



**Syllabus
Information Seeking Behaviors
(LIS 4301)**

1. Course Information

Course #/Title: LIS 4301: Information Seeking Behaviors (3 Credits)

Quarter: Fall 2013, Tuesday 7:00 - 9:20pm; KAR 306

Meetings: September 9, 2013 – November 21, 2013

2. Faculty Information

Instructor: Shimelis Assefa, PhD.

Contact Information: P. 303-871-6072 Email: sassefa@du.edu
Office: KAR 244

Office Hours: Tuesday 4:00 – 6pm, and other times by appointment.
During my office hours, I am available for chat in my virtual office on Blackboard.

3. Course Description

This course explores various models of information-seeking behavior, and how information delivery systems can be designed to meet the needs of users in a variety of information agencies and settings. It examines assessment and evaluation tools used to judge information system effectiveness.

On extended note, the primary goal for this course is to explore the conceptual frameworks that provide adequate account for human information behavior. By focusing on information related phenomena this course further explicates the theories, methods, models, paradigms, and perspectives surrounding human-information interaction including how people need, seek, manage, and use information in different situations. In general, this course seeks to understand human-information interaction and related behaviors.

4. Course Materials, Highly Recommended and Suggested

Readings and additional resources for each learning modules can be accessed through the Blackboard site.

Required textbook:

Case, D.O. (2012). *Looking for Information: A Survey of Research on Information Seeking, Needs, and Behavior*. 3rd ed. Howard House, UK: Emerald.

Highly Recommended:

Fisher, K.E., Erdelez, S., & McKechnie, L. (Eds.). (2005). *Theories of Information Behavior*. Medford, NJ: Information Today, Inc.

5. Learning Outcomes

Upon satisfactory completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Build a conceptual framework of human-information interaction
- Review theories, models, and paradigms in the study of information seeking behavior
- Use theories of information behavior to inform the design of information systems and services
- Discuss patterns of information seeking behavior among different community of users
- Learn methodologies for conducting information seeking research and user studies.

6. Method of Instruction

This is 3 credit hours course that meets face-to-face every Tuesday from 7 to 9:20pm. The method of instruction places emphasis on collaborative learning where active engagement of students is sought. Within a weekly structured outline, the focus will be more on discussions and knowledge creation. As part of this pedagogical strategy, there will be a weekly activity called “Course Preparation Assignment or CPA,” that provides students an opportunity to come to class prepared.

7. Methods of Assessment

All assignments are to be completed from within the Blackboard site. Please review descriptions of individual assignments that are available in the Assignments page and in the Syllabus page as one downloadable file..

Points Possible:

Assignments	Weight (percentage)	Points
Icebreaker	5%	100
Class Participation	5%	100
Course Preparation Assignments X 8	40%	800
Methods Assignment	15%	100

Final Project	35%	200
Total	100%	1300

Evaluation: Grades will be based on points accumulated and converted to 100 percentile according to the following scale:

Grades	Percent	Grades	Percent
A = 4.0	93 - 100	C = 2.0	73 - 76
A- = 3.7	90 - 92	C- = 1.7	70 - 72
B+ = 3.3	87 - 89	D+ = 1.3	67 - 69
B = 3.0	83 - 86	D = 1.0	63 - 66
B- = 2.7	80 - 82	D- = 0.7	60 - 62
C+ = 2.3	77 - 79	F = 0.0	<= 59

8. Course and Related DU Policies

Student Responsibilities. As a student, you are expected to challenge yourself, to actively participate in your education, and to search both inside and outside of the classroom for answers to your questions. Answers are rarely black and white at this level of study. I expect you to actively participate in the classroom, to listen and to discuss ideas with your colleagues. I expect you to read all assigned materials, and research additional sources for more information. The sources I have chosen are only some of those available in the field; you are encouraged to find other resources and share them with the class. Most importantly, you are expected to learn, and to leave this course with new ideas. My goal is to provide you with the foundation to continue to explore these ideas when you leave the classroom.

