IRLS 571-010 Introduction to Information Technology (Virtual-Smith)

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COURSE NAME, NUMBER AND PREREQUISITES:

Introduction to Information Technology

IRLS 571-010

Instructor: Trevor Smith

This course is an elective for the SIRLS Masters degree. [IRLS 504 is no longer a prerequisite]

Note: This course spans both the Summer I and Summer II sessions. This is an intensive introduction to technology—plan on a substantial time commitment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

"This course is designed to introduce the basic concepts and applications of Internet-related information technology and its impacts on individual users, groups, organizations, and society. The topics in this survey course include computing basics, network applications, human computer interactions, computer-supported cooperative work, social aspects of information systems, and some economic and legal issues related to digital services and products." (3 credit hours)

"If the automobile had followed the same development cycle as the computer, a Rolls-Royce would today cost $100, get a million miles per gallon, and explode once a year, killing everyone inside." -- Robert X. Cringely.

Introduction to Information Technology is a course about computers, but it is not just about computers. More than any other recent development, the computer, and specifically Internet-related technology, has changed the way humans interact with the world, information, and each other. To understand social change in the digital age and the implications for information professionals, it is necessary to have a broad understanding of technology. This course will cover the history and development of computers and networking, survey Internet technologies, and describe some of the electronic tools that are found in modern libraries. Students will be assigned hands-on projects that reinforce important concepts. We will also look at the implications and consequences of information technology such as collaboration, hacking, access/ownership, free-inquiry, and information economics.

The purpose of this course is not to teach you how to be an engineer, administrator, web mistress, or even a systems librarian. Rather, upon completion of IRLS 571, you should be able to intelligently discuss library and Internet technology with IT professionals, make reasoned purchase recommendations, constructively critique web sites, and present information online in an effective and appealing manner. You should also understand enough about inevitable technological change to help your institution plan for success.

General familiarity with computers will help on some assignments, but as the semester progresses, we'll find that we all have strengths and weaknesses when it comes to the course material. "1337 haxors" may find some of the early tech-oriented assignments relatively easy, but they won't necessarily have any advantage when it comes to the contextual issues surrounding technology.

Course Contents
The summer course is composed of 5 interdependent units. We will spend one or two weeks on each topic. In order, the units are as follows:

Unit 1: Introduction and History of Computing
Unit 2: Operating Systems, Networking, Programming Languages and Formal Troubleshooting
Unit 3: Internet Technologies
Unit 4: User Interface Design, Information Seeking Behavior and Website Evaluation
Unit 5: Library Technology and Social Issues

Course Delivery

This is a virtual course with the majority of interaction taking place in the UofA's course management system, Desire2Learn (D2L). In D2L we have access to email, announcements, discussion boards, an assignment drop-box, a resource repository, a chat room, and a secure grade book. We will use all of these features this semester. Many of the online lectures include both video and sound. No on-campus attendance is required.

New lectures will be posted on Wednesday (with the exception of the first week). Unit assignments, if any, from the previous week will be due Thursday by 8:00pm (unless otherwise indicated). Announcements and discussion postings may be added at any time. Every attempt will be made to release grades and feedback promptly.

Small groups will be assigned about two-three weeks in to the class when the roster has stabilized. This is also when we will discuss the details of the group project.

The final individual project will be due the last week of the course. It will require you to synthesize and apply the knowledge you have been acquiring during the semester. Comprehensive details will be provided later in the course.

What to Expect

There are two areas to consider when planning your time commitment during the semester. We will share about 40 hours of "mediated instruction" (it would be "classroom time" if we were in a face-to-face course), or about 4-4.5 hours per week. This will consist of everything from text-based lectures and interactive tutorials to multi-media Flash presentations with music, dancing, and explosions (okay, I'm exaggerating a bit here). Homework will include required reading, finding and using optional resources, and assignments--a target of 10 hours per week, with some weeks much less, other weeks slightly more. Plan on a combined total of 14-16 hours per week for an average student to keep up with the class.

The good news is that the course is entirely asynchronous, you can log in to D2L any time you wish. Having said that, to keep up with the discussion boards and your group members, you should expect to check in about 5 times a week; once a day Monday-Friday is perfect. Keep in mind that most of the important information will be distributed on Wednesday. If you are going to be unable to access the class for more than three or four days in a row, please let me know so we can make some special arrangements.

