FOUNDATIONS OF INFORMATION

Section: INFO–601–07
Semester: Fall 2023
Meeting Information: Thursdays, 6:30–9:20pm
Location: PMC 214
Credits: 3
Prerequisites: None

Chris Alen Sula, Ph.D. (he or they)
Office: PMC 607 & Online
Office Hours: Thurs 5–6pm (signup)
p 718.399.4256
e csula@pratt.edu
w https://chrisalensula.org

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This foundational course focuses on the intersection of people, information, and technology and the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the information field. Students will be introduced to ideas and concepts that will inform future specializations in their course of study and provide them with concrete strategies for ongoing professional growth and development in their area of interest.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

This section is taught from a critical perspective, which attends to structures of power in our concepts, actions, and social systems. Each week, we'll consider topics in the broad field of information through such lenses as intersectionality, capitalism, feminism, social justice, and colonialism.

COURSE GOALS & LEARNING OUTCOMES

The goals of this course are to:
- introduce students to the major frameworks of the information field
- help students to develop critical thinking, communication, research, management, presentation, and other skills required for successful completion of their programs and their professional growth
- broaden students' understanding of information professions and careers in the information field

By the end of this course, students will be able to:
- describe and critique historical, political, economic, social, and ethical aspects of information environments, including:
  - various manifestations of information and internal and external factors affecting its production, distribution, and consumption
  - diversity of needs and characteristics of people, both individuals and communities, involved in information creation, management, and use
  - foundational methods for assessing information environments and actors' needs
  - basic elements of project and institutional management
- express professional voice for analyzing and evaluating information, contextualizing their views, and communicating them effectively
- Identify and value opportunities for continuing professional development

REQUIRED TEXTS & COURSE WEBSITE

All readings are available on the course website at https://pratt.instructure.com/courses/27265

COURSE FORMAT

This is a seminar course, where each class is devoted to discussion of the required materials for that week, as well as current events and student work pertaining to those readings. You are required to review the assigned materials in advance of each session and prepare to discuss them in class.

GRADING & ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments are due on the date indicated, and late work may receive reduced credit. Final grades will be awarded as follows:

Grade	Evaluation	Quality Points per Credit
A	Excellent	4.0
A-	Excellent	3.7
B+	Very Good	3.3
B	Good	3.0
B-	Good	2.7
C+	Above Average	2.3
C	Average	2.0
F	Failure	0.0
WF	Failure Due to Lack of Attendance	0.0

Note: C is the lowest passing grade for graduate students.

Your grade in the course will be based on the following assignments:

Discussion posts	25%
Fieldwork	20%
AI activity	10%
Book review	45%

Discussion posts (25%)
Throughout the course, you are expected to participate in online discussions of course topics. These posts should focus on course readings, as well as outside articles, resources, and events that are related to the course. Posts should be short: tweet-sized (280 characters), or about one or two sentences (max 50 words). Requirements for this assignment include:
- following the discussion throughout the semester
- posting at least three times per week—usually *before* class
- at least one weekly post should pertain to the readings for the upcoming session (e.g., by asking a critical question, applying the reading to the information professions, replying substantively to another student's post about the readings)

You may also post during and after class (e.g., making a note during class discussion, following up on ideas after class). You may skip one reading week of your choice.

Fieldwork (2 activities, 10% each)
Throughout the semester, you should participate in at least two professional development opportunities and report back to the class through an informal discussion of up to five minutes, which may include questions from others. Examples of relevant activities include:
- attending professional events or live webinars
- attending SI's Ethics & Technology Forum on October 20, 4:30pm
- watching a recorded lecture related to class topics
- other ideas, which you should feel free to discuss with me at any time

All fieldwork must be completed before class on November 16.

AI Activity (10%)
After finishing the readings for Sept 7, choose one of the following activities to complete and submit a short report (max. 1,000 words) before class on Sept 14:

- *System probe* — Engage with an AI chat bot (e.g., ChatGPT, Bing) about some of the critical points in our readings on AI. For example, you may ask it about biases, privacy, ownership, terms, environmental impact, etc. You may need to refine your prompts to yield more complete or interesting results. Your report should describe your process/intentions for drafting and refining the prompts, as well as highlights from your chat. Include the transcript of the chat as an appendix to your report (does not count toward word limit). Please note that most AI tools collect, mine, and sell user data; if you do not wish to have your data used in this way, select another activity below.
- *Privacy audit* — Read the terms of service and privacy policy for a common chat bot (e.g., ChatGPT, Bing) and highlight areas of concern. As background, you may wish to consult <u>what to look for in a privacy policy </u>and <u>how to read a TOS</u>.
- *Technoethical audit* — Complete a <u>Technoethical Audit</u> for a common chat bot (e.g., ChatGPT, Bing) and submit the handout as your report.
- The People's Guide to AI *speculative sci-fi activity (pp. 71–75)* — Include your answers to the prompts in your report, as well as any additional reflections on the activity.

