

IS 10: Information and Power
Fall 2016

Department of Information Studies
University of California, Los Angeles
Tuesdays 5:30pm–9:00pm
111 GSE&IS Bldg.

Course website <https://ccle.ucla.edu/course/view/16F-INFSTD10-1>

Office Hours

(Please make appointments at least one (1) day in advance)

Diana L. Ascher
T 4:00 p.m. – 4:45 p.m. **by appointment**
<http://doodle.com/poll/h4uxcbxgmm98vbs6>
The Salon, GSE&IS Bldg.
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Prof. Safiya Noble
Hours by appointment only
210 GSE&IS Bldg.
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Course Description and Objectives. IS 10 draws on the research literature in information studies and related fields, along with contemporary events and issues, to explore the connection between information and power. Taking a social justice perspective, the course investigates the cultural, economic, legal, political, and technological structures and forces that shape how information is created, disseminated, managed, stored, and destroyed. Topics include information and democratic institutions; legal and cultural perspectives on access; surveillance and privacy; censorship and leaks; the economics of information; and the politics of classification, categories, and ontologies. This mixed lecture/discussion course is combines live class meetings, web-based readings and media, and online exercises and workshops to focus on the core issues arising at the intersection of information and power.

As a result of instruction in this course, students should be able to:

- Describe how information and power have been defined and related in the research literature and popular discourse over time, and how these concepts foster or discourage social justice.
- Critique popular and scholarly accounts of information and related concepts, such as data, knowledge, and wisdom.
- Argue for and support a particular definition of information relevant to a particular issue or debate.
- Use specific cases or examples to construct, support, and justify an argument about the mutual shaping of power and information.

This course satisfies the Society and Culture-Social Analysis GE requirement for the College of Letters & Science.

Course Platform

Students are required to check the CCLE platform on a regular basis to gain access to review materials and course readings, submit assignments, and participate in discussion forums. Please contact the help

desk with any technical difficulties. There are no required textbooks or additional materials to purchase for this course.

Additional material will be available on the instructor's website as indicated in the

Readings and Course Resources. Students are expected to read/explore/watch all assigned materials (listed below, under Weekly Topics and Required Materials) prior to each class meeting. All course materials are available via the UCLA Common Collaboration and Learning Environment (CCLE) website. The website and other class materials are password-protected and intended for the exclusive use of students participating in IS 10. Students may not forward or circulate any course materials outside of class without the instructor's express permission. **You should bring copies of the assigned text(s) to each class session, as we will refer directly to them in our discussions. You should also come to each class having read and thought about the material, with at least two meaningful contributions to make to the discussion.**

Assignments and Grading. Student learning will be evaluated by four elements to assess understanding of key issues covered in the course and encourage critical reflection about those issues:

1. **Class participation (25%):** Thoughtful, substantive contributions to classroom discussion. Please be prepared; "fake it 'till you make it" won't work here. This class is primarily discussion based. It is very difficult to earn an excellent grade in this course if you do not verbally participate in the conversation about research presented in this course. Being able to talk about course material is a vital part of learning it, and the ability to contribute is an indispensable skill in both college and the "real world." Accordingly, I expect and require that everyone participate actively in class discussions and presentations. This is your time to ask questions, voice opinions and reactions, and engage your classmates in thoughtful discourse related to the content of the course. The classroom is our learning lab – it's where we practice how to think critically, which might be different from your experiences in other settings. As such, I encourage you to jot down notes, questions, and key passages as you do the readings. This will facilitate your contribution to class discussions. Having questions and comments written down especially helps if you sometimes feel hesitant to contribute during discussion. Always read for the big picture or the main point, and then refine your thinking with the details.
2. **Weekly reflection essays (25%):** Each week you will post to the class blog a 300-word essay reflecting on the coming week's readings. Reflection essays must be posted before 5pm on the Friday prior to the class meeting. In other words, for Week 2, post your blog before 5pm on Friday, September 30; for Week 3, post your blog before 5pm on Friday, October 7. Your post should demonstrate that you have read, understood, and thought about the implications of the material. Do not just summarize the articles. **I want you to reflect on what the information/research/evidence mean to you.** Integrate the theoretical and research perspectives we have covered in class.
3. **Group timeline project (25%):** During the first class session, students will be divided into small groups. Each group will develop a timeline of the top 10 information-related events for a specific domain. Final timelines must be submitted by 5pm on **Friday, December 2**. Groups will present their final timelines on **Tuesday, December 6**. Along with the final presentation, each student must submit a peer review evaluating the contributions of the members of her/his group.
4. **Final paper (25%):** Students will prepare a case study of an incident or controversy and show how the case illustrates or exemplifies the connection between information and power (e.g.

public response to government surveillance, the role of popular media and information services in elections, public education policy and curriculum, financial markets and trade, scientific controversies, etc.). Papers should include a detailed account of the case and a well-supported and well-argued discussion of how it demonstrates the relation between information and power, drawing on the concepts covered in the course (5 pages; 1250 words, double-spaced, 12pt font, 1in margins). Your paper should engage explicitly with the main themes of our class and demonstrate a thoughtful, informed perspective based on our course readings and discussions, as applied to a topic of interest to you. The goal of the assignment is to demonstrate your ability to recognize some of the attendant challenges and opportunities of the topic you have chosen. The final paper must be uploaded to CCLE by 5pm on **Tuesday, December 13**. Late papers and papers that merely regurgitate content included in your group presentation will NOT be accepted.

