University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Graduate School of Library and Information Science

LIS590CO Community Informatics
Fall 2009, Thursdays 9:00-11:50 am, in LIS 131 (4 credits)
Course docs at http://courseweb.lis.illinois.edu/~katewill/fall2009-lis590co (or via Moodle)

Instructor

Dr. Kate Williams
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Office hours: Thursday 1:30-3:30

Course description

A survey of key concepts in an emerging field that studies how local, historical communities are using information and communications technologies. Covers key principles for work in the non-profit/public sector as people harness new technologies and media as individuals, students, families, community organizations, and so on. Overarching ideas prepare both professionals and researchers to understand and master this environment, whatever their technology background. Especially useful for those interested in public or community libraries, youth services, social work, education, and anyone interested in working with or studying underserved communities. The required course for the community informatics specialization.

Assignments and course requirements

1. **Read:** Read the weekly assigned course readings and the websites connected with each Digital Divide guest lecture.

2. **Reflect:** Turn in a three-paragraph reflection on each Digital Divide lecture (first one is due Sept 17, then every week through Dec 3). 15% of course grade.

3. **Talk:** Present two of the readings, bringing a one page summary, three marked passages you find most interesting, three questions for discussion; when it isn’t your week to present, speak up too. (Choose your readings—and your weeks—in class August 27.) 15% of course grade.

4. **Explore:** Carry out three field work assignments and bring your experiences into class discussion:
   a. Wireless survey (report due Sep 10). 15% of course grade.
   b. C-U in cyberspace (report due Sep 24). 15% of course grade.
5. **Analyze:** Turn in a five page paper analyzing what you experienced and learned in the fieldwork, using concepts you select from the course readings or other texts (due Nov 19). 20% of course grade.

6. **Connect:** In last class, sum up what you’ve learned and how it relates to your chosen profession and ideas you’ve learned in other coursework.


Note: Post reflections in discussion space in Moodle, turn in other work in class, hard copy, single spaced.

**Texts**

All texts can be purchased or obtained from the web or the library; interlibrary loan is very effective. The assigned pages are also provided as pdf files.

**Special lectures**

Supplementing class discussion, we will join the Digital Divide Lecture Series from 9-10 am in Room 126, starting September 10 through November 17. See page 5.

**Readings, with assignments indicated**

**August 27. Introductions/What is CI?**


**September 3. Community as history**


**September 10. Community as network**


*Turn in Wireless C-U report.*

**September 17. Community in disaster**
Readings will be posted.

*Turn in reflection on lecture.*

**September 24. Virtual community**


*Turn in C-U in Cyberspace report and reflection on lecture.*

**October 1. Informatics: Early ideas.**


*Turn in reflection on lecture. Start Computer Class Month.*

**October 8. The information age; key concepts**


*Turn in reflection on lecture. Continue Computer Class Month.*

**October 15. The network society, the dual city, the space of flows**


*Turn in reflection on lecture. Continue Computer Class Month.*

**October 22. Literacy**


*Turn in reflection on lecture. Continue Computer Class Month.*
October 29. Empirical work: Case studies


Turn in reflection on lecture and report on Computer Class Month.

November 5. Empirical work: Datasets


Turn in reflection on lecture.

November 12. Empirical work: Cyberorganizing


Turn in reflection on lecture.

November 19. Empirical work: Cyberpower


Turn in reflection on lecture and Analysis of field work.

December 3. Reflections and discussion.
Bring your oral reflection on this course as it connects with your chosen profession and with ideas from other courses.

The Digital Divide: What is it? What can be done about it?
Second Annual Fall Lecture Series on the Digital Divide
University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science
9-10 am Thursdays, Room 126

September 10  What is the Digital Divide?
Kate Williams, U of I GSLIS
http://www-personal.umich.edu/~katewill/kwd3workshop.pdf
http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/computer.html
http://www.pewinternet.org/topics/Digital-Divide.aspx

September 17  UC2B: The Urbana Champaign Big Broadband Proposal, August 2009
Mike Smeltzer, U of I CITES, and Abdul Alkalimat, U of I GSLIS/DAAS
https://wiki.cites.uiuc.edu/wiki/display/bac/UC2B
http://www.cuopenaccess.org/

September 24  The Search for Broadband Data
Maryalice Wu and Dawn Nicholson-Owens, U of I ATLAS, and
Safiya Umoja Noble, U of I GSLIS
http://www.atlas.illinois.edu/
http://www.ojctech.com/about/safiya-noble