Faculty Responsibilities. My primary role is to serve as a facilitator in a manner that supports meaningful learning. I will present information related to the topics covered, help you synthesize materials assigned for the course. I will both ask and answer questions; this class is your opportunity to discuss the issues. I am available outside of class time to answer questions concerning assignments and topics covered in class. I will also give you a grade. My expectations for your performance are clearly outlined in this syllabus. If anything appears unclear, or if you have any questions, please ask me. Most of all, my role is to encourage you to learn -- *encourage, not force*. You will take from this course what you put into it. I hope you will take advantage of the opportunity to learn in this class, from me, from the materials on the subject, and from your colleagues.

If you have special needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act and need any test or course materials provided in an alternative format, notify the instructors.

HONOR CODE STATEMENT

All members of the University community are entrusted with the responsibility of observing certain ethical goals and values as they relate to academic integrity. Essential to the fundamental purpose of the University is the commitment to the principles of truth and honesty. The Honor Code is designed so that responsibility for upholding these principles lies with the individual as well as the entire community.

The Honor Code fosters and advances an environment of ethical conduct in the academic community of the University, the foundation of which includes the pursuit of academic honesty and integrity. Through an atmosphere of mutual respect we enhance the value of our education and bring forth the highest standard of academic excellence. Members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, administrators and trustees, must not commit any intentional misrepresentation or deception in academic or professional matters

9. Course Schedules

Week	Topic/Readings** ** See Respective Modules on Bb for Readings	Assignments, Start dates and due dates
1 9/10	Introduction to Information Behavior. (Readings: Case, D.O. Chapters 1 & 2)	Icebreaker: How much information? due 9/16, 11:59pm
2 9/17	The Concept of Information and the Different Senses of Information. (Readings: Case, D.O. Chapter 3) Additional Reading on Bb	Class preparation assignments [CPAs] - weeks 2 to 9 – due each week.
3 9/24	Information Needs and Information Seeking Activity. (Readings: Case, D.O. Chapters 4 & 5)	Start working on the Final Project, due 11/15, 11:59pm
4 10/1	Models of Information Behavior. (Readings: Case, D.O. Chapter 6)	
5 10/8	Theories of Information Behavior. (Readings: Case, D.O. Chapter 7)	
6 10/15	Methods for Studying Information Behavior. (Readings: Case, D.O. Chapters 8 & 9)	Methods Assignment due 10/28, 11:59pm
7 10/22	Information Behavior Research in different Contexts: By Occupational Category. (Readings: Case, D.O. Chapter 11)	
8 10/29	Information Behavior Research in different Contexts: By Demographic Category. (Readings: Case, D.O. Chapter 12)	
9 11/5	Application of Information Behavior Research to Information Systems Design. (Readings: Ding & Lin, Chapter 5)	
10 11/12	Final project presentation Wrap-up; Course Evaluation	Final Project Presentation Final Project Paper due – 11/15, 11:59pm

LIS 4301: Information Seeking Behaviors Descriptions of Assignments | Fall 2013.

Icebreaker: How much Information? (5%)

How much information do you encounter in a day? Leaving aside the difficult issue of how to assess images (i.e., what you see around you or on television screens), let's just think about amounts simply in terms of words. If you could count up all the words that you hear or read in a typical day, about how many thousand that would be?

Assume that most half-hour television or radio broadcasts contain about 3000 words, that newspaper articles are about 1000 words long, that there are about 500 words on a typical book page, and that people speak (conservatively) at roughly 100 words per minute. Consider what you hear, see or read in the course of a typical work day, starting with any news you may read or listen to in the morning and continuing through to the last things you hear or read before you fall asleep. Don't forget to consider the following: conversations you have with others, announcements or conversations that you overhear, signs and billboards that you pass along the way, and of course, conscious watching, listening, or reading of news and entertainment.

Post your reflection on the appropriate discussion board area on Blackboard > Module 1.

