Information Sources and Services in the Social Sciences
LIS523LE
Fall 2010

Course Overview

CONTACT INFORMATION
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I am most accessible through email. As a general rule, I will respond to course-related email within 24 hours. You can also reach me in my office at Eastern Illinois University using the phone number above. Please leave a detailed message along with a way for me to reach you.

DESCRIPTION:
Overview of the information needs and practices of researchers, practitioners, and the general public. Detailed consideration of disciplinary literatures and print and electronic reference materials. Advanced training in addressing reference questions and research problems in the social sciences.

OVERVIEW:
During the 25 years I’ve spent working in libraries, the one thing that I’m certain about is that the library world in always changing. To succeed in this profession you need to have a firm foundation in the basics, but then be able to apply that knowledge to new services, resources, and technologies. With that in mind I don’t expect to teach you everything you need to know about social science librarianship. Rather, we will be looking at how social scientists approach information and the kinds of sources they frequently consult. You will then be able to build upon that knowledge in whatever library you work in, or with whatever user population you serve.

This is graduate school in preparation for a complex information environment. Therefore the point is less about a quick answer and more about you thinking carefully and developing your ability to articulate your thinking. This will apply to the assignments and to the course discussions. As you explore resources and think about services you will want to consider what your user would want. This is also not a simple answer and will also change. While the tools are and resources available are ever changing, your ability to analyze these products and know how best to incorporate them into the library is what is most important.
My approach to librarianship and to this class is collaboration. While you may be working independently, there is always a community of others willing to share their knowledge with you. I know that each of us has something to contribute to the course and expect everyone to participate in discussion so that we can learn from each other. There are very rarely right and wrong answers. Your ability to succeed in this profession depends on how flexible you are in an ever changing environment and how well you can adapt to challenges while at the same time working as a team.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

The primary goals and objectives of the course are to help students:

- Develop an understanding of the information needs and information behavior of social scientists;

- Acquire knowledge of the major information sources and services available to social scientists;

- Learn about, and be prepared for, the various roles and responsibilities of social sciences information intermediaries in their quest for meeting the information needs of clients; and

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

Students are expected to attend all sessions in this course. If a student must miss a class because of an illness or family emergency, s/he should let the instructor know and make arrangements with classmates to get any class notes. Active and meaningful participation is a requirement of this course. Student participation grades will be assessed on the basis of regular attendance, participation in class discussion, and demonstration of familiarity with assigned readings.

ASSIGNMENTS:

The goals and objectives of the course will be achieved by completing a variety of tasks, including:

- **Readings and Class Participation:** While there will be some lecturing, LIS 523LE will mostly run like a seminar in which the focus will be on discussing assigned readings and projects and sharing of ideas and information. Four hour students will be assigned to lead a discussion.

- **Subject Area Introductions:** Each student will be expected to provide a general overview of a social science discipline. The class presentation will include (1) a survey
of the field including the major subfields; (2) various approaches to gathering information in that field; (3) key research concepts; (4) primary databases used; (5) major print resources. More information about this assignment will be provided in class.

- **Problem Sets**: The questions in these assignments are designed to familiarize you with: (1) important and popular social sciences information sources; (2) effective and efficient search strategies; and (3) resource evaluation methods.

- **Collection Development Policy**: Each student will write a brief collection development policy explaining how they will build a social science collection for their library. This will include how decisions will be made regarding the purchase of books, journals, and media, in print and electronic formats.

- **Targeted Research Guide**: A research guide is an organized list of articles, books, and other published and unpublished materials/information sources on a particular topic. Research guides bring together the ideas and work of many authors so that others could use them for advanced research. Each item listed in the guide is annotated in a descriptive and evaluative paragraph (50-100 words long). The annotations usually identify for the user the most important, useful, salient information found in the item. The goals of this assignment are to: (1) allow you to become a subject expert on a particular topic; (2) introduce you to important and popular social sciences resources and selection tools; (3) introduce you to effective and efficient search strategies; (4) familiarize you with resource evaluation methods; and (5) provide you with experience in compiling research guides. More information about the project will be provided in class. Four hour students will be creating two research guides.

**TEXTS:**
Readings will come from professional journals and books. These will all be available as electronic reserve items or linked from the course site.

**EVALUATION:**
In addition to assignment specifics, all written work will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of writings and the amount of reflection, analysis, comparison, and evaluation provided in them. Use of appropriate sources and/or literature will also be assessed. I expect that all work turned in would be able to be ready to be used in library.

The grade for the course will be based on the following:
- Readings and class participation - 40 points
- Subject introductions – 40 points
- Problem sets 4 @ 20 points each = 80 points
- Collection development policy = 20 points
- Targeted Research Guide – 80 points