

I2I: Introduction to Information

In this introductory-level class, we will examine the myriad different ways of understanding the contemporary information universe. As you'll see in perusing the syllabus, we cover a broad range of issues, from privacy and intellectual property to business and cultural issues. By completing this, you'll not be an "information professional," but you will know what that involves and you'll get a solid foundation for navigating and getting empowered in our information-driven world. There are no texts to be purchased for this course — all assigned readings are on CTools. You should also be aware, of course, that this course is listed both in Sociology as well as in the School of Information. If you're considering going into the Informatics concentration, you should perhaps enroll under the SI listing.

Course Schedule

The main lecture meets Tuesday and Thursday from 11:30am to 1:00pm in USB 2260.

Discussion sections will be:

110-002 18069 Wednesday 9:00AM-10:00AM, NQ1265 (Will Riley) 110-003 18070
Wednesday 4:00PM-5:00PM, NQ1265 (Will Riley) 110-004 23891 Thursday
3:00PM-4:00PM, NQ1265 (Chris Leeder) 110-005 23896 Thursday 5:30PM-6:30PM,
NQ1265 (Chris Leeder)

Course Objectives

The vaunted Information Revolution is more than Web surfing, Net games, and dotcoms. Indeed, it is arguably the foundation for an economic and social transformation on a scale comparable to the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century. As a culture we have learned from earlier such transformations and it is important to recognize those lessons and chart a path toward intellectual and practical mastery of the emerging world of information. At the School of Information, we take pride in our tradition, inherited from librarianship, of "user-centeredness" and public access. For this reason, not only will you, the "user" of this course, be given unusual attention, but intellectually, we will approach information technology from the perspective of end-users and their concerns. This course will provide the foundational knowledge necessary to begin to address the key issues associated with the Information Revolution. Issues will range from the theoretical (what is information and how do humans construct it?), to the cultural (is life on the screen a qualitatively different phenomenon from experiences with earlier distance-shrinking and knowledge-building technologies such as telephones?), to the practical (what are the basic architectures of computing and networks?). Successful completion of this "gateway" course will give you, the student, the conceptual tools necessary to understand the politics, economics, and culture of the Information Age, providing a foundation for later study in Information or any number of more traditional disciplines. Over the course of this course, we will often elicit your feedback and analysis. These evaluation procedures are not, however, merely to make "guinea pigs" of you; rather, a key part of our assessments will use leading-edge

electronic and information tools, and your ability to use those tools well will also be a key part of the agenda. In addition, of course, we very much want to know what works and what does not work for you, as this course belongs to you.

Materials for This Course

There are no books to be purchased for this course, as all readings are on-line. (However, if you need help writing, we strongly recommend [Diedre McCloskey's Economical Writing](#)). Prof. Paul Edwards in the School of Information has an excellent manuscript on how to get the most out of reading a large amount of material: "[How to Read a Book v 4.0](#)".

We also make the lecture slides available as PDFs, and the lectures themselves as podcasts. We recognize that by offering podcasts of the lectures and not keeping track of attendance at lectures, many of you will be tempted to skip going to the lectures. Yes, you can do that, but I promise you, you will not get nearly as much from the course, as you won't be actively engaged, asking questions, offering your perspectives (yes, I encourage you to chime in during lectures), and the like. Believe me, learning is best accomplished by active participation, just like politics. By being a passive spectator of the course, you would merely replicate all of the worst, most depressing aspects of consumer culture.

An Important Note on Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

You should draw on the ideas and writings of others in your work, but you must not plagiarize ("to steal and use [the ideas or writings of another] as one's own"). Many students seem to be under the impression that plagiarism is difficult to detect, but it isn't. Indeed, thanks to the Internet, it's simple to plug a suspect phrase into a search engine and find plagiarized material. We teach this material, and we've had to prosecute students in the past for lifting content off the Web. Plagiarism is a serious academic crime for which you can be expelled from the university.