Course Preparation Assignments [CPAs]

Let me preface the description of CPA by saying that it is a combined effort by all of us that makes a great class.

If you agree with the above statement, here is an invitation for you to do your part. By CPA, you expose yourself with the course material firsthand. In short, CPA is all about reading and preparing before coming to class. CPA is adopted from the paper by *David Yamane, "Course Preparation Assignments: A Strategy for Creating Discussion-Based Courses," Teaching Sociology 34, July, 2006, 236-248.*

Starting week 2, you will be provided with clear strategy how and what you need to do to complete CPA. The strategy will have the following components:

- 1) Introduction – what is important to learn for the week
- 2) Objective – what you will be required to do
- 3) Assignment – the actual material to read, question to answer, or concept to explain. Please don't limit yourself to the specific material assigned for the CPA assignment. For each module, the required textbook provides list of further readings. Using these readings as a starting point, go ahead and explore to expose yourself to other materials to get a wider and deeper understanding of the topic each week.
- 4) Submission – what you do at the beginning of class
- 5) Grade – grade point available for each CPA and due date.

On Blackboard, in respective weekly modules – you will find details of the CPA.

Week 2: Course Preparation Assignment, CPA

Week 2: CPA, (5%)

- 1) **Introduction** – what is important to learn for the week
 - a. learn the many different senses and meanings of information.
 - 2) **Objective** – what you will be required to do
 - a. review definitions, concepts, and the different senses/meanings of information. Understand the five problematic issues in defining information.
 - 3) **Assignment** – the actual material to read, question to answer, or concept to explain
 - a. read – Case, D.O. Chapter 3 and Chapter 1 The Many Meanings of Information – from the additional reading titled - Information Concepts: From Books to Cyberspace Identities (Blackboard > Module 2):– and reflect on the following points
 - i. discuss the five senses of information.
 - ii. Information can be a commodity but does not always “behave” in the same way as other commodities. Explain this statement.
 - 4) **Submission** –what you do to complete the assignment
 - a. Post your reflection/answer (not more than two pages, single-spaced) addressing the items in (3) above on Blackboard in the appropriate Blog area. When you come to class, be ready to discuss your reflection. No formal presentation required. It is always a plus to respond to other student’s post.
 - 5) **Grade** – Assignment is worth 5% of your overall grade. **Due 9/16, 11:59pm**
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Week 3: CPA, (5%)

- 1) **Introduction** – what is important to learn for the week
 - a. learn about different concepts and definitions of information needs and information seeking.
- 2) **Objective** – what you will be required to do
 - a. gain a very good understanding of the psychology of “need” and other related concepts in information seeking such as – decision making, browsing, foraging, encountering, sharing, knowledge gap, selective exposure, avoidance, etc.
- 3) **Assignment** – the actual material to read, question to answer, or concept to explain
 - a. read – Case, D.O. Chapters 4 & 5.– and reflect on the following points
 - i. do people really “need” information, or is it just a by-product of other things we need? Consider the type of subjects and outcomes that are typical of primary education (i.e., what school systems try

to teach children from age 5 through 12). Are all of them directly related to another, more basic need, such as making a living? Are all of them really necessary, in your view?

- 4) **Submission** – what you do to complete the assignment
 - a. Post your reflection/answer (not more than two pages, single-spaced) addressing the items in (3) above on Blackboard in the appropriate Blog area. When you come to class, be ready to discuss your reflection. No formal presentation required. It is always a plus to respond to other student's post.
 - 5) **Grade** – Assignment is worth 5% of your overall grade. **Due 9/23, 11:59pm**
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Week 4: CPA, (5%)

