

Tompkins Cortland Community College
Master Course Syllabus

Course Discipline and Number: IRM 101
Course Title: Research Strategies

Year: 2024-2025
Credit Hours: 1

Attendance Policy: *To maintain good grades, regular attendance in class is necessary. Absence from class is considered a serious matter and absence never excuses a student from class work. It is the responsibility of all instructors to distribute reasonable attendance policies in writing during the first week of class. Students are required to comply with the attendance policy set by each of their instructors. Students are not penalized if they are unable to attend classes or participate in exams on particular days because of religious beliefs, in accordance with Chapter 161, Section 224-a of the Education Law of the State of New York. Students who plan to be absent from classroom activity for religious reasons should discuss the absence in advance with their instructors. See college catalog for more information.*

Services for Students with Disabilities: *It is the College's policy to provide, on an individual basis, appropriate academic adjustments for students with disabilities, which may affect their ability to fully participate in program or course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Coordinator of Access and Equity Services, to discuss their particular need for accommodations. All course materials are available in alternate formats upon request.*

Course Description

How do you go about researching an information problem? This course goes beyond basic database and Internet searching to identify the experts, agencies, foundations and organizations who generate information. Search tools are reviewed, but the emphasis is on evaluation and critical reading of sources. Some class time is devoted to discussion of critical issues involving the role of information in society such as privacy, civil liberties, free speech and disinformation. Prerequisite: Prior completion or concurrent enrollment in ENGL 100. 1 Cr. (0.5 Lec., 0.5 Lab.) Spring semester.

Course Context/Audience

Research Strategies is intended to help students conduct better college-level research. It will support any program that requires research and writing. Research Strategies may be taken as an unrestricted elective. Students are advised to take this course as early in their program as possible, as the skills they learn will help them in other courses. Research Strategies is a requirement for students in the Communications & Media Arts program.

Basic Skills/Entry Level Expectations

Writing: WC College level writing skills are required. See course co-requisites or pre-requisites.
Math: M2 Completed MATH 090 (if needed) - Course requires only the use of basic mathematical skills.
Reading: R4 Before taking this course, students must satisfactorily complete RDNG 116 or have assessment indicating that no reading course was required.
Computer: C1 Requires basic computer skills - Course requires one or more of the following skills: basic keyboarding; basic word processing; simple file management; using e-mail; information searching on the Internet.

Course Goals

Students will learn how to take an information problem drawn from current events and explore its political, scientific and economic ramifications, expanding their knowledge base by using sources such as quality publications, subject-matter experts, government agencies, research foundations and non-governmental organizations.

Students will develop an understanding of critical issues in society created by the easy availability of information, in particular privacy, civil liberties, free speech and disinformation.

Course Objectives/Topics

Revised Spr 14

Objective/Topic	% Course
Students will be able to apply basic database concepts (subject headings, fields, Boolean operators, and various other delimiters) to novel searching situations.	10%
Students will distinguish between various information sources and categorize them, for example as primary or secondary, and as anecdotal, research or critical.	15%
Students will accurately summarize main points of a given text.	15%
Students will use a text or an initial search as a basis for developing a search strategy, based on their reading and understanding of the text(s).	15%
Students will use information sources from their reiterated searches to develop a list of experts, government agencies, research foundations, professional associations and non-governmental organizations most significant to the research question they are investigating.	20%
Students will articulate information gaps in their understanding of an issue and develop strategies for closing them.	15%
Students will discuss at least one critical issue having to do with the control of information in society.	10%

General Education Goals - Critical Thinking & Social/Global Awareness

CRITICAL THINKING OUTCOMES	HOW DOES THE COURSE ADDRESS THE OUTCOMES (Include required or recommended instructional resources, strategies, learning activities, assignments, etc., that must or could be used to address the goal/outcomes)
<p>Students will be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ develop meaningful questions to address problems or issues. ➤ gather, interpret, and evaluate relevant sources of information. ➤ reach informed conclusions and solutions. ➤ consider analytically the viewpoints of self and others. 	<p>Students will read and summarize a variety of sources used in exploring various information problems. At least one of the sources used in information problem-solving will be professional interviews, requiring careful listening. Students will read, write, and listen while participating in online class discussions based on readings about critical information issues. Students will prepare for and conduct an interview of a subject matter expert relevant to his or her respective class information problem. Students will submit a written summary, individually, of a class information problem and one other information problem of their choosing. Summaries will list their selections of the ten most valuable information sources they found on the topic, as well as a list of all the important experts, agencies and organizations associated with the topic. At least some of the sources used in information problem-solving will be audio, requiring careful listening. Students will submit a written summary, individually, of the class information problem and one other information problem of their choosing. Summaries will list their selections of the most valuable information sources they found on the topic, as well as a list of all the important experts, agencies and organizations associated with the topic.</p> <p>Students will be required to move beyond typical student searching behaviors (Internet and ProQuest) to deeply grapple with where information comes from in society and how it is used. Students will be required to restate main concepts learned from information sources in their own language. This class will emphasize the critical evaluation of information, including work on how information is manipulated to favor certain points of view. Students will have two opportunities (group information problem and individual information problem) to create a final product which gives an overview of a selected topic and would serve as a useful research guide.</p>