The following practices will help you avoid plagiarism:

- Whenever you use information or ideas of someone else, credit the source. You may use any standard reference system — we really don't care, as long as the original material can be located based on your citation. (As an author myself, I certainly want to be given credit for my efforts, though I care little about "owning" what I write).
- Direct quotations of phrases and sentences, if used, must appear in quotation marks, and the source must be cited. (Minimize the use of direct quotations except when necessary to convey the unique flavor of an original source).
- Copyright law protects not ideas per se, but the expression of them; for that reason, you generally don't need to cite obvious facts, yet you should cite something if you're using it as evidence in an argument.
- When citing a Web site, give a static URL (so that it's retraceable) and the last date of access. The University of Michigan takes plagiarism very seriously; here's a link to the [honor codes on campus](#), and here's the [plagiarism document posted by the Rackham School of Graduate Studies](#).

Classroom Conduct

This class is a mixture of lecture and discussion section. In each of these formats, things go better if we all follow a simple set of rules. Most of these could be bundled under the category of “BE COOL”/”don’t be that guy” but let’s spell a few out:

Lecture comportment:

- The golden rule is to try and not distract others. Turn your phones to vibrate. On your laptops, when not taking notes try not to distract others with your awesome 1337 HAXX0R SKILLZ or whatever.
- You’re not invisible! Reading newspapers, playing on your phone, sleeping — all things I can see. When I see these things, I’ll feel free to call out these behaviors and subject you to general ridicule. Usually for the rest of the semester.
- Feel free to ask questions! Or to tell me to slow down, or clarify a point. Being visible has an upside.
- Showing up on time is important. I try to start on time, and end on time. We all have schedules, and I try to respect yours.

Discussion section comportment:

- Come on time and be prepared! It’s a drag for the instructors and other students if you try to get through the class through conniving and shamming that you read the readings.
- Speak up! You and your classmates get more out of the class by having many voices contributed. Being scared or being cool are no reasons to keep your voice quiet.

Emailing us

This course is a nice opportunity to employ some email skills. Here are some tips on how to use email effectively in this class:

- DO: include a salutation and signature on emails.
- DO: use appropriate grammar, spelling, and punctuation. I like it that way.
- DO: be clear and to the point. Five lines or less is a good rule of thumb.
- DO: put “[SI110]: subject” in the subject lines of your email. We receive hundreds of emails a day, and this will help us make sure you receive prompt attention
- DO: copy the entire instructor team. Our contact information is on this syllabus.
- DO: include your student ID number in your signature. Especially for assignment materials, it’ll help make sure we take care of things in an expeditious manner.
- DO: contact us two days ahead of time with any problems — we will get back to you within 48 hours but we can’t promise to respond to any last-minute messages.

We strongly encourage you to use encryption for your messages. Prof. Brunton would be glad to help you set up encryption for your mail account; you can [download his public key here](#).

Prof. Brunton is sort of active on Twitter (@hagarfalk) and Google+. You are welcome to connect with him on those platforms, or not. Nothing class-vital will happen there.

Classroom Activities

We’ll be doing several things in class consistently over the semester. This section of the syllabus

is to help you map out some of the consistent activities in class.

Tech in the News: at the beginning of each lecture, we'll be looking at a current issue in the news related to information studies. This can be a technical, policy, or culture story. The idea is to highlight how information is related to so much of daily life. Issues we cover in this section will make excellent paper topics and exam examples.

IRC back channel: during the lectures, we'll have an open IRC back channel for people to ask questions about the topic being covered, discuss the class, or to seek further information from each other. A GSI will always be in the channel. We'll be on the Slashnet sever, in channel #i2i. There are several good [IRC clients](#) available.

Twitter: The Twitter hashtag for the class will be #si110. We will see anything you post with that hashtag, so it's a nice way to circulate stories and sites you come across that are relevant to the class.

Teaching Team

Your teaching team for this class includes Professor Finn Brunton, and Graduate Student Instructors Chris Leeder and Will Riley.

