

INFO 215: Social Aspects of Information Systems

College of Computing and Informatics
Drexel University
Fall 2022

Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 5:00pm – 6:20pm Eastern
Classroom: 3675 Market St., Rm. # 1056

Instructor: John S. Seberger
Office: #1109, 3675 Market St.
Office Hours: Thursday 12:00pm – 2:00pm; Also by Appointment.
Email: jss436@drexel.edu

Teaching Assistant: Abass Ahmed
Office: TBD
Office Hours: TBD
Email: aoa73@drexel.edu

Note: Email is the best way to contact us. Please send questions about the class to Abass and cc John on the email. This will ensure that you receive the promptest response possible. Please include a succinct and descriptive email subject. I (John) do not usually check email after 6pm.

We recognize that being a student is sometimes very stressful, but Abass and I are on your side. Neither one of us is draconian. In fact, I think you'll find that we're both pretty reasonable people – things happen, and we get it. We'll talk more about this on the first day of class.

Pro Tip: Please **consult the syllabus for answers to any questions before emailing us** 😊

Part I

THE BASICS

Course Description:

INFO 215 introduces some of the social issues involved in information systems design and use, such as personal computing, telecommuting, computers in education, the privacy and security of stored and transmitted information, information ownership and copyright, and the interaction of high technology, employment, and class structure. When you have completed this course, you should be able to:

- Describe the concepts of the information society, the information industry, and the information profession, as a context for becoming familiar with a broad range of social, economic, political, and legal issues affecting information systems.
- Analyze interactions between emerging technologies and social systems.
- Analyze social, economic, political, and economic aspects of information systems.
- Describe the societal context in which information professionals work.

Course Content:

The course includes lectures, discussions of readings, and interactive activities. Coursework involves: (a) reading and analyzing articles, blog posts, videos, and other assigned materials; (b) connecting these materials with your personal experiences; (c) completing written assignments, participating in in-class and out-of-class discussions and learning activities. Active participation is a key component of this course. This is a course about social issues, so you're going to have to be social!

Course Readings:

There is no textbooks for this course. The readings listed on the schedule and any other announced in class will be available online or made available on Blackboard.

Grading:

The following items will contribute to your final grade:

- Assignment 1 25%
- Assignment 2 25%
- Assignment 3 25%
- Weekly class attendance and participation 25%

Late adders are required to complete all assignments.

Grades will be issued as letter grades following the Drexel grading scale:

<https://drexel.edu/provost/policies/grades/>

Grade	Points
A	4.0
A-	3.67
B+	3.33
B	3.0
B-	2.67
C+	2.33
C	2.0
C-	1.67
D+	1.33
D	1.0
F	0.0

Grade Appeals:

To appeal a grade received on an assignment, submit a written (email) description of why you think the grade is in error. I will begin a review of the assignment in question and will re-grade the assignment from scratch. **Please note:** such a review process may result in a higher grade, the same grade, or a lower grade (if, for example, I find errors in content that I had not previously considered).

Basic Grading Standards for Written Assignments:

A = Goes above mastery of facts and ideas presented in class and presents original ideas. Creatively synthesizes class readings and class discussions. Submitted materials are well-developed.

B = Demonstrates understanding of the course materials and ideas presented in class. Exhibits few miscomprehensions of course material, but presentation is somewhat less developed.

C = Meets most expectations but some materials is miscomprehended, contains errors, or lacks significant depth of presentation.

D = Misses or insufficiently addresses parts of the assignment.

F = Assignment is missing or plagiarized.

Readings:

Complete all readings and/or listening/viewing listed on the syllabus **before the class date** under which they're listed. They'll help you to understand the classes and provide you with meaningful content to contribute to class discussions and activities. You'll also find the readings helpful for completing course assignments. You should use them as references for your assignments.

Assignments:

Read and follow all assignment instructions carefully. General formatting guidelines are presented below; specific formatting requirements are described in the Assignments document on Blackboard. Assignments will be turned in and graded once. Late assignments will be penalized by one full letter grade.

Please submit all written assignments in PDF format. You can use whatever word-processing software you like (e.g., Overleaf, Word, Google Docs, etc.) to write assignments, but to avoid interoperability issues, please submit as PDFs. Before submitting your PDF, please check that it opens successfully in Adobe, Preview, or Firefox.

Writing

Your writing should be clear, concise, readable, and free from spelling and grammar errors. If English is not your first language, note this on your assignments, and I will take this into consideration.