Students with Disabilities. Students with documented disabilities who wish to discuss academic accommodations should contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at (310) 825-1501, and must notify the instructor at the start of the quarter so that appropriate accommodations can be arranged and coordinated with the OSD well in advance of course assignments and due dates.

Late Assignment Policy

I will not accept any late submissions unless you and I have signed in advance an agreement to modify your submission schedule, or you present University-approved documentation of an illness or a situation beyond your control (like a house fire, not a bad hair day) immediately on your return to the classroom. You must communicate with me immediately if you fall behind for any reason. I cannot help you address any deficiencies if you wait until the last week of the quarter or after grades have been posted. It is very rare that I will give an “Incomplete” grade to any student, so please be advised.

Tardiness and Attendance

In this class, as in much of life, punctual attendance is expected. Be sure to find the classroom in advance—the GSE&IS Building is situated to the west of the Young Research Library, north of Northern Lights, and east of UCLA Anderson. Tardiness is unacceptable, unless you have notified me in advance about a specific situation. If you have received approval from me to arrive late to class, sit in the seat reserved for you in the back of the room, and do what you can to minimize disruption to the class discussion. Students arriving to class 10 minutes late without my advance approval will not receive credit for attending class that day. However, you can get participation credit and the benefits of class discussion, so you may still want to attend.

Attendance will be monitored on random occasions. Regular attendance and participation are prerequisite to your success in this course. If you need to miss class due to an illness or other emergency, please email me prior to your absence (if possible). You are still accountable for any assignments that were due during your absence.

- Missing two class meetings will reduce your grade a whole letter.
- Missing four class meetings means you are failing the course; come see me immediately.

Etiquette

Let us strive to use language that facilitates an environment of learning. Passion for research and the ideas that spawn from evidence is welcome. Critique ideas, backed with evidence, rather than criticize

people. We must all work together to foster an environment where diverse opinions can be freely voiced and a critical but constructive dialogue can be created. Please be open-minded with your classmates and with me—none of us are perfect communicators, and communication includes the words we choose, as well as the mindset with which messages are decoded and understood. You demonstrate learning as you encounter and consider a wide range of possibilities, and I encourage you to become a well-rounded critical thinker and scholar. You do not have to agree with all the research presented, but you need to demonstrate you understand it.

The classroom is a public space, at a state-sponsored public university; it is **not** the private sphere (e.g., your family, your home, a place that is personal to you only). As such, my philosophy is that when we are at the university, we are in a public space intended to bring a lot of varying ideas to conversation, and these may often be contentious and uncomfortable. My desire is that you will learn to use evidence, reasoning, persuasion, and your own experiences in the cultivation of your ideas—this is the basis of a solid education.

Respect for each other includes not talking, texting, working on laptops or tablets, or reading materials during class lecture or presentations. All cell phones must be turned off during class at ALL times.

Presentation of Coursework

Please do not attach a cover page to your assignments. When required, all assignments **MUST** be typed in a 12-point font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins, page numbers, and your name on each page. I do not accept assignments that are printed with poor quality, unless I specifically ask you to handwrite an assignment (which is always possible). Please note campus printers are not always available at the last minute. All work for this class must be properly labeled on the electronic file you upload to the CCLE site. **All of your work must be uploaded to the course CCLE by the due date.**

Academic Integrity

All students are responsible for knowing the definitions and penalties for academic dishonesty, which include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, academic interference, etc. Students are expected to abide by the academic integrity provisions set out in the university student code of conduct. It is the responsibility of the student to make her/himself aware of the standards of academic integrity. Plagiarized material submitted in this course will be penalized based on the rules and regulations outlined in the student code. Generally, when you submit work in this course, you are indicating that it is **YOUR** work. Copying another's work wholesale is cheating and is only one kind of plagiarism. For example, plagiarism can be simply drawing on another's ideas without giving proper credit. Please use a writing style guide to cite references, citations, and resources appropriately in your work. You may choose a style guide of your choice (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.). Apply it consistently throughout your work.

Course Grading

Grading Scale:

100-99.5	A+
99.4-93.5	A
93.4-90	A-
89.9-87.5	B+
87.4-83.5	B
83.4-80	B-
79.9-77.5	C+
77.4-73.5	C

73.4-70	C-
69.9-67.5	D+
67.4-63.5	D
63.4-60	D-
less than 60	F

In accordance with best practices regarding student privacy, we cannot discuss grades via email. Please meet with your instructor during office hours if you have questions about grades.

Extra credit: There may be opportunities to earn extra credit by attending a designated campus event and writing a two-page response paper. You may earn a maximum of three extra credit points. Events will be announced as opportunities arise. Extra credit response papers are due within one week of the event date.