Professor Finn Brunton Office hours: Thursday 9-10 or by appointment Email (preferred contact method): f@finnb.net Twitter: @hagarfalk [Google+](#)

GSI Chris Leeder Email: cleeder@umich.edu

GSI Will Riley Email: rileyw@umich.edu

Assignments and Grading

A Note for Students with Special Needs

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let us know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way we teach can be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make us aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSwD) to help us determine appropriate accommodations. SSwD (734-763-3000; or on the [Web](#)) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. We will treat any information you provide as private and confidential.

Student Assessment Methods / Grading

We view grades not as rewards or punishment, but as a system to indicate to you how you might improve your performance. To make your progress entirely transparent to you, we've constructed a system of points. The class has a nominal maximum (high score) of 1000 points,

but with extra credit it's possible to go over that limit. There are several categories of assignments that make up those 1000 points.

- 100 points - A 3 page “think piece” on how social media is changing our lives
- 100 points - A brief multiple choice quiz, early in the semester
- 200 points - A 10 page research-based paper on the core topic of your choice
- 200 points - Midterm exam
- 200 points - Final exam
- 200 points - Class participation, particularly in discussion sections

These points can be translated into final grades in the following manner:

- 4.0 - A : 950 - 1000 points
- 3.7 - A- : 900 - 949 points
- 3.3 - B+ : 865 - 899
- 3.0 - B : 830 - 864
- 2.7 - B- : 800 - 829
- 2.3 - C+ : 765 - 799
- 2.0 - C : 730 - 764
- 1.7 - C- : 700 - 729
- 1.3 - D+ : 666 - 699
- 1.0 - D : 630 - 665
- 0.7 - D- : 600 - 629
- 0.0 - E : less than 600

Readings for the Course

All readings for the course are on-line, and they are extensive. Nearly all of them are readable through your browser or by using a PDF client.

Class Participation

Though this is considered a “lecture” course, it's far more exciting and educational as we have a lot of “back-and-forth” in the plenary meetings (“lectures”) as well as in the discussion sections. This is all the more important with this content, as you, the students, are often more attuned to some of these issues than is the professor. We should all be learning together. As for you showing up in lecture, we are aware that providing podcasts allows you the liberty to time- and space-shift the lecture content, and it's your adult choice whether to attend each lecture. That said, a part of your grade is based on contributions you make to the class, both the lecture and the discussion sections — if you are not there, it is difficult to earn a good grade on your participation.

For lecture sections, while we won't be taking attendance, we will note participation in back channel, or engagement in class through attention, comments, and questions, or negatives like lack of attention and distracting others. For the lecture, there will also be several in-class assignments, randomly distributed throughout the semester, that will be pass/fail and count towards participation.

We will check attendance for each discussion section; you can miss two of those, but after that,

each absence in a roll call will cost you 1/3 of your final letter grade. We are quite well aware that differences in age, sex, class, and cultural background bear heavily on rates of participation (and confidence) in class discussions and we take that fact into account when evaluating student performance. At the same time, this class should be a learning experience for us all, and we can achieve that best by being active learners — all of us. That means also that fruitful participation helps create an atmosphere in which innovative thinking and peer support/respect are vital. Another key aspect of discussion section participation is that you have read the materials posted for that week. It's obvious who has reviewed materials and who has not.

Midterm and Final Exams

Each exam is worth 200 points towards the final grade, and each will be one hour long. The midterm exam will cover material from the first half of the course and the final will cover only second-half material. Both will occur in the usual classroom; the final will happen in our last lecture-class meeting and the midterm exam will be set by your vote early in the term, though we have our own preference, which we'll make known.

There will also be a brief in-class multiple-choice quiz early in the semester, to provide feedback on your studying thus far, and help you identify areas where you want to focus

The midterm exam will be essay answers to deeper questions that attempt to integrate the themes of the course. A bit more than a week before the exam, we'll develop a set of eight potential questions for the exam. You'll view them on the Web and very shortly after, you'll vote by email to eliminate two of them. Of the remaining six, you'll see four on the exam, of which you'll answer three, plus one you've not seen before — a “mystery question.” We pull no tricks: the mystery question will, hopefully, come as no surprise to those who've been keeping abreast of the course. On the syllabus page, there are links early on in the course for exam questions we used in the previous term; once the questions for the current term are ready, we'll replace the older ones with the new ones.

