

**GOVERNMENT INFORMATION
RESOURCES & SERVICES
Mondays 6 PM – 8:50 PM
LIS 2537
Spring Term 2013
University of Pittsburgh
Room 403, School of Information Sciences (SIS) Building**

Mark C. Scott
Adjunct Faculty
University of Pittsburgh
G-22 Hillman Library
3960 Forbes Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15226
412-383-5097

Office hours: By appointment
Email: mcs50@pitt.edu

SYLLABUS

Unit subject topics and scheduling may be modified as necessary.

COURSE GOAL

The overarching goal of this course is to provide developing librarians and information professionals with an overview of the key resources, services, concepts, and issues related to Government Information.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Access to government information, in furtherance of an informed citizenry, has historically been a fundamental tenet and philosophical underpinning of U.S. democracy. In the digital age, a sea of change in government information access and provision is underway: specifically, information produced by and about “government” is shifting more and more from print to electronic sources and formats. Indeed, in many instances much government information is now *only* accessible via electronic means.

This e-government transformation is introducing new expectations and service demands: (1) that libraries and information centers are and will be vital physical *and* virtual portals for access to government information, and (2) that librarians and information professionals will increasingly be expected to provide library users—as well as traditionally non-users of libraries—with “expert” government information guidance and help. This cyber-government landscape presents significant challenges and opportunities for librarians and information professionals and the customers they serve.

Throughout this term, we will examine the current state of, and important questions and issues stemming from, this unprecedented, ever-evolving government information environment, within a library and information science (LIS) context.

OBJECTIVES

- To learn about the history of government publishing and printing and the Federal Depository Library Program
- To introduce e-government resources and services, and consider a variety of e-government “hot topics” and issues
- To become familiar with existing, revised, new, and proposed legislation and initiatives impacting government information
- To gain a greater understanding of local, state, and federal government information resources and services
- To examine the processes and resources of the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of government, as well as the regulatory process
- To attain basic awareness of the Superintendent of Documents (SuDoc) Government Information classification system
- To learn about performing historical research using U.S. government documents and statistical sources
- To investigate a range of issues related to providing services, and the development and management of government information print and electronic collections by LIS professionals
- To enhance awareness of international government information resources and services
- To explore current developments and future trends in government information
- To acquire a deeper understanding of the relevance of government information resources and services for LIS professionals and information centers, as well as for our customers and broader societies

COURSE STRUCTURE

“Blended” learning is a hybrid of on-campus classroom and online learning that incorporates the conveniences and advantages of online courses with those of face-to-face contact.

This blended course is being offered in order to maximize the interaction of the instructor and students who are located in geographically diverse regions. The student population includes a rich mix of academic and professional backgrounds and provides varied viewpoints on the topics to be covered.

A typical week in this course will follow this schedule:

Monday:

6 PM – 8:50 PM

An on-campus presentation of the weekly topic(s) will be conducted and videotaped. The audio and PowerPoint slides for the session will subsequently be available for asynchronous online viewing within approximately 24 hours (in some cases, potentially longer if technical difficulties arise).

OTHER SOURCES FOR GOVERNMENT INFORMATION AWARENESS

Students are encouraged to augment their awareness of government information-related issues by subscribing to and reading postings of groups, such as the Penn State University-based Government Information Listserv, [GovDoc-L](#). The Government Printing Office (GPO) also provides information on how to subscribe to several dozen [ListServes](#) related to its publications; see <http://listserv.access.gpo.gov/>.

Readings

Required Text: (available for purchase/ordering at Pitt Book Center or via Amazon or another bookseller) This title is also on reserve at the Hillman Library Information Desk.

Forte, Eric J. Hartnett, Cassandra, Severson, Andrea. (2011) *Fundamentals of Government Information: Mining, Finding, Evaluating, and Using Government Resources*. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers.

Course readings in CourseWeb

Each week, the required readings will be listed in the WEEKLY folder area on CourseWeb. Journal articles will be provided for the purposes of discussion in addition to the textbook readings.

Course Calendar and Topics

Week 1 - January 7, 2013

Review of course syllabus
Introduction to the Course

The People's Information

Reading: Fundamentals, Chap. 1
Sign up for the GovDoc-L listserv

Week 2 - January 14, 2013

Thinking like a government documents librarian
Reading: Fundamentals, Chap. 2

[Article 1](#)

Week 3 - January 21, 2013

No Class - Martin Luther King Day

[Discussion Topic 1](#) - GovDoc-L listserv

Week 4 - January 28, 2013

The Legislative Process and its resources
Reading: Fundamentals, Chap. 3

Due: Depository Visit Assignment

Week 5 - February 4, 2013

Federal Regulations

Reading: Fundamentals, Chap. 4

[Discussion Topic 2](#)

[Article 2](#)