If you need or would like writing assistance, please contact Drexel Writing Center: 0032 MacAlister, 215.895.6633, www.drexel.edu/writincenter. They are open Mondays through Thursdays from 9am to 9pm, and on Fridays from 9am to 4pm.

Assignment formatting:

Unless otherwise specified in an individual assignment, written assignments should be formatted as follows:

- 12-pt font, standard font (e.g., Times New Roman, Helvetica, Arial, etc., etc. **Note:** serif fonts [e.g., Times New Roman] are generally better for prose.)
- 1-inch margins all around
- Double-spaced

CLASS POLICIES

Attendance and Participation

Participation is a critical aspect of this course and will constitute 25% of your grade. Regular class attendance is therefore required. But, as I said above, sometimes things happen. As such, you may miss two classes without penalty. (Note: Please do not interpret this to mean, “Oh, cool, I can skip two classes just because I don’t feel like going.”) If you miss more than two classes, your participation grade will go down 1.25% points for each class missed.

Note: just showing up to class does not constitute full participation. You are expected to contribute to class discussion, take active part in small-group activities, and show active engagement with the material in order to receive an A for class participation.

Every class includes material relevant to understanding social aspects of information systems. If you miss a class, you can watch the recording and review the PowerPoint slides. However, viewing lectures/slides online and after the fact has no impact on your participation grade.

Late adders are required to complete all assignments and to be familiar with all course materials missed.

Academic Honesty (Honestly...)

Any incidence of plagiarism or other academic dishonesty will result in an **automatic F for the course**. Do not plagiarize from anywhere, including articles, class handouts, other students, websites, work you have submitted to other courses, etc. All work you turn in must be your own original work for this course. Quotes from others’ work must be properly cited.

Any assignment that includes plagiarized material, including using someone else’s work of your own work from another course, will result in course failure and reporting of the incident to the college and to the university. No excuses will be accepted. It’s up to you to be familiar with counts as plagiarism. Here are some suggested sources for understanding plagiarism:

- https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/teacher_and_tutor_resources/preventing_plagiarism/avoiding_plagiarism/index.html
- <https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/avoiding-plagiarism>

A note of explanation: I know that all of this stuff about plagiarism may seem draconian. But there are good reasons for it. First, people deserve credit for their work. It is not ethical to submit someone else’s work, or even the work of an AI text generator, as your own. Second, think about it: you’re here, you’re paying to be here in order to attain some kind of self-improvement (e.g., a broader worldview, viability on the job market, etc.). It just doesn’t make sense that waste an opportunity you’re paying for by cheating. To quote The Beatles, “The love you take is equal to the love you make.” In other words, you get what you give. I have found this to be true in every good-faith situation I’ve ever been in. I do understand the occasionally tremendous pressure that students feel to get “great” grades. If you find yourself weighed down by that pressure to such an extent that it is untenable, I would encourage you to take advantage of any number of the well-being resources that Drexel makes available to its students. Do your best. That’s all anyone can reasonably expect of you.

A note about collaborative work: Studying together or providing one another feedback on assignments is not dishonest; in fact, it is highly encouraged! If you want to work with a partner on your assignments, that's fine. You'll both receive the same grade on the assignment.

Drexel Academic Integrity Policy:

https://drexel.edu/studentlife/community_standards/code-of-conduct/academic-integrity-policy/

Add/Drop Policy:

University policies apply: <https://drexel.edu/policies/policy/Course-Add-Drop/>

Course Withdrawal:

University policies apply: <https://drexel.edu/provost/policies/course-withdrawal/>

Course Communications:

Blackboard and your official university email address will be used for all course communication. You are responsible for the correct submission of your work via Blackboard.

Incompletes:

Incomplete grades for the term will be issued at the professor's discretion and will be issued only in extreme cases, after the student has worked with the professor to try to complete the work during the term. Incompletes will be given only to students whose completed coursework has been qualitatively satisfactory, but who are unable to complete all course requirements because of serious illness or other extenuating circumstances beyond their control.

Students should notify the professor via email as soon as they realize they are having trouble completing work on time. Note that the decision whether or not to allow an incomplete is up to the professor, not the student, and can only be issued if at least 70% of all coursework has already been turned in.

University policies apply: https://drexel.edu/provost/policies/incomplete_grades/

Course Evaluations:

Course evaluations will be available online toward the end of the term. Please complete them since they serve an important role in improving the quality of education at Drexel. (Pro Tip: Please avoid trivial comments. Examples of trivial comments I've received in the past: "Seberger should wear his hair down more." Such comments are not only unproductive, but they're also super uncomfortable.)