The final exam will be in a different format: a mixture of multiple choice and short answer questions. Questions will be pulled both from lectures, Tech in the News segments, and course readings. A study guide will be provided a week or so before the exam is to take place.

Missing exams: Stuff happens. Very rarely does stuff happen with no advance warning. The Instructor Team will be happy to work with you to provide you with an alternate time to take an exam if something does occur. Be reasonable when requesting a different time. Going to a job interview is a good reason. Going to a Tigers game is not. We reserve the right to refuse grant an alternate test time for any reason that seems overly spurious. If you aren't able to show up to the exam OR give us advance warning, we'll be happy to do a make up if you show us pictures of your abduction by aliens on the exam day.

Papers

You will write two papers on assigned topics (and when we specify page lengths, we mean those to be rough — we don't count words). They should be double spaced, and they must provide proper citations of outside sources, and the research paper must have at minimum three

references drawn from the databases located in the University Libraries.

We require that the papers be submitted using the Assignments tool on the CTools site in a standard format (.doc, .rtf, or .pdf). If you want to use Google Docs or another online document editor, let us know and sign us on as collaborators. We'd like to know about your experiences.

The papers should not be a simple summarization of the readings or a "report." Rather, we want you to make an argument, to take a position and defend it. Your grade on the paper does not come from the opinion you have or position you take. Instead, you will be graded on your ability to support that stance, providing logical and persuasive rationales and using solid evidence. Spouting an opinion without due attention to logic and evidence simply will not do. We will offer you not only topics for each assignment, but a few examples as to how you might address them. We try to come up with a new paper topic each term so that your thinking will always be fresh and relevant. Please feel free to suggest paper topics at any time. On the syllabus page, there are links early on in the course for topics other professors have assigned in the previous term. A key rationale for assigning papers is to facilitate both the firming up of ideas on your side — nothing helps gel ideas better than putting them on paper — and to fuel the discussion sections.

This approach flows from our belief in active learning, that is, that by grappling with issues you in a sense gain "ownership" of them, thereby going beyond the passivity of merely letting words float before your eyes. The due dates for the papers posted on the "i2i Syllabus & News Page" are of a "drop dead" character (we urge you to turn them in earlier if you wish), and for each day a paper is inexcusably late, you will lose 1/2 of a grade letter on the paper.

Details on these papers can be found in the appropriate folders on CTools.

Detailed Schedule

Thursday January 5 *Introduction*

The first day: We'll talk about how this is going to work, what we'll focus on, and how to achieve a HI SCORE in the class. You'll meet your teaching team, and we'll meet you.

TODO Before your sections meet this week, write a short autobiography (the usual facts, plus one thing about yourself that's unusual), with a statement about how you learn best, whatever that means to you, and send it as an email attachment to your GSI. A few paragraphs is fine, and it's not graded.

Tuesday January 10 *What Is Information?*

We'll cover what "information" means, how we define and measure it, and how it works in our heads and in the world. We'll talk about cybernetics, information theory and science, Claude Shannon, Gregory Bateson, Norbert Weiner, different kinds of signals, the "difference that makes a difference," and how the human senses work informationally.

TODO Read the Introduction of James Gleick's *The Information: A History, A Theory, A Flood*.

(PDFs will be in CTools for this week, as usual.) Read Wikipedia's entry [Information](#), using the methods we discussed to assess its quality, and follow at least three related links.

Thursday January 12 *Histories of Information I*

We'll start way back — with the beginnings of language (the first information technology), cave art, the shift from orality to writing, ideographic/logographic/phonographic written languages, Walter Ong, cuneiform and symbol systems, the birth of the book and movable type, Bi Sheng and Johannes Gutenberg.

TODO Read Chapter 2 of James Gleick's *The Information*.

Tuesday January 17 *Histories of Information II*

We'll cover the information Renaissance (both figurative and literal) in the West after printing: the scientific revolution, the Enlightenment, distributed control of organizations around the world, wired and wireless media (telegraph, telephone, radio, moving images) — and the birth of the computer!