- 1) **Introduction** – what is important to learn for the week
 - a. learn the different models proposed by scholars in the field that offer frameworks to investigate information behavior studies.
 - 2) **Objective** – what you will be required to do
 - a. describe one or two models in regards to the framework they offer to understand information seeking activity.
 - 3) **Assignment** – the actual material to read, question to answer, or concept to explain
 - a. read – Case, D.O. Chapter 6 – and answer the following question
 - i. which of the models depicted in the reading makes the most sense to you? Which factors are the most influential in your choice? The level of detail? The particular words chosen to describe the process? The emphasis – for example, written information, or everyday life information?
 - 4) **Submission** – what you do to complete the assignment
 - a. Post your reflection/answer (not more than two pages, single-spaced) addressing the items in (3) above on Blackboard in the appropriate Blog area. When you come to class, be ready to discuss your reflection. No formal presentation required. It is always a plus to respond to other student's post.
 - 5) **Grade** – Assignment is worth 5% of your overall grade. **Due 9/30, 11:59pm**
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Week 5: CPA, (5%)

- 1) **Introduction** – what is important to learn for the week
 - a. learn about the different theories put forward by scholars in the field to offer explanatory principles to study and understand information behavior.
- 2) **Objective** – what you will be required to do

- a. Identify and discuss one or two theories from the assigned reading (chapter 7 of the textbook).
 - 3) **Assignment** – the actual material to read, question to answer, or concept to explain
 - a. read – Case, D.O. Chapter 7 – and reflect on the following points
 - i. which of the theories depicted in the reading makes the most sense to you? Why? Is it due to the level of detail? The words chosen to describe the process? The emphasis – for example, formal written information versus everyday life information? The ease with which you can think of human behavior that seems to fit the theory? Make a case for why the particular theory you chose is the most useful of those described in this chapter.
 - 4) **Submission** –what you do to complete the assignment
 - a. Post your reflection/answer (not more than two pages, single-spaced) addressing the items in (3) above on Blackboard in the appropriate Blog area. When you come to class, be ready to discuss your reflection. No formal presentation required. It is always a plus to respond to other student's post.
 - 5) **Grade** – Assignment is worth 5% of your overall grade. **Due 10/7, 11:59pm.**
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Week 6: CPA, (5%)

- 1) **Introduction** – what is important to learn for the week
 - a. learn what information behavior research methods are and understand the different methods.
- 2) **Objective** – what you will be required to do
 - a. explain research methods in connection with information behavior study and identify the different methods available and their use.
- 3) **Assignment** – the actual material to read, question to answer, or concept to explain
 - a. read – Case, D.O. Chapters 8 & 9 – and reflect on the following points
 - i. if you were to begin a study of information seeking today, which methodological approach would you be most comfortable with, and why? Consider a group with which you are familiar – students in a particular discipline, members of an organization you belong to, or people who share your interest in a particular sport or hobby. How would you go about investigating their information needs and behaviors?
- 4) **Submission** –what you do to complete the assignment
 - a. Post your reflection/answer (not more than two pages, single-spaced) addressing the items in (3) above on Blackboard in the appropriate Blog

area. When you come to class, be ready to discuss your reflection. No formal presentation required. It is always a plus to respond to other student's post.

- 5) **Grade** – Assignment is worth 5% of your overall grade. **Due 10/14, 11:59pm**
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Week 7: CPA, (5%)

- 1) **Introduction** – what is important to learn for the week
 - a. learn how different people from different occupation behave when it comes to information seeking activity.
- 2) **Objective** – what you will be required to do
 - a. pick at least two professions from the reading for this week and discuss how these occupational groups are similar or different in their habits, preferences, and styles of their information seeking activity, including sources and channels.
- 3) **Assignment** – the actual material to read, question to answer, or concept to explain
 - a. read – Case, D.O. Chapter 11 – and reflect on the following questions
 - i. is it a problem that medical doctors so often choose not to pursue questions they have regarding diseases and treatments? Or is this just an unavoidable circumstance of being a busy professional whose time is highly valuable? How might a hospital or clinic make it easier for doctors to find the answers to questions that come up in the course of examining patients?
- 4) **Submission** – what you do to complete the assignment
 - a. Post your reflection/answer (not more than two pages, single-spaced) addressing the items in (3) above on Blackboard in the appropriate Blog area. When you come to class, be ready to discuss your reflection. No formal presentation required. It is always a plus to respond to other student's post.