Provisions for Students with Disabilities:

Students requesting accommodations due to a disability at Drexel University need to request a current [Accommodations Verification Letter \(AVL\)](#) in the ClockWork database before accommodations can be made. These requests are received by Disability Resources (DR), who then issues the AVL to the appropriate contacts. For additional information please consult: <https://drexel.edu/disability-resources/about/overview/>. DR can be contacted by phone at 215.895.1401, or by email at disability@drexel.edu.

Part II

Course Schedule (Syllabus)

Week 1a: Tuesday, Sept 20

Class Overview; Discussion

Week 1b: Thursday, Sept 22

What is Society?

Readings due:

- Brey, P. (2018). The strategic role of technology in a good society. *Technology in Society*, 52, 39-45. [Pdf is posted on Blackboard.] (6 pages)

Week 2a: Tuesday, Sept 27

Approaching Information in Society

Readings due:

- Ackoff, R. (1989). From Data to Wisdom. (Pdf posted in Blackboard.)
- Anderson, (2006). End of Theory. Wired Magazine. (Pdf posted in Blackboard.)
- (Watch in Class) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUSZfEBTwRc>
 - Note: This is the video you'll be writing about in Assignment 1 ☺

Week 2b: Thursday, Sept 29

Classic sociotechnical approaches and key ideas.

Readings due:

- Bowker G.C. & Star, S.L. (1999). To Classify is Human, pages 1-16. (Pdf is posted on Blackboard.)
- Wong et al (2020). Infrastructural Speculations: Tactics for Designing and Interrogating Lifeworlds. CHI'2020. (Pdf posted on Blackboard.)

Week 3a: Tuesday, Oct 4

Current issues in sociotechnical thought: User Tracking. Facial Recognition.

Readings due:

- Visit: <https://privacybadger.org/>
- Visit: <https://www.ghostery.com>
- Chandnani, A., & Agosto, D. E. (In press for 2022.) Algorithms: Decoding bias in media messages and systems. In B. De Abreu (Ed.), *Media literacy for justice: Lessons for changing the world* (pp. 120-124). Chicago: American Library Association. [Pdf is posted on Blackboard.]
- Stark, L. (2019). Facial Recognition is the Plutonium of AI. <https://dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.1145/3313129>

Week 3b: Thursday, Oct 6 (continued on next page)

Just Plain Creepy

Readings due:

- Harwell, D. (February 18, 2020). Ring and Nest helped normalize American surveillance and turned us into a nation of voyeurs. *Washington Post*,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/02/18/ring-nest-surveillance-doorbell-camera/>. [Pdf is posted on Blackboard.]

- Zuboff, Shoshanna (2015). Big Other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects an Information Civilization. Journal of Information Technology. (Pdf is posted on Blackboard.)
- Seberger et al., (2022) Still Creepy After All These Years: The Normalization of Affective Discomfort in App Use. (Pdf is posted on Blackboard)

Week 4a: Tuesday, Oct 11

Technology evolution and the politics of information technology.

Readings due:

- Buchanan, R. (1992). Wicked Problems in Design Thinking. Design Issues. (Pdf is posted on Blackboard.)
- Knobel, C. & Bowker, G. (2011). Values in Design. (Pdf is posted on Blackboard.)
- Winner, L. R. (1980). Do artifacts have politics? *Daedalus*, 121-136. [Pdf is posted on Blackboard.]

Week 4b: Thursday, Oct 13

DUE Assignment 1

Web 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0.

Readings due:

- Allyn, B. (November 21, 2021). People are talking about Web3. Is it the Internet of the future or just a buzzword? NPR, <https://www.npr.org/2021/11/21/1056988346/web3-internet-jargon-or-future-vision>. (read and listen online, please)
- Finley, K., & Barber, G. (July 9, 2019). The *Wired guide to blockchain*” *Wired*, <https://www.wired.com/story/guide-blockchain/> (Pdf is posted on Blackboard, too)
- Ovide, S. (October 28, 2021). Google and Facebook’s Ad Empires. New York Times On Tech. [Pdf is posted on Blackboard.]
- Ovide, S. (November 11, 2021). Why the internet is turning into QVC. New York Times On Tech. [Pdf is posted on Blackboard.]

Week 5a: Tuesday, Oct 18

Technological utopias and dystopias, pt. 1.