Book Review (45%)
Each student will select a recent book (published within approximately the past three years) and complete a review (max. 3,000 words) that summarizes the main contributions of the work and situates it in the context of other literature on the subject, including course readings.

Your **proposal**, due by Nov 1, should include 2–3 book choices, with a brief statement explaining why you have selected each of them. You may choose books from the list suggested by the professor, or other titles related to course concepts and your professional interests. You do not need to read these books before proposing them as choices, but you should be generally familiar with them, enough to be sure you want to spend time writing a review of one of them.

Your **written review** should be 1,500–3,000 words in length—typical of an <u>academic book</u> review—and summarize the work, analyzes its merits, and places the book in a context of recent related literature. Though you are not writing a <u>literature review</u>, you may find it helpful to pursue your research as if you were, and be sure to cite these sources in a consistent style (e.g., Chicago, APA, MLA). You may also consult other reviews of your book, but be careful to avoid plagiarizing them—develop your own view of the book and its contributions.

A review **draft** must be circulated to the entire class by the Wednesday before it is discussed in class for constructive feedback (3 min presentation, 10 min discussion). Your workshop draft may be shorter than your final version, on the assumption that workshop feedback will lead to additional content. Your revised final draft should be uploaded to Canvas by Dec 18.

PORTFOLIO WORK

Work from this class may be used to satisfy graduating portfolio requirements for students in specific programs. Detailed information on the learning outcomes and requirements for each program is available at <u>si.pratt.edu</u>. Please discuss with the instructor or your faculty advisor which assignments may satisfy which requirements. Typically, your seminar paper can fulfill program learning outcomes that ask you to adopt critical, ethical, legal, or professional perspectives.

POLICIES

The following abbreviated set of policies is especially relevant to this class. Full details on policies and procedures can be found on the Pratt <u>website</u>.

Community Standards

All Pratt students, faculty, and staff members are expected to value and uphold the community standards essential to the pursuit of academic excellence and social responsibility. These include expectations for social conduct, academic integrity, non-discrimination, and other policies described in the link above, and apply to all Pratt-sponsored activities, on or off campus.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity at Pratt means using your own and original ideas in creating academic work. It also means that if you use the ideas or influence of others in your work, you must acknowledge them.

At Pratt, we do our own work, we are creative, and we give credit where it is due.

When students submit any work for academic credit, they make an implicit claim that the work is wholly their own, completed without the assistance of any unauthorized person. These works include, but are not limited to exams, quizzes, presentations, papers, projects, studio work, and other assignments and assessments. In addition, no student shall prevent another student from making their work. Students may study, collaborate, and work together on assignments at the discretion of the instructor.

Examples of infractions include but are not limited to plagiarism, defined as using the exact language or a close paraphrase of someone else's ideas without citation, and the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) to produce or to improve work, whether visual or textual, except when called for by an assignment or instructor and acknowledged transparently as one tool among others in the creative process.

The Academic Integrity Standing Committee (AISC) is charged with educating faculty, staff, and students about academic integrity practices. Whenever possible, we strive to resolve alleged infractions at the most local level possible, such as between student and professor, or within a department or school. When necessary, members of this committee will form an Academic Integrity Hearing Board to hear cases regarding cheating, plagiarism, and other infractions described below; these infractions can be grounds for citation, sanction, or dismissal. Detailed procedures are explained in the full version of the Academic Integrity Policy.

Attendance Policy

Consistent attendance is essential for the completion of any course or program. Attending class does not earn students any specific portion of their grade, but is the pre-condition for passing the course, while missing class may seriously harm a student's grade. Pratt Institute respects students' requirements to observe days of cultural significance, including religious holy days, and recognizes that some students might need to miss class to do so. In this, or other similar, circumstance, students are responsible for consulting with faculty ahead of time about how and when they can make up work they will miss. Reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities will continue to be provided, as appropriate. For full details, see Pratt's Attendance Policy.