TODO Go through the entries in [Predicting the Future of Computation](#) from 1500 to 2005.

Thursday January 19 *Histories of Information III*

In which we arrive in the information age: the end of gatekeepers, crowd vs. expert, networks over hierarchies, and the development of low-cost information tools and questions of global access. We'll discuss positive (Shirky, Benkler, Rheingold) and negative (Lanier, Morozov, Sunstein, Turkle) takes on what this era is doing to us — and why all of those takes may be somewhat invalid — and we'll introduce the ideas of gamification and “big data.”

TODO Read Shirky's chapter from *Cognitive Surplus*. Read Bonnie Huang's post about [the Shanzhai hardware hackers](#) — and consider the rapid evolution of cheap hardware and connectivity.

Tuesday January 24 *Information and Freedom I*

Obviously information technology and freedom are correlated — or are they? We'll talk about the promise, and the realities, of open information and the “end of secrets,” echo chambers, filter bubbles, overload and information cascades in politics, the question of “online activism” vs. other kinds, what it means to be “information literate,” and how to be accurate in a world of competing signals.

TODO Read Cook and Lewandowsky's “The Debunking Handbook.” Read Russ Neuman on information overload over time. Watch [Eli Parsier's talk](#) on “filter bubbles.” Read [“Digital Literacy: Search Algorithms are Mechanical Turks”](#).

Thursday January 26 *Information and Freedom II*

Chris Leeder will guest lecture on information literacy!

Tuesday January 31 *Findability I*

We'll discuss how we determine "information needs," and how to meet them, the theories that drive different models of searching and browsing, the outside factors and costs that make it hard to accurately evaluate the information we've got — how you need, and how you know, what you need to know.

TODO First, look at Hilbert and Lopez, "The World's Technological Capacity to Store, Communicate, and Compute Information" — we don't expect you to read or understand all of it, but take in the numbers and get the scale of the problem. Finally, look through the [Endeca User Interface Design Pattern Library](#) for some thought-provoking forms of display (we'll come back to this.)

Optional Read the [fascinating article about Gordon Bell's MyLifeBits project and the prospect of "lifelogging"](#) — with a whole new layer of findability issues.

Thursday February 2 *Findability II*

How social media and search engines change what we know, and how we know it. What is "social media"? We'll discuss how it works, how different search engines function (and how they could function differently, and better), and the new forms of knowledge — and manipulation — that they enable.

TODO Read danah boyd and Kate Crawford's "Six Provocations for Big Data."

Tuesday February 7 *Computer and Network Architectures I*

We start with the box: the fundamental hard- and software of computing. We'll discuss computability, information architectures, the invention of the hard drive and the database, the birth of the operating system, and the creation of interface tools.

TODO Read Jeanette Wing's "Computational Thinking." Read Prof. Brunton's "Brief Guide to Computers."

Optional If you'd like to start teaching yourself programming, we would recommend [the Processing language](#), [Learn Python the Hard Way](#), and [why's poignant guide to Ruby](#) as some good starting points.

Thursday February 9 *Computer and Network Architectures II*

Then we hook the box up to the network of many other boxes. We'll cover the birth of network protocols and technologies, packet-switching, analog vs. digital, different kinds of networks (and what comes after the Internet), the Web, and the cloud.

TODO Read Prof. Brunton's "Brief Guide to the Internet."

Tuesday February 14 *Open Source*

We'll talk about open source software and open culture, the difference between free and open, the culture of collaboration, "commons-based peer production," walled gardens and the future of software (and culture?).

TODO Read chapter 3 of Yochai Benkler's *The Wealth of Networks*, and the manifesto "The Cathedral and the Bazaar." **First brief quiz**

Thursday February 16 *Information Policy*

We'll discuss intellectual property and government protection: international trade agreements, questions of authorship, money, fair use, and slander, piracy and the production of content. How has copyright changed? What are other systems of payment and distribution?

TODO Read chapter 7 from Lessig's *CODE 2.0*.

Tuesday February 21 *Study Break*

We will pause to consider the readings and prepare for the midterm. No meeting.

