. Senior Project Proposal: **10/11/2021** by 5pm to both readers.
2. Oral Proposal Defense: Before **10/25/2021**
3. IRB proposals (if applicable): **11/1/2021** by 5pm submitted to IRB committee.
 - If you are doing human subjects research, your IRB proposal must be submitted by November 1st. Please note that only faculty can submit IRB proposals and that it often takes several rounds of revisions before approval.
4. Progress Portfolio: **12/8/2021**.

Seeking assistance

If you find yourself in difficult circumstances which affect your ability to participate in or complete course work, let your first reader know immediately. Do not wait until the end of the semester.

Part of our role as course instructors is to make sure that students receive the assistance they need. Do not hesitate to let us know if there is anything we can do with respect to your ability to handle your work. This is especially true of our current circumstances of the on-going global pandemic.

In many situations, the following list of resources may help:

- [The Maytum Learning Commons](#)
- [Allegheny College Counseling Center](#)
- [The Winslow Health Center](#)
- [Student Life](#)

Special needs and disability

Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course are encouraged to contact Disability Services at +1 814-334-2898. Disability Services is part of the Learning Commons, located in Pelletier Library. Should you need accommodations, contact this office as soon as possible to ensure that approved accommodations are communicated and implemented as quickly as possible. This serves both you and me in providing the best environment for learning and support.