For this class, students are allowed three individual absences for any reason; no documentation or notice is required. If you miss a session, be sure to complete the readings, consult your classmates or the professor about the class, and (as always) demonstrate your knowledge of the material in later sessions. Upon a fourth or fifth absence, your grade will be lowered by one mark for each absence (e.g., A to A-); students who miss six or more sessions will not pass the course. If you encounter significant health issues and will miss class for an extended period of time, contact your professors to formulate a plan for the semester.

Academic Support

For assistance with time management and/or subject and software tutoring, contact the Student Success Center at success@pratt.edu. For assistance with writing assignments, contact the Writing and Tutorial Center at wtc@pratt.edu. The Pratt Libraries can also help with research and citations.

Accessibility

The Learning/Access Center (L/AC) coordinates access for students with disabilities. Students who identify as having any type of disability are entitled and encouraged to enroll with the L/AC in order to determine and implement reasonable accommodations. Contact the Learning/Access Center at lac@pratt.edu or 718.802.3123 for information or to schedule an appointment.

Title IX and Sexual Misconduct Policy

Pratt Institute is committed to fostering an environment that is safe, secure and free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment, sexual violence, dating and domestic violence, and stalking among all forms of sexual misconduct. The Institute takes prompt and appropriate action to address misconduct, end a hostile environment if one has been created, and prevent the recurrence of a hostile environment. To submit a concern, please use the Title IX and Sexual Misconduct Disclosure Form. For full details, see the Title IX and Sexual Misconduct Policy.

If you inform me of an issue of sex discrimination or sexual misconduct, I will keep the information as private as I can. However, as a faculty member, I am a mandatory reporter of sexual misconduct and required to bring it to the attention of the Institute's Title IX Coordinator, who can also be contacted at titleix@pratt.edu. You can also speak to someone confidentially by contacting our confidential resources in Health Services or the Counseling Center.

Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy

Pratt is committed to fostering a welcoming, safe, non-discriminatory, and harassment-free educational, living, and working environment for its community. To submit a concern, please use the Discrimination and Harassment Disclosure Form, or place an anonymous report in confidence using EthicsPoint. For full details, see the Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy.

Wellbeing

Pratt is dedicated to creating a culture where the entire community can flourish and thrive. Taking time to care for yourself and seeking appropriate support is important to achieving your academic and professional goals. Several resources are available through Starfish, including our Student Advocate and Care Coordinator, who can also be reached at 718.399.4546 or studentadvocate@pratt.edu. If you or anyone you know experiences overwhelming academic stress, persistent difficult feelings, or challenging life events, the Counseling Center can be reached 24/7 by calling 718.687.5356. To schedule a consultation, please call or email therapy@pratt.edu

Starfish

Starfish provides students with contact information for advisors, instructors, department chairs, and support services across the campus. Faculty can also use Starfish to inform students of their progress in class and connect them with resources. Students are contacted by support offices whenever a flag is raised.

Public Safety & Emergency Contacts

The Department of Public Safety provides 24-hour-a-day protection to the campus, including an emergency response guide. Contact Public Safety at security@pratt.edu or 718.636.3540. The Pratt Emergency Alert System is used to send urgent messages to registered mobile devices and emails (faculty, staff, and students have the option to opt-out, which must be renewed each year). You can update your emergency contact information in the Safety section of OnePratt.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This is a tentative outline of topics, readings, and assignments. On occasion, I may add, delete, or substitute topics or readings. Changes will be posted here and on Canvas.

In assigning authors, I strive for gender parity and to include *at least* one scholar of color each week.

WEEK	DATE	TOPICS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

1   8/31   Introduction
- Sweeney, Miriam E. (2012). "How to Read for Grad School." [personal blog] https://miriamsweeney.net/2012/06/20/readforgradschool
- Tech Impact Network. (2020). *Future Says*. https://www.futuresays.org [watch trailer and the five videos with scholars]

No discussion posts required

Optional:
- Rayward, W. Boyd. (1996). "The history and historiography of information science: some reflections" *Information Processing & Management* 32(1): 3–17. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/W_Rayward/publication/222489196_The_history_and_historiography_of_information_science_Some_reflections/links/53f671e40cf2fceacc731d9c.pdf