Thursday February 23 *Midterm exam!*

It will consist of the four questions you voted on (of which you answer any three), and a fourth "mystery question."

Tuesday March 6 *Information and Interface Design I*

First, we'll talk about what it means to visualize and display information. What are the best practices? How can we visualize changes over time as well as distributions in space? We'll look at some world-class examples, from Galileo's notebooks to Isotype to proposed nuclear waste storage facilities (and at some visualization "don'ts"), learn some classic tricks and rules of thumb, and talk about the limits of information display.

TODO Go through all eight video chapters on data visualization in journalism at [Journalism in the Age of Data](#). Watch [Hans Rosling's brief performance](#) of real-space information performance.

[Visual Complexity](#) is a great blog for more of this kind of work.

Thursday March 8 *Information and Interface Design II*

Second, we'll turn to how to design *interactions* with information. How do good interfaces work, and how can we improve them? We'll have a crash course in user experience design, accessibility, constraints and feedback, A/B testing, wireframes, storytelling, personae, and interaction modes. We'll look at some projects and platforms and work out, in class, innovative and functional interfaces for them.

TODO Read Rogers, Sharp and Preece: *Interaction Design*, Chapters 1 and 2. Take a look at [Little Big Details](#). **Second think piece due!**

Optional The Wikipedia page for [user interface design](#) is a good brief overview of the field (follow the links!). Chapter 9 of Jessie Schell's *Art of Game Design* discusses how information and interfaces can be configured to produce a "flow state."

Tuesday March 13 *Information and Interface Design III*

We'll discuss the design of future interfaces. We'll discuss what's most likely going to happen, and the pros and cons; how to plan resources and projects for unforeseen interfaces; some outliers and possible game-changers; what projections and predictions of the future get wrong, and how to be less wrong than usual.

TODO Look over Julian Bleeker's "Design Fiction: A Short Essay on Design, Science, Fact and Fiction." We don't expect you to read the whole thing! Check out some of the different projects and examples, and understand what "design fiction" is and why it's helpful. Read "[Sometimes the Stories Are the Science](#)", about video prototyping for new interfaces and objects. Work on the chapters for Thursday.

Thursday March 15 *Information Economics*

We'll be talking about the complex but very important distinctions about the economics of information. How is it priced? How do we make economic decisions about it? It is a term-heavy lecture: we will learn about nonrival goods, mindshare, bundling, lock-in, common carriage, public goods, digital rights management and other jargon; how to make smart decisions about formats and companies; and how to work with different pricing models, market tails, and niche markets.

TODO Read Shapiro and Varian, *Information Rules*, Chapters 1 and 2.

Tuesday March 20 *Information (and) Work I*

So we live in an information economy. We'll talk about what it means to be an information or knowledge worker — and how work happens now: remotely, collaboratively, in ways that may not reflect traditional job qualifications, titles and hierarchies. We'll discuss the positives and negatives of contemporary online nomads and outsourced workers and the tools of self-regulation and self-management that have been developed for these groups. Plus being an entrepreneur, and why reading too much Hacker News is bad for you.

TODO We're going to look at a specific case of contemporary information work — the DIY gaming scene: read "[Can D.I.Y. Supplant the First-Person Shooter?](#)" and [this brief interview with Jason Rohrer about his production setup](#) and his [notes on his life of voluntary simplicity](#). Along with that, look at Rheinhardt et al, "Knowledge Worker Roles and Actions" — you don't need to read the whole thing, but pay careful attention to the "typology of actions" and the "typology of roles": how many of these do you do every day? What do you rarely (or never) do? Think about how an organization incorporates these.

Optional If you want to read the bizarre real-life story of the war that broke out around Jason Rohrer's game *Chain World*, [here's a good article](#). For fun, check out the [Hierarchy of Digital Distractions](#) (already obsolete!).

Thursday March 22 *Information (and) Work II*

Having discussed the work, we can talk about the enterprise: the pros and cons of crowdsourcing, the new cities and work spaces that emerge from these new forms of labor, the management techniques that succeed and fail in this environment, and the advent of new models of production and organization for businesses.