I have a love-hate relationship with group projects. It is very difficult to make sure every participant does his/her fair share and receives an appropriate grade. However, there are three aspects of groupwork that redeem it as a learning tool for this particular course. First, it tends to break down the sense of isolation, a chronic problem of distance education. Second, virtually all technology development is done in groups, teams, and committees--to really understand technology development you have to understand small-group dynamics. Third, an important aspect of this class is understanding collaborative technologies; how better to learn than by using technology to collaborate? A couple of components of the group project will be assigned as individual work to make the experience less stressful.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

By the completion of this course, you will:

- understand computer, network, Internet, and library technology enough to do the following: speak intelligently to those charged with implementing and maintaining it, recommend and justify purchase or discard, perform elementary troubleshooting, and assist library patrons with basic technology problems
- have experienced a wide variety of information systems and will more rapidly learn how to utilize tools, software, and infrastructure
• be able to create and critically evaluate web sites; suggest improvements to appearance, functionality, and organization
• understand how digital technologies affect society in areas such as equal opportunity, crime, privacy, preservation, free inquiry, intellectual property, communication, collaboration, and economics

This course is intended to address, in part, the following two Student Competencies and Learning Outcomes:

A3) Students will demonstrate understanding of the use of information and communication technologies in the provision of information resources and services in libraries and other settings.

C10) Students will demonstrate the ability to recognize and analyze ethical issues and dilemmas in library and information settings and propose reasoned courses of action.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS:

Textbooks:

OR

Either 4th or 3rd edition is acceptable (but not 1st or 2nd)!


The bookstore should have copies of these by the first week of classes, but you might want to look at the major online sites and compare price and availability.

Internet Access:

Students will need a reliable computer and online access. High speed internet such as broadband cable or DSL is required (many of the lectures have an audio-video component). If you do not have broadband, consider using the SIRLS computer lab, the UofA information commons, or even a public library computer center.

U-System Account:

You will need to have a U-System account for both the group project and several of the individual homework assignments. You must request this account be created for you (it is not automatically created when you get your email address). Once you have your UA NetID, go to https://account.arizona.edu/ and follow the "Create your U of A Email and other UITS computer accounts" link. Request a U-System Computing account. The process can take 24 hours or longer, so try to get this done as soon as possible. If you have any trouble contact the UITS helpdesk at http://uits.arizona.edu/departments/the247.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Coursework
2. Mid-term Exam
3. Group Project
4. Final Individual Project

The coursework will consist of five Unit assignments, each worth 8 points, for a total of 40% of your final grade. These assignments will require you to post information on the discussion boards, answer essay questions, provide a link to something you found online or created, and/or write up the result of a "hands-on" exercise. While study groups, either in-person or virtual, are encouraged, the Unit assignments should be your own work. In other words, you can talk to each other about the assignments but do the exercises and write-up the results independently.
The mid-term exam will be worth 10% of your semester grade; it will be multiple-choice and approximately an hour in duration.

The group project will be detailed in week 3; you will be assigned to a small group and will select (or be given) a technology topic to develop an informational web site around. As part of this process you will individually assess your site, some of your classmates' sites, some external sites, and provide recommendations for improvement. In total, it is worth 25% of your course grade.

The final project will require you to construct a technology policy for a library. This will also be worth 25% of your grade and will be fully detailed around the mid-point of the course.

**COURSE, SCHOOL, AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES:**

**Academic Code of Integrity**

Students are expected to abide by The University of Arizona [Code of Academic Integrity](http://tech.sbs.arizona.edu/node/3391). 'The guiding principle of academic integrity is that a student's submitted work must be the student's own.' If you have any questions regarding what is acceptable practice under this Code, please ask an Instructor.

**Accommodating Disabilities**

The University has a [Disability Resource Center](http://tech.sbs.arizona.edu/node/3391). If you anticipate the need for reasonable accommodations to meet the requirements of this course, you must register with the Disability Resource Center and request that the DRC send me, the Instructor, official notification of your accommodation needs as soon as possible. Please plan to meet with me by appointment or during office hours to discuss accommodations and how my course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate.