- 6) **Grade** – Assignment is worth 5% of your overall grade. **Due 10/21, 11:59pm**
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Week 8: CPA, (5%)

- 1) **Introduction** – what is important to learn for the week
 - a. learn about information seeking practices across different social roles and demographic variables.
- 2) **Objective** – what you will be required to do
 - a. review and understand the different information behavior studies carried out taking social roles (e.g. consumers) and demographic characteristics (e.g., the elderly) into consideration.

- 3) **Assignment** – the actual material to read, question to answer, or concept to explain
 - a. read – Case, D.O. Chapter 12 – and reflect on the following points
 - i. make an argument for studying social role or type of person that has not yet been studied (or at least not so identified in the textbook). How common and widespread is the role or group? What special challenges does that type of role, or person, face/ what makes it worthy of study? What would be a good way of sampling that population? How would you go about studying it?
 - 4) **Submission** –what you do to complete the assignment
 - a. Post your reflection/answer (not more than two pages, single-spaced) addressing the items in (3) above on Blackboard in the appropriate Blog area. When you come to class, be ready to discuss your reflection. No formal presentation required. It is always a plus to respond to other student's post.
 - 5) **Grade** – Assignment is worth 5% of your overall grade. **Due 10/28, 11:59pm**
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Week 9: CPA, (5%)

- 1) **Introduction** – what is important to learn for the week
 - a. learn the significance of understanding user needs and information behavior to inform information systems design.
 - 2) **Objective** – what you will be required to do
 - a. understand the process of user research and the techniques used and how we can translate the data from research into system design artifacts.
 - 3) **Assignment** – the actual material to read, question to answer, or concept to explain
 - a. read – Ding & Lin, Chapter 5 (Blackboard > Module 9) – and reflect on the following points
 - i. consider any specific user groups (children, college students, doctors, etc.) and taking one library as an example, prepare a Persona for the user of your choice, taking searching, browsing, and/or asking as the task the user is completing when he/she visits the library site.
 - 4) **Submission** –what you do to complete the assignment
 - a. Post your reflection/answer (not more than two pages, single-spaced) addressing the items in (3) above on Blackboard in the appropriate Blog area. When you come to class, be ready to discuss your reflection. No formal presentation required. It is always a plus to respond to other student's post.
 - 5) **Grade** – Assignment is worth 5% of your overall grade. **Due 11/4, 11:59pm**
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Methods Assignment (15%)

On chapter 9 (see Table 9.1, p.223) of the textbook, there are several empirical studies that were cited. Choose one of these studies and locate the original article or chapter in which it was reported. Read it carefully and develop responses to the following questions:

- a. What kind of phenomenon or problem is being studied? In your view, does the researcher make good arguments as to why it is being studied? Does it seem important to you?
- b. Are definitions offered for the key terms and concepts used in the study? Is there any indication of how those words relate to one another? Does it explain how we know that the concepts really exist, and how to recognize and /or measure them?
- c. What has been left out of any literature review that precedes the study? What other literature might have been reviewed that you are aware of as being somewhat relevant to the subject of the study?
- d. Consider the choice of words used by the author to report the study. Is the language biased in any way – that is, slanted towards a particular view of people or the phenomenon being studied? An example would be words that suggest the persons studied are “lazy” in seeking information, or that assume that the only valid information is that from an institutional source.

Address each of the questions from (a) to (d) and submit your answer to the appropriate dropbox.

Assignment is due – October 27, 11:59 pm

Final Project: Information Seeking Behavior Research, 30%.