TODO Watch the two-part video or read the two-part transcript of [Philip Rosedale's talk on the crowdsourced creation of Coffee & Power](#) — the transcript is faster but some of the slides are important. Ignore his company cheerleading and focus on the mechanisms that enabled a whole, complex company to be assembled with almost no employees — no engineers, no program managers. Then, sticking with theme of games, read Chapter 23 of Jessie Schell's *The Art of Game Design*, about how teams work in the process of producing a game — a hands-on look at collaboration around an information good.

Tuesday March 27 *Information (and) Society I*

We'll be talking about haves and have-nots, who goes unheard, how audiences are formed, failures of usability and functionality, and how different social systems installed in our technologies (like “proper names” and genders for databases) can function to exclude people — ways that the wide adoption of information technology is creating new barriers, and raising some hard questions, that have to be addressed.

TODO Read [Falsehoods Programmers Believe About Names](#) (check out the comments for a spirited debate), and, on the other side, for the question of audience and viable production, first read Kevin Kelly's speculation [1,000 True Fans](#) and the followups: [The case Against 1000 True Fans](#), [The Reality of Depending on True Fans](#) and [Stars of 1,000 True Fans](#) — again, look in the comments for much argument and many examples on both sides.

Thursday March 29 *Information (and) Society II*

We will discuss “network culture”: how information technologies have enabled new, and sometimes very strange, forms of cultural activity. Memes and LOLcats, remixing and mashups, 4chan and Reddit, what the varieties of YouTube videos say about social media production, and many forms of global Internet culture beyond the English speaking world.

TODO Read Andy Baio's post [“No Copyright Intended”](#), and take a look at some of the videos on [Supercut](#) (“Various Films” in the alphabetic list has the most interesting stuff). Read Simon Reynolds' [“Xenomania: Nothing Is Foreign In An Internet Age”](#), which brings up the new modes of network-enabled “nomad eclecticism” in global music.

Tuesday April 3 *Privilege Escalation: Privacy, Access, Exploits I*

A dark side of information technology: the problem of privacy. What is “privacy,” and what are the trade-offs? We will talk about contextual integrity, privacy as a right and as a practice, how data mining works, online marketing and advertising, and the personal-data-capturing engines of Facebook, Google and Amazon.

TODO Read Helen Nissenbaum’s “A Contextual Approach to Privacy Online.”

Thursday April 5 *Privilege Escalation: Privacy, Access, Exploits II*

Another dark side of information technology: security and crime. We’ll discuss worms, viruses, malware and spyware, botnets, DDoS attacks, espionage, packet-sniffing and sidejacking attacks, man-in-the-middle attacks, phishing and zero-day exploits — and how to take care of ourselves.

TODO Read through the [many varieties of malware on Wikipedia](#). Look at the [WikiLeaks site devoted to collecting documents and videos](#) around state spying and mass interception systems, and follow a few of the links — I personally recommend [GAMMA’s insane advertising videos](#) which brag about enabling law enforcement to tap Skype calls and hack BlackBerries and so on. Consider the [seemingly simple problem of crossing a border with a laptop](#).

Tuesday April 10 *Social Media and Social Information I*

How is social media evolving? Who uses it and for what? We’ll look at the power and pitfalls of designing and using social media systems, the concepts of social capital, transaction costs, signaling, and relational investment, and new ways the “social layer” is being added to forms and categories of information very different from sandwiches and cute cat pictures.

TODO Read [“Ranking Live Streams of Data”](#) — a real-world instance from LinkedIn.

Thursday April 12 *Social Media and Social Information II*

Guest lecture, to be announced. Prof. Brunton will be out of town.

TODO To be decided.

Tuesday April 17 *Reviewing Topics — and Future Scenarios*

We’ll do a brief, high-level refresher on everything we’ve covered this semester, and look towards the final. Then we’ll go out on a limb and discuss some long-term future scenarios for information — its economics, its impact, its devices and management, its transformation. Come prepared to think out loud and speculate!

TODO Read the epilogue to Gliick’s *The Information*.