Week 6 - February 11, 2013

Legal Resources

Reading: Fundamentals, Chap. 5

Due: Reference Question Assignment #1

[Discussion Topic 3](#)

Week 7 - February 18, 2013

Publications of the President and Executive Branch Resources

Reading: Fundamentals, Chap. 6 & 7

[Discussion Topic 4](#)

Week 8 - February 25, 2013

Health

Reading: Fundamentals, Chap. 9

[Article 3](#)

Week 9 - March 4, 2013

United Nations: Information Resources and Services

Guest Speaker: Thomas Twiss, Government Resources Librarian, Hillman Library, University of Pittsburgh

Week 10 - March 11, 2013

NO CLASS: Spring Break

UNIVERSITY SPRING BREAK: March 10-17, 2013

Week 11 - March 18, 2013

Education Resources

Reading: Fundamentals, Chap. 10

Due: Reference Question Assignment #2

Week 12 – March 23, 2013

Business, Economic and Consumer Information

Reading: Fundamentals, Chap. 13

[Article 4](#)

Week 13A - April 1, 2013

Science, Technical, Environment, and Energy Information

Reading: Fundamentals, Chap. 11 & 12

[Article 5](#)

FastTrack Weekend

Week 13B- April 5, 2013

Census and Government Statistical Sources

Readings: Fundamentals, Chap. 8 & 14

Week 14 – April 8, 2013

NO CLASS Due to FastTrack

Week 15 - April 15, 2013

State and Local Resources

Due: Reference Question Assignment #3

[Discussion Topic 5](#)

Assignments

Submission of Assignments

Assignments for this course will be submitted via the Assignment Manager in Courseweb unless otherwise noted. All assignments submitted via Courseweb must be submitted by [5pm Eastern](#) on the day of class.

[One point per day will be deducted for all assignments submitted late.](#)

Journal Article Discussion Assignments Due: Via CourseWeb by 5pm on the day of class

The journal articles discussion assignments are designed to get you thinking about the related topics and issues within the documents community. There will be five articles assigned throughout the semester (see above Calendar for due date). Please post your thoughts and comments about the articles in the appropriate discussion board topic. Each post will be worth a total of 3 points. We will discuss the article at the beginning of class on the due date. Grading for this assignment is based on the thought and quality of your response concerning the concepts and ideas featured in the article.

**Discussion Topic Assignments
on the day of class**

Due: Via CourseWeb by 5pm (Eastern)

The discussion questions are designed to get you thinking about the subject matter. There will be five discussion topics throughout the semester worth 4 points each for a total of 20 points. You will be asked to answer the discussion questions and then share your response in class or if you are an online student via the discussion board.

Depository visit (See Course Calendar or Courseweb for due date)

Visit a federal depository library and search the library's catalog for a print government document on a topic of your choice. Next find the document on the shelf. While in the stacks review the organization of the collection, what do you notice? Was there a separate desk for document reference questions? Were the stacks opened or closed to the public? Did you speak with a librarian or staff person for help? If so, did they provide good information? Were there other patrons using the collection? Additional things to observe, was there a depository eagle sticker on the main entrance door? Was the collection easy to find? Write a brief (two pages, double spaced) review of the entire search process. Include the search terms you used to find your document, the title of the item you found, the SuDoc number and your impression of the collection and services.

Reference question exercises Assignment #1-3 (See course schedule or Courseweb for due dates)

During the semester, there will be three **(15 question) intensive reference question assignments**. The questions will involve the use of the Government resources covered in class and are available in a Federal Depository Library collection and/or via the ULS database or on the Internet. Please see the Calendar above for corresponding due dates. The questions will be posted to the Assignment section two weeks prior to the due date.

Course Requirements

Journal articles – response via Discussion Board in Courseweb (5 worth 3 pts each)	15%
Discussion Topics – response via Discussion Board in Courseweb (5 worth 4 pts each)	20%
Depository visit review	20%
Three reference question assignments (15 points each)	45%

Grades

94-100 = A

90-93 = A-

87-89 = B+

83-86 = B

80-82 = B-

77-79 = C+

73-76 = C

70-72 = C-

below 70 = F

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: PHYSICAL OR LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting accommodation(s), you must contact both the instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 216 William Pitt Union (412-648-7890/TTY:412-383-7366) within the first two weeks of the term, i.e. by January 18th. You should also consult the office's website www.drs.pitt.edu. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodation(s) for this course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND GRADING

Students in this course are expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity; see <http://www.pitt.edu/~provost/ai1.html>. Copies of this policy were available at the SIS orientation session and are available through the SIS Dean's Office. Any student suspected of violating academic integrity will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. If it is determined that a student has violated the policy on academic integrity, he or she will fail the course.

INCOMPLETE GRADES (G)

All students are expected to complete course assignments on the specified due date. Deductions will be taken for late work. Only in rare cases will exceptions be made, e.g. verified hospitalization, approved bereavement leave, etc.