

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY  
MASTER OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE  
MLIS 7110 Online Searching  
Syllabus—Spring Semester 2014  
Three Credit Hours

**Instructor:**

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**Catalog Description**

An introduction to methods of information retrieval used in commercial databases and on the World Wide Web. Advanced search strategies such as complex Boolean operations and keyword commands will be included.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

Given a real-world environment of online information retrieval products, students will identify:

- Commercial vendors and marketplaces
- Databases of varying content, scope, format
- Interfaces based on usability
- Indexing and controlled vocabulary features
- Free Web resources

Given a series of online searching exercises that simulate real-world client questions, students will:

- Interview a client to verify information need(s)
- Identify searchable resources appropriate to information need(s)
- Translate research questions into effective and efficient search statements
- Navigate to and from adjunct files (indices, thesauri, saved documents)
- Interpret results output (citations, full records, full-text formats)
- Preserve findings in a form most accessible to the client
- Locate actual source materials or deliver location information to clients
- Evaluate the success of their own search efforts

**Textbooks**

The purchase of a commercial textbook is not required for this course. The instructor provides numerous handouts and guided search sheets. Print these out and organize them into a notebook.

**Online Learning Objects**

EBSCOhost User Guide

[http://support.epnet.com/knowledge\\_base/detail.php?id=3866](http://support.epnet.com/knowledge_base/detail.php?id=3866)

EBSCO Support Tutorials

<http://support.epnet.com/training/tutorials.php>

## Journal Articles

### Class 4

“Information Search Tactics” by Marcia J. Bates.

<http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/bates/articles/Information%20Search%20Tactics.html>

Published in 1979 – still a classic.

### Class 5

Two conference presentations from 1998 by Jessica L. Milstead:

“NISO Z39.19: Standard for Structure and Organization of Information Retrieval Thesauri”

<http://www.bayside-indexing.com/Milstead/z39.htm>

“Use of Thesauri in the Full-Text Environment”

<http://www.bayside-indexing.com/Milstead/useof.htm>

### Class 13

“Adding Value to Your Online Results” by Robert Schwarzwald. *Database Magazine* 20 (1997), unpaginated. Full-text available in Academic Search Complete.

"After the Research: Information Professionals' SECRETS for Delivering Results"

by Angela Kansiger. *Online* 27 (2003), unpaginated. Full-text available in Academic Search Complete.

## Instructor Availability & Support

Check with your instructor for her/his policy on how frequently e-mail and telephone messages will be returned. By institutional policy, instructors are asked to communicate with students online through VSU accounts (BlazeView and VSU e-mail). If you are registered for the course as a non-degree student, a VSU email account will be assigned to you for this semester.

All discussion posts and assignment submissions for this online course must be sent via BlazeView. Your VSU email username serves as your BlazeVIEW login. The BlazeVIEW password requires at least one capital letter and one number in it. See the section on “Technical Requirements” on page 4 of this syllabus for contact information in the case you need technical help.

## Attendance

This is a Web-delivered course, with no required face-to-face meetings. The instructor will schedule real-time instruction using tools in BlazeVIEW such as Live Classroom.

## Course Activities Outline

The following list is a brief overview of the activities included in this course. Complete instructions for each assignment along with grading criteria will be posted on the BlazeView course site in advance of that assignment’s due date.

### Independent Search Exams

**32 points**

Exam #1 (16 points) – applying searching techniques and rules using a search form.

Exam #2 (16 points) – applying searching techniques and rules using a command interface.

## Discussion Posts

28 points

Practice Search 1 (7 points) – keyword searching in a menu-driven search form.  
Search Term Safari (7 points) – finding and modifying thesaurus terms.  
Practice Search 2 (7 points) - advanced searching using multiple techniques.  
Dear Dr. Search-It (7 points) – explaining a search using a discovery tool.

## Course Project #1: Biography of a Database and Its Users

16 points

A report that profiles a database and the online searching habits of its primary users. In the first part of the report, you will provide an overview of the database - its history, contents, types of material included, scope and coverage, frequency of updates, and the vendors that market subscriptions to it. Devote the second part of the report to a short profile of the audience for which the database is intended, including a description of how the search features and functionality of that database fit the searching habits of those intended users.

## Course Project #2: Client Report

24 points

A documented client report that demonstrates your online searching expertise in multiple databases and free Web sites to find materials on a multi-faceted topic for a client. Examples of your search histories and consultations with the client (who will be a classmate) are part of this project.

## Graded Course Requirements

As a student in this class, you are expected to: (1) read or view all assigned background materials; (2) participate in all online discussions and class follow-up activities; (3) check the BlazeVIEW course site regularly for messages and posted materials; (4) submit all projects on time and according to the format designated by the instructor, and (5) conduct your research and composition according to the rules of academic integrity (see Academic Honesty section on pages 4-5).

\*Specifics on each graded requirement are included in the “Assignment Calendar” document

100 – 90 points = A      89 – 80 points = B      79 – 70 points = C      69-60 points = D      Below 60 points = F

No grade below a C will be credited toward a VSU graduate degree.