2   9/7   Artificial Intelligence
- IFLA (2023). "Generative AI for Library and Information Professionals (draft), https://www.ifla.org/generative-ai
- Allied Media Projects. (2018). *A People's Guide to Artificial Intelligence*, pp. 3–5 and 60–70 (additional chapters optional) https://alliedmedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/peoples-guide-ai.pdf
- Goodlad, Lauren & Samuel Baker. (2023). "Now the Humanities Can Disrupt 'AI'" *Public Books*, https://www.publicbooks.org/now-the-humanities-can-disrupt-ai
- Firth, Niall & Mat Honan, eds. (2022). "AI Colonialism" [series], *MIT Technology Review* https://www.technologyreview.com/supertopic/ai-colonialism-supertopic (read introduction and at least one case study)

3   9/14   Discussion of AI Activity
No discussion posts; AI Activity due

4   9/21   Being, Online
- Hine, Christine. (2015). *Ethnography for the Internet: Embedded, Embodied, and Everyday*. Bloomsbury, esp. pp. 27–54 & 85–88.
- Tufekci, Zeynep. (2017). "We're Building a Dystopia Just to Make People Click on Ads." *TED.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iFTWM7HV2UI
- Bali, Maha. (2019). "Reimagining Digital Literacies from a Feminist Perspective in a Postcolonial Context" *Media and Communication* 7(2): 69-81. http://dx.doi.org/10.17645/mac.v7i2.1935
- Trust and Safety Teaching Consortium https://stanfordio.github.io/TeachingTrustSafety

5   9/28   Governance
- Zuboff, Shoshana. (2015). "Big Other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects of an Information Civilization." *Journal of Information Technology* (30): 75–89. https://doi.org/10.1057/jit.2015.5

- Burrell, Jenna & Marion Fourcade (2021). "The Society of Algorithms." *Annual Review of Sociology* 47(1): 213–37. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-090820-020800
- DW Documentary (2022). "Fake News, Propaganda, and Conspiracy Theories," YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDtFpGfORpE
- Aouragh, Miriyam & Paula Chakravartty (2016). "Infrastructures of Empire: Towards a Critical Geopolitics of Media and Information Studies," *Media, Culture & Society* 38(4): 559–75, https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443716643007

Optional:
- Vaidhyanathan, Siva. (2005). "Critical information studies: a bibliographic manifesto" *Cultural Studies* 20(2/3): 292–315. http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=788984
- Tai, Qiuqing. (2014). "China's Media Censorship: A Dynamic and Diversified Regime." *Journal of East Asian Studies* 14: 185–209
- Lessig, Lawrence. (1999). "Open code and open societies: values of internet governance," *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 74, 101–116. http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/works/lessig/final.PDF

6   10/5   **Design**

- Pincus, John. (2018). "Gender HCI, Feminist HCI, Post-Colonial Computing, Anti-Oppressive Design, and Design Justice" *A Change is Coming* (Medium) https://medium.com/a-change-is-coming/gender-hci-feminist-hci-and-post-colonial-computing-f955a4054c89
- Costanza-Chock, Sasha. (2020). "Introduction: #TravelingWhileTrans, Design Justice, and Escape from the Matrix of Domination" in *Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need*. https://design-justice.pubpub.org/pub/ap8rgw5e/release/1
- Crawford, Kate & Vladan Joler. (2018). "Anatomy of an AI System: The Amazon Echo As An Anatomical Map of Human Labor, Data, and Planetary Resources," *AI Now Institute and Share Lab*. http://www.anatomyof.ai
- Simmons, Anjuan. (2015). "Technology Colonialism." *Model View Culture* 27. https://modelviewculture.com/pieces/technology-colonialism

Optional:
- Talja, Sanna & Jenna Hartel. (2007). "Revisiting the user-centered turn in information science research: an intellectual history perspective," *Information Research* 12(4). http://InformationR.net/ir/12-4/colis/colis04.html
- Sayers, Jentry. (2018). "Before You Make a Thing: Some Tips for Approaching Technology and Society." https://jentery.github.io/ts200v2/notes.html

7   10/12   **Culture**

- Mbembe, Achille. (2002) "The Power of the Archive and its Limits" in *Refiguring the Archive*, eds. Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid, and Razia Saleh (Springer)
- Macdonald, Sharon. (2015). "Is 'Difficult Heritage' Still Difficult?" *Museum International* 67: 6–22
- Berry, Dorothy. (2021). "The House Archives Built." *up//root*. June 22, 2021. https://www.uproot.space/features/the-house-archives-built
- Raval, Noopur (2019). "An Agenda for Decolonizing Data Science." *spheres: Journal for Digital Cultures* 5. https://spheres-journal.org/contribution/an-agenda-for-decolonizing-data-science

Optional:
- Schwartz, Joan M. & Terry Cook. (2002). "Archives, records, and power: the making of modern memory," *Archival Science* 2: 1–19

- Rosenzweig, Roy. (2003). "Scarcity or abundance? Preserving the past in a digital era," *The American Historical Review* 108(3): 735–763
- Hamilton, Amber M. (2020) "A Genealogy of Critical Race and Digital Studies: Past, Present, and Future." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 6(3): 292–301.