SOCIAL/GLOBAL AWARENESS OUTCOMES	HOW DOES THE COURSE ADDRESS THE OUTCOMES (Include required or recommended instructional resources, strategies, learning activities, assignments, etc., that must or could be used to address the goal/outcomes)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Students will begin to understand how their lives are shaped by the complex world in which they live. ➤ Students will understand that their actions have social, economic and environmental consequences. 	<p>In their group discussions, students will explore quality information sources to support, challenge and deepen their previously held beliefs. In their individual projects, students will select a topic of interest to them and reiterate the group process, searching for and evaluating high-quality information sources to again expand their knowledge base and support decision-making on an important issue.</p> <p>In their group projects, students will explore quality information sources to support, challenge and deepen their previously held beliefs. In their individual projects, students will select a topic of interest to them and reiterate the group process, searching for and evaluating high-quality information sources to again expand their knowledge base and support decision-making on an important issue.</p>

Instructional Methods

There are five elements to this class:

1. The Class Project: For the first four or five weeks of class, students will work independently on an interesting information problem proposed by the teacher. The ideal problem for this exercise will be a scientific problem with sociological, political, business and cultural ramifications. Through class discussions, the teacher will model effective searching strategies such as looking through any articles and books available for organizations and experts worth pursuing and using the Web to look for specific sites of relevant agencies and organizations. Also during this process the teacher should be modeling and reinforcing basic database concepts such as subject headings, field searching, etc. During this process the class will develop a concept map which will be available to add to at each session as more is learned. This entire period should be seen as developing a model which the student will be expected to replicate on a second problem of their choosing. As the first information problem is drawing to a close, it may be useful to introduce the expert interview.
2. The Individual Information Problem: Once the class project is concluded students will move on to demonstrate what they've learned by developing their own information case. The format of this presentation should be left to the student. The more traditional student may want to use the opportunity to do research for a project in another class and provide the bibliography as his/her finished project for IRM 101. A more visual student might want to hand in a concept map based on their reading. Art, music, poetry and fiction should all be welcomed as long as they clearly demonstrate that the student has done the research and understands the problem they have chosen to work on. Another possibility to be encouraged is for the student to develop a proposal for an information case to be used in subsequent semesters.
3. Issue Discussions: While the students are working on their projects they should also have weekly reading assignments for class discussion. The readings should be brief and engaging. Online discussion forums will be provided for students to ask questions about and discuss their projects.
4. Skills Checklist: At the beginning of the semester each student should be given a skills checklist which addresses the mechanical part of information seeking. They should be reminded at every class session or in every module that it is up to them to get the teacher's confirmation on each skill and they can request an opportunity to demonstrate skills at any time in class (in-person or online) or by appointment. This list should be brief and to the point and should address only mechanical searching skills, such as appropriate use of Boolean operators. These skills are necessary and they need to be included in the course, but they absolutely must be pushed into the background if students are ever to understand that research is an intellectual endeavor and not a mechanical one.
5. Final Project (Optional): For the final project, students will be given an information problem similar to the two they have already worked and asked to apply the strategies they have learned. It might be a good idea to give them a copy of a similar project or test at the beginning of the course to help them understand what they need to learn throughout the semester. It should be emphasized repeatedly that if they master the skills and strategies as they go along there won't be any need to study for the test or project. Citation should be de-emphasized and quality of sources and search strategies

emphasized. The teacher may want to use the final exam or project as a motivation tool throughout the semester by setting standards of mastery that students can attain as they go through the course which will entitle them to be excused from the exam or project.

Methods of Assessment/Evaluation

Method	% Course Grade
Discussions/Participation	20%
Assignments	80%

Text(s)

No text required

Bibliography

Breivik, P. S. (1998). Student learning in the information age. Phoenix: Oryx.Fister, B. (© 1993).

Teaching the rhetorical dimensions of research. Research Strategies, 11(4), 211-19.Fister, B. (© 1992).

The research process of undergraduate students. Journal of Academic Librarianship, 13(3), 163-9.Fister, B. (© 1990).

Teaching research as a social act: collaborative learning and the library. RQ, 29(4), 505-9. Kuhlthau, C. C. (© 1988).

Developing a model of the library search process: Cognitive and affective aspects. RQ, 28(2), 232-42. Shapiro, J. J., & Hughes, S. K. (© 1996).

Information literacy as a liberal art: Enlightenment proposals for a new curriculum. Educom Review, 31(2), 31-35.

Learning Resources

Audiovisual

The need for specific audiovisual resources will depend on the information problem(s) selected by the teacher and the students to work on for the semester. They should be requested from Media Services as necessary.

Electronic

Students will need full Internet access.

General databases such as Academic Search Premier available through the library will be used.

Other

Books that will be needed will depend on the particular information problem that is assigned to the students. The collection in the TC3 Library, as well as resources of the SUNY system, are more than adequate.

The course has already been created in a full online format in ANGEL and a new section can be opened by Campus Technology with the Dean of Instruction's approval.