**Assignment Policies**

- **How to submit assignments:** All Unit assignments must be submitted in the D2L drop-box. They may be submitted by email (either D2L or my external email) only if there are technical problems with the drop-box. The format must be "standard" HTML—what this means is that you can **not** use your word processor to "save-as" an HTML file (the files created by MS Word, for example, wreak havoc with some browsers). If you have Dreamweaver or FrontPage, they will work fine for your assignments; but if not, check out [NVU](http://tech.sbs.arizona.edu/node/3391) or [Kompozer](http://tech.sbs.arizona.edu/node/3391), both are free web development tools for all three major PC operating systems. If a unit assignment asks you to make a contribution to the discussion groups, please cut-and-paste what you posted into your drop-box submission. **If you have any graphics or other objects referenced in your HTML, make sure that you submit all the files and use a relative link to objects from the same directory as your HTML document.**

  A link to your group assignment must be submitted by every participant in their D2L drop-box. This will allow me to give you your individual grades and feedback.

  The final project should also be submitted in the D2L drop box in "standard" HTML.

- **Assignment due dates:** The Course Schedule will list specific due dates for assignments, and reminders will be posted in D2L. In general, late assignments will not be routinely accepted. I understand that emergencies and problems can occur in the course of the semester, so please contact me as soon as you find you may not be able to make a particular due date; under certain circumstances partial credit may be possible. To avoid technical problems remember my digital mantra, "save early, save often!"

- **Writing style:** Be sure to include your name at the top of every submission. Clear and concise writing consistent with upper-division undergraduate and graduate course-work is expected on all assignments. I am not a stickler for precisely following a style manual (it can be almost impossible to create some things like "hanging indents" in HTML), but be certain to properly attribute the quotes, work, and ideas of others with citations--check out [APA](http://tech.sbs.arizona.edu/node/3391) and [Citation Machine](http://tech.sbs.arizona.edu/node/3391) for help. Spell-check is your friend.

**Incompletes**
The current Catalog reads

The grade of **I** may be awarded only at the end of a term, when all but a minor portion of the course work has been satisfactorily completed. The grade of **I** is not to be awarded in place of a failing grade or when the student is expected to repeat the course; in such a case, a grade other than **I** must be assigned. Students should make arrangements with the instructor to receive an incomplete grade before the end of the term ...

If the incomplete is not removed by the instructor within one year the **I** grade will revert to a failing grade.

**GRADING:**

Every effort will be made to rapidly correct homework assignments. Feedback will be provided through the gradebook feature of D2L.

**Points possible for each assignment**

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<th>40 points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term Exam</td>
<td>10 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Project</td>
<td>25 points</td>
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<td>Final Individual Project</td>
<td>25 points</td>
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<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>571</th>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;A&quot;</td>
<td>90-100 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;B&quot;</td>
<td>80-89 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;C&quot;</td>
<td>70-79 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;D&quot;</td>
<td>60-69 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;F&quot;</td>
<td>below 60 points</td>
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</tbody>
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**How to get a good grade:**

- Read, understand, and follow the assignment instructions. This bears repeating, every assignment will include a set of instructions--**follow them**.
- If you aren't sure what I expect, ask me for clarification--it is likely others are wondering as well.
- Stay on top of the required readings. There is a lot of raw information and vocabulary in this class; avoid the frustration of falling behind.
- Play. Technology is an information power tool, but never forget that video games drive hardware evolution. Try to find aspects of the material that are genuinely interesting to you.

**INSTRUCTOR NAME AND CONTACT ADDRESSES:**

Email is the quickest and most reliable way of contacting me. **For class matters, internal D2L email is preferred** and I will be checking it frequently during the semester. You can also contact me at my regular email address: trevors followed by @email.arizona.edu .

If you feel more comfortable with online chat, IM, or Skype, just email me for an appointment and detailed contact information. I’m glad to work with the type of communication technology that best fits your learning style.

If you have a question or situation that might be easier to talk about than exchange email, or if you get frustrated with technology and just want help from a human voice, I am available via telephone virtually any time by appointment. Feel free to call my number at Cochise College, (520) 515-5421, but please understand if I have to reschedule our conversation to work around my "day job".

--Trevor Smith

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