8 10/19 **Ethics & Technology Forum**
- Broussard, Meredith. (2023) *More than a Glitch: Confronting Race, Gender, and Ability Bias in Tech,* MIT Press.

SI's Fourth Annual Ethics & Technology Forum – Oct 20, 4:30pm

9 10/26 **Infrastructure**
- Ensmenger, Nathan. (2018). "The Environmental History of Computing." *Technology and Culture* 59 (4S): S7–33. https://doi.org/10.1353/tech.2018.0148
- Lisa Nakamura. (2014). "Indigenous Circuits: Navajo Women and the Racialization of Early Electronic Manufacture," *American Quarterly* 66(4): 919–41, https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/undergraduate/modules/fulllist/first/en122/lecturelist2019-20/nakamura_indigenous-circuits.pdf
- Share Lab, "Invisible Infrastructures" https://labs.rs/en/category/invisible-infrastructures (choose one)
- Mattern, Shannon. (2014). "Libraries as Infrastructure," *Places* https://placesjournal.org/article/library-as-infrastructure

Optional:
- Driscoll, Kevin. (2012). "From punch cards to 'big data': a social history of database populism." *Communication +1* 1. http://scholarworks.umass.edu/cpo/vol1/iss1/4
- Keller, Michael & Josh Neufeld. (2015). "Terms of service: understanding our role in the world of big data." *Al Jazeera America*. http://projects.aljazeera.com/2014/terms-of-service/#1
- Aouragh, Miriyam & Paula Chakravartty. (2016). "Infrastructures of Empire: Towards a Critical Geopolitics of Media and Information Studies." *Media, Culture & Society* 38(4): 559–75. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443716643007

Book choices due by Nov 1

10 11/2 **Library Instruction Session**
No readings assigned

11 11/9 **Management and the Information Workforce**
- Adler, Paul, Linda C. Forbes & Hugh Willmott (2007). "Critical management studies." *The Academy of Management Annals* 1: 119–79
- Tadajewski, Mark, Pauline Maclaran, Elizabeth Parsons & Martin Parker (2011). *Key Concepts in Critical Management Studies*. London: Sage Publications.
  Read Introduction and three entries of your choice.

Optional:
- Cope, Jonathan. (2014). "Neoliberalism and library & information science." *Progressive Librarian* 43: 67–80. http://www.progressivelibrariansguild.org/PL/PL43/067.pdf
- Fournier, Valérie & Chris Grey. (2000). "At the critical moment: Conditions and prospects for critical management studies." *Human Relations* 53(1): 7–32
- Neilson, Tai (2018). "Unions in Digital Labour Studies: A Review of Information Society and Marxist Autonomist Approaches" *tripleC* 16(2): 882–900. https://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/article/view/1065

12 11/16 **Research Methods & Ethics**

- McGrath, Joseph. (1994). "Methodology matters: doing research in the behavioral and social sciences." Original paper
- Held, Mirjam B. E. (2019). "Decolonizing Research Paradigms in the Context of Settler Colonialism: An Unsettling, Mutual, and Collaborative Effort." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918821574
- PERCS: The Program for Ethnographic Research & Community Studies. "The ethics of fieldwork." Elon University. https://www.elon.edu/u/academics/percs/wp-content/uploads/sites/527/2017/09/EthicsModuleforWeb.pdf

Optional:
- Ragin, Charles & Howard S. Becker. (1992). *What is a Case?: Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*. Cambridge University Press. Ch. 1, 5
- Creswell, John W. (2008). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed-Methods Approaches*, 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications. Chs. 8–10
- Rosa, Jonathan. (2018). "When Decolonial Perspectives Ground Your Research, They Completely Transform Questions, Methods, Analyses, Modes of Representation, Proposed Interventions, and Political Commitments. A Thread…" *Twitter*. https://threadreaderapp.com/thread/1050775828076720128.html

13   11/23   **NO CLASS—Thanksgiving Break**

14   11/30   **Writing Day**
Sign up for conference with professor

15   12/7   **Review Paper Workshop**

16   12/14   **Review Paper Workshop**

Revised papers due by Dec 18