Individually or in groups of two, you are to carry out a quasi-research that focuses on information seeking behavior of specific user group. As you later discover from class discussions, investigating information seeking behavior of a certain user group is very common in the extant literature. Oftentimes, these specific user groups or community are constrained by certain characteristics, such as:

- Demographic –e.g. the elderly, children, women, immigrants, the poor, etc.
- Occupation – e.g. musicians, journalists, scientists, lawyers, nurses, etc.
- Life experiences, interest or beliefs – e.g. battered women, hobbies, political orientation, religion, ability/disability

In the past students who have taken this course completed high quality papers, including some that won second place in the ASIST best student paper competition. Examples of these research papers include:

- Information seeking behavior of Celiac disease patients
- Information seeking behavior of Gamers
- Information seeking behavior of HR Professionals,
- Information seeking behavior of twins, etc.

Using the above description as a background, your task is to identify a specific user group and carry out a small-scale study/research. Although all the components/stages of a typical research work are present, this is a small-scale study because of time and other

logistical reasons. A typical research progresses through the following five stages:

1. Introduction
2. Literature review
3. Methods
4. Results and Discussion
5. Conclusion

To better guide your study, adopt the following template. (Follow APA 6th edition format)

1. Title page – running head, title of your paper, your name, followed by institution name, i.e., University of Denver
2. Abstract page – usually the second page following the title page – provide one paragraph abstract/summary of your study/research, followed by 5-7 keywords
3. INTRODUCTION – to write the introduction, read appropriate papers that are the background to the particular work under investigation – and focus on
 - a. What is the problem – describe it, provide/summarize relevant research to provide context, key terms and concepts
 - b. Why is it important – review relevant research to provide rationale
 - c. What solution (or step toward a solution) do you propose – briefly describe your experiment, hypothesis, research questions, general design or method, justification of method if alternative exist.
4. LITERATURE REVIEW - a review of relevant and pertinent literature in the area of the topic you are investigating. By way of the literature review, you offer supporting account on what has been said and written about your topic. The writing process for the literature review requires serious planning and organizing. You need to search and select relevant literature for review; read, analyze, and synthesize the literature being reviewed; and write the first draft and edit the draft for completeness, cohesions, and correctness. I anticipate you will review adequate number of works (a minimum of ten and above).
5. METHODS – here provide enough detail for any future researcher to repeat your study and reproduce the results. In this section focus on
 - a. How you studied the problem – explain the scientific procedure, techniques of measurement and analysis (see table 8.1, p.204, in the textbook).
 - b. What material you used – describe the materials, subjects, and equipment, software (if any)
 - c. How did you proceed – explain the procedure, steps you took.
6. RESULTS & DISCUSSION – very important section of the research report
 - a. In the **Results** section you present your findings. Present the data, digested and condensed, with important trends extracted and described. Because the results comprise the new knowledge that you are contributing to the world, it is important that your findings be clearly and simply stated. The

Results should be short and sweet, without excessive verbiage.

- b. Here, Focus On:
 - i. For RESULTS – what did you observe - for each experiment or procedure – briefly describe experiment without detail of methods section; Report main results – supported by selected data – representative (most common) – best case – best examples of ideal or exception
 - ii. For DISCUSSION – what did your observation mean – summarize the most important findings at the beginning; what conclusions can you draw – for each major result – describe the patterns, principles, relationships results show; explain how your results relate to expectations and to literature cited in the Introduction – do they agree, contradict, or are they exceptions to the rule – explain plausibly any agreements; describe what additional research might resolve contradictions – or explain exceptions; How did your results fit into a broader context – suggest the theoretical implications of your results – suggest practical applications of your results – extend your findings to other situations – give the big picture – do your findings help us understand a broader topic related to your study.

7. CONCLUSION

- a. In this section, summarize your findings and the overall process of your research. Talk about the limitations of your study and try to make recommendations for future study. Your recommendations need to be specific such that someone in the future will continue to work on them. Provide a perspective in one paragraph about the implications of your study findings in terms of service delivery and/or information use by the user group under investigation.

Presentation is required. Prepare to present your work the last day of class on 11/12.

**The assignment is due – November 15, 11:59 pm.
Be prepared for class presentation on the last day of class.**