October 1  Solutions: CU-WiN (Champaign Urbana Wireless Network)
Sascha Meinrath, Research Director, Wireless Future Program; New America Foundation
http://cuwireless.net
http://www.newamerica.net/people/sascha_meinrath

October 8  Policy: The Public Library
Debra Lissak, Executive Director, and Mary Ellen Farrell, Board Chair, Urbana Free Library
http://urbanafreelibrary.org/

October 15  Policy: The Public School
Don Owen, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Urbana School District 116
http://www.usd116.org/home/
October 22  Solutions: Community perspectives  
Andre Arrington, Don Moyer Boys and Girls Club, and  
Dawn Blackman, Church of the Brethren  

October 29  Solutions: The Community College and the Community Technology Center  
Maria Mobasseri, Computer Science and Information Technology Department Chair, and Brian Bell, Part time Instructor and DCEO Grant Coordinator, Parkland College  
http://your.parkland.edu/Media/Website%20Resources/PDF/catalog/catalog.pdf  
#page=99  
http://your.parkland.edu/academics/departments/csit  

November 5  TBA  

November 12  Policy: City Government  
Bill DeJarnette, Information Services Manager, City of Urbana  
http://www.city.urbana.il.us/urbana/  

November 19  Policy: The State of Illinois and BTOP  
Ryan Croke, Policy Advisor to Governor Pat Quinn  
http://broadband.illinois.gov/
Instructions for <Champaign/Urbana/YourTownOrNeighborhood> in Cyberspace

This is a virtual exploration complementing the physical legwork of the wireless hunt. (If you need or want to, you can choose a different community.) Here the task is to build a webliography about the community. Aim for 20-30 websites using the approach detailed in the CI Lab Notes that offer bibliographies and webliographies about ethnic communities in Chicago, viewable at:

http://www.ideals.uiuc.edu/handle/2142/5138/browse?type=title

The difference is that you are only making a webliography, not a bibliography.

Some of the websites will be entirely devoted to your chosen community, some just a page or page in a larger site. That’s to be expected. But include what you think are the best web resources across as many of the subject areas as possible. (We aimed for 2-5 for each subject area when we did ethnic Chicago; you don’t have as much time as we had.)

Format each entry in the webliography as in the CI Labnotes, except you may not need to include language. (If it’s relevant to your community and you can search in multiple languages, please do so.) That format is (omit the brackets):

<publisher of website or name of website>. <name of page or phrase about that page>. In <language/s – omit this if they’re all in english>. <URL as active link>.

Turn this in as a text post (not an attachment) on the moodle discussion space. This is definitely an assignment where it’ll be interesting to share results.

Your deliverable here is three parts:

1) the webliography

2) one paragraph on challenges and breakthroughs in the hunt

3) one paragraph evaluating your results (what conclusions can you draw from the results? what do they mean?)

If you can find a place to post your links (your town’s Wikipedia entry? Somewhere else?), great, and share that link to inspire other students to do likewise.

Due September 24 by start of class.
Instructions for Wireless Report

Choose a commercial neighborhood, take a laptop and find the wireless hotspots in that neighborhood. For each hotspot, identify:

1. The physical business and its address
2. The vendor of the wireless service
3. Any cost to the user
4. The speed of connection and time/date you tested it (For speed, test the bidirectional speed at speedmatters.org).
5. If possible, talk with the owner or manager about the service. What do they like/dislike about it? What does it cost?

For your report, write 1-2 pages describing

1) what you learned (data 1-5 as above)
2) challenges and breakthroughs in the hunt
3) your evaluation of what you found

Footnote: check the internet speed at your home and work connections, if you have them, and add that into your report.

If you don’t have a laptop, let me know, there’ll be an alternate assignment.
Instructions for Computer Learning Month

Recruit a site where you will go three times during October and teach/support computer users. You can teach whatever you work out with the site, however you think best. One resource that you may find helpful is http://www.gcflearnfree.org/, but think too about teaching people about any online resource(s) or technique that you think is important/relevant. (e.g. Solitaire for mouse lessons, Wikipedia for Web 2.0 lessons). Be prepared for low turnout as well as high; this is not a lot of advance notice to build up interest or a routine. One-on-one help can be very effective, especially if you “reference interview” to find out what the person wants to learn.