Readings due:

- Naughton, J. (February 26, 2020). “Slouching towards dystopia: The rise of surveillance capitalism and the death of privacy.” *New Statesman*. <https://www.newstatesman.com/2020/02/slouching-towards-dystopia-rise-surveillance-capitalism-and-death-privacy>.
- Seberger & Patil 2021. Post-COVID Public Health Surveillance and Privacy Expectations in the United States: Scenario-Based Interview Study. JMIR mHealth uHealth. (Pdf is posted on Blackboard.)

Week 5b: Thursday, Oct 20

Technological utopias and dystopias, pt. 2.

No additional readings. It’s midterm season. Take a breather.

Week 6a: Tuesday, Oct 25 (continued on next page)

Information technology for work support, and the gig economy.

Readings due:

- Allyn, B. (October 26, 2020). Uber fires drivers based on “racially biased” star rating system, lawsuit claims. NPR, <https://www.npr.org/2020/10/26/927851281/uber-fires-drivers-based-on-racially-biased-star-rating-system-lawsuit-claims>.
- Anderson, M., McClain, C., Faverio, M., & Gelles-Watnick, R. (December 8, 2021). The state of gig work in 2021. Pew Research. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/12/08/the-state-of-gig-work-in-2021/>.
- Hamari, J., Sjöklint, M., & Ukkonen, A. (2016). The sharing economy: Why people participate in collaborative consumption. *Journal of the Association for information Science & Technology*, 67(9), 2047-2059. [Pdf is posted on Blackboard.]

Week 6b: Thursday, Oct 27

Sociotechnical aspects of a world health crisis: fake news and information privacy.

Readings due:

- Drexel University (February 5, 2020). Learn from the Best: Denise Agosto on fake news. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xqYsOneOtU>.
- Hoover, L. (November 23, 2020). Living in the filter bubble. *ALA Intellectual Freedom Blog*. <https://www.oif.ala.org/oif/?p=23585>.
- Tau, B. (March 29, 2020). Government tracking how people move around in coronavirus pandemic. *Wall Street Journal*. [Pdf is posted on Blackboard.]

Week 7a: Tuesday, Nov 1

Information privacy, pt. 1. Or, The Zombie Discourse

Readings due:

- Seberger et al (2021). Empowering Resignation: There’s an App for That. CHI’21. (Pdf is posted on Blackboard)
- John, N. & Peters, B. (2017). Why Privacy Keeps Dying: The Trouble with Talk About the End of Privacy. *Information, Communication, and Society*. (Pdf is posted in Blackboard.)

Week 7b: Thursday, Nov 3

DUE Assignment 2

Privacy, pt. 2. California to the rescue? Information ethics.

Readings due:

- Mork, M. M. (December 22, 2022) The California Consumer Privacy Act. 2020 year in review. *National Law Review*, <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/california-consumer-privacy-act-ccpa-2020-year-review>.
- Warzel, C. (February 11, 2020). The Privacy Project: When China hacks you. *New York Times Privacy Project*. [Pdf is posted on Blackboard.]

Week 8a: Tuesday, Nov 8 No class. Go vote.

Week 8b: Thursday, Nov 11

TBD. Guest Lecture from Abass Ahmed!

Week 9a: Tuesday, Nov 15

DUE: Choose technology to write about for Assignment 3.

Readings:

- Wells, G., Horwitz, J., & Seetharaman, D. (September 14, 2021). Facebook knows Instagram is toxic for teen girls, company documents show. *The Wall Street Journal*. [Pdf is posted on Blackboard.]
- Wharton School. (April 17, 2020). How Social Media is Shaping Political Campaigns. <https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/how-social-media-is-shaping-political-campaigns/>. Listen to the podcast at the top of the page.
- Seberger & Bowker. Humanistic Infrastructure Studies.

Week 9b: Thursday Nov 17

Copyright and DRM. (In-class video viewing + whosampled.com activity)

Readings due:

- Lessig, L. (2004). Introduction to “Remix”. (Pdf is posted on Blackboard.)
- <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/17/107>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Upright_Music,_Ltd._v._Warner_Bros._Records_Inc.

Week 10a: Tuesday, Nov 22

In Class Activity: Work on Assignment 3

Week 10b: NO CLASS Thanksgiving

Week 11a: Tuesday, Nov 29

Course review.

Seberger AMA (Ask Me Anything) Lecture

Week 11b: Thursday, Dec 1

Course review.

DUE Assignment 3 (Before Class)

DUE Class Participation Self-Assessment (by 11:59pm)

Small Group Discussions about Assignment 3