The C-U sites will all have letters from the instructor (copy will be on our website as well). Out of towners (Leepers) can recruit themselves any place they like, including the nearby public library. Work with the site to use/adopt our generic flyer as promotion, as appropriate.

This is a study and service project. You are studying from the moment you contact the site, not from the moment you start teaching. A visit, not a call, is the best way to get started because you are entering a complex environment you are unfamiliar with, and everyone will be more comfortable after they’ve met.

Class should be about 45-60 minutes.

Record after each visit:

1. Where did you go? (first visit provide site name and address, later visits provide more specific information about the space you teach in)
2. What was your intent?
3. Who did you interact with?
4. What happened?
5. What did they learn?
6. What did you learn?

For your report, provide the above information and write three paragraphs about:

a) challenges  
b) breakthroughs  
c) your evaluation of the experience, i.e., your reflections

Turn in a folder containing any free literature you find at the site, and drop in one of the flyers you use.

Due October 29 before class, turn in your report via the moodle discussion space and your tangible physical folder in class (if face to face) or on October 15 in class (if LEEP).
Instructions for analysis paper

This is a paper to analyze and then synthesize all you can from the course:

a) the experience: wireless survey, community in cyberspace study, computer learning month
b) the experience and concepts from the guest lectures -- and remember these are all taped if you want to watch any portions: http://www.lis.illinois.edu/news/lectures.html
c) the experience (for the empirical papers) and the concepts from the readings
d) and generally the discussions in class and online; make use of the reading summaries and the powerpoints to help jog your memory.

About analysis and synthesis

The process of the paper is Analysis. According to Wikipedia this is “the process of breaking a complex topic or substance into smaller parts to gain a better understanding of it.” The complex topic here is community informatics. What you are breaking down is the experience in the class (yours and the lecturers).

The goal of the paper is Synthesis. Again from Wikipedia this is “the combining of two or more entities to form something new.” What’s new? Your new mastery of concepts because you know something about their meaning and even their origins AND you have used them to synthesize or you could say sum up the experience that you have broken into smaller parts.

The field reports – and feel free to quote other people’s reports, but include them in your bibliography– is a record of your experience that you are analyzing and synthesizing. Your own field reports and lecture reflections are not part of your bibliography but are your raw data and a record of your own synthesizing as we went along.

Note:

1. Five pages single spaced including bibliography citing any readings, guest lectures, and other students reports or lecture reflections that you use
2. Due Nov 19 electronically to moodle
3. Worth 20% of your course grade
4. You are welcome to use concepts not from this course, just be sure to include them in bibliography
5. Required: At least one table or figure – quantitative or diagrammatic. In an age where scientists read in order not to read (according to Renear and Palmer’s study) such tools for understanding are mandatory.
From syllabus:

**Analyze:** Turn in a five page paper analyzing what you experienced and learned in the fieldwork, using concepts you select from the course readings or other texts (due Nov 19). 20% of course grade.

Later:

Your plans to collaborate on concepts from the course is such a good one that I want to revise my remarks from class -- collaborate all you want, the unique part will be each of you has different data to analysis, some of which is written down and some still in your head. So do not hold anything back from your collaboration.

Still later:

I'd like to offer an option for the analyusis paper that might be more fun and interesting.

Write a three page single spaced letter to a person you choose from the site where you did your computer learning month. Use your experience, ideas from class, and a diagram or table or picture, and explain some of what you learned this semester to them.

And omit the bibliogrpahy, this is a letter:


Again, I encourage you to work together as you write.

Then:

In response to a question -- if you choose the letter option, you don't have to send the letter unless you want to, but make it real, even if you decide to say something along the lines of "My instructor asked us to write a sumup letter using ideas from class."
September 23, 2009

<public computer center and contact>

Dear <contact>:

The Urbana Champaign Big Broadband proposal has been submitted with your organization as one of the community sites that will benefit from better technology and more human support and coordination. As someone who helped write that grant, I’d like to get a jump start on this good work.

Graduate students in my community informatics class are seeking a community site where they can teach a computer class or help people use computers three times during the month of October. With 23 students and perhaps 30-some sites that I am contacting and presenting to them, there is a good chance one of them will contact you. I hope you will find a way for them to help your patrons/clients/residents and learn something at the same time.

A student will call and visit you to see what is possible, whatever sort of computer training and/or user support is best. If this is a bad time for this activity at your site, just say so and we will look forward to working with you another time.

Best,

Kate Williams
Assistant Professor
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