**To be eligible for an A in this course requires completing every assignment.**

**By VSU policy, course instructors may consider requests for a grade of Incomplete only if the majority of assignments have been submitted and documentation is provided before grades are due to the Registrar’s office to show why assignments due after midterm could not be completed.**

## Letter Grading

Your final grade will be one of these letter grades:

Exceptionally exceeds minimum standards	A
Exceeds minimum standards	B
Meets minimum standards	C
Barely meets minimum standards	D
Fails to meet minimum standards	F

## Technical Requirements

All class materials will be placed on a password-protected Web site using the BlazeVIEW course management program. Login using your old BlazeVIEW ID and the new Single Sign-On (SSO) password. The Desire2Learn (D2L) course management software powers the BlazeVIEW system. See the section on Distance Learning Support (below) for help contacts for D2L.

To meet all class requirements, you should be prepared to: (1) open and save or print all documents that are required background reading - this requires the Adobe Acrobat Reader on your computer; (2) view all PowerPoints placed on the course BlazeVIEW site – these are saved to **Powerpoint 97-2003** and will open in all higher versions; (3) participate in Live Classroom sessions – login links and instructions will be available through your BlazeVIEW course homepage; (4) check discussion groups as needed; and (5) keep electronic backup copies of each assignment and project you submit.

Unless otherwise stated, assignments must be submitted using a word processing program compatible with Microsoft (MS) Word. BlazeVIEW accepts attached documents in **MS Word 97-2003 or higher**. If you are using WordPerfect or sharing documents with classmates who have a different version of Word, save your documents in Rich Text Format (rtf). The instructor returns documents that cannot be opened on VSU equipment. Documents that cannot be opened on VSU equipment will be returned to you for re-formatting.

## Distance Learning Support

The university's Information Technology department provides step-by-step guides on how to use VSU's email and other sources. The IT Help Desk is at <http://www.valdosta.edu/helpdesk/guides/> and their phone hotline is 229-245-4357. BlazeVIEW is powered by the Desire2Learn (D2L) course learning system. D2L provides 24/7 support 365 days a year. To contact D2L, go to <https://D2LHelp.view.usg.edu> or call the hotline at 855-772-0423.

To ask questions about **availability or location of VSU online resources**, use the VSU Library's Live Chat or E-mail at: <http://www.valdosta.edu/library/ask.php>. You may also phone the VSU Library's reference service at (229) 333-7149.

## Late or Missing Submissions and Grace Periods

Most graded assignments are due Friday, 10:00 pm. You have a one-day grace period to submit assignments for full credit – Saturday, 11:59 pm is the deadline. Assignments received after Saturday, 11:59 pm, lose points. Completely skipping an assignment is not acceptable in graduate school. To be eligible to receive an A in this course requires completing every assignment and submitting within the specified deadlines.

A grade of Incomplete is not an option unless a non-academic situation interferes with completion of assignments after the option to withdraw without academic penalty passed (October 3). A petition for an Incomplete must be submitted with documentation to the professor at the time an assignment is missed. Withdrawal from a course after October 4 requires a petition to the VSU Dean of Student Affairs.

## Academic Honesty

Valdosta State University expects that graduate students will pursue their academic endeavors and conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner. All work that a student presents to satisfy course requirements should represent his or her own efforts, including appropriate use and acknowledgement of external sources.

The *Guide to Ethical Conduct* is a booklet created for VSU MLIS students ([http://www.valdosta.edu/mlis/student\\_resources/documents/GuidetoEthicalConductWebversion.pdf](http://www.valdosta.edu/mlis/student_resources/documents/GuidetoEthicalConductWebversion.pdf)). It contains guidelines on appropriate conduct and outlines the ethical principles that instruct the profession of library and information science. Specific regulations related to student conduct and behavior are contained in the *Student Handbook*, *Student Code of Ethics*. Please acquaint yourself with the full policy at <http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/AcademicHonestyPoliciesandProcedures.shtml>.

It is **your responsibility** to make sure you understand how to avoid breeches of academic integrity. The instructor posts rules for citing, quoting, and appropriate use of resources for assignments that require written compositions, reviews, or commentary.

Asking librarians or staff in a library to provide answers or to conduct research to fulfill any part of a graded course requirement is an infraction of academic integrity. The same policy applies to contacting any free or commercial reference service for assistance with a graded assignment.

## Equal Opportunity Statement

Valdosta State University is an equal opportunity educational institution. It is not the intent of our institution to discriminate against any applicant for admission or any student or employee of the institution based on the sex, race, religion, color, national origin, or the handicap of the individual. It is the intent of the institution to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent executive orders as well as the Title IX section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

## Special Needs Statement

From VSU's Access Office (<http://www.valdosta.edu/access/facresources.shtml>): Students with disabilities who are experiencing barriers in this course may contact the Access Office for assistance in determining and implementing reasonable accommodations. The Access Office is located in Farber Hall. The phone numbers are 229-245-2498 (V), 229-375-5871 (VP) and 229-219-1348 (TTY). For more information, please visit <http://www.valdosta.edu/access/> or email: [access@valdosta.edu](mailto:access@valdosta.edu).

## Student Agreements

Enrollment in this class signifies that you agree to abide by and adhere to the policies and regulations specified above. It is understood that the instructor may adapt or change this syllabus and the assignments contained within it if extraordinary circumstances arise during the course of the semester.

By taking this course, you agree that all required course work may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to TurnItIn, a tool within BlazeVIEW. For more information on the use of TurnItIn at VSU, go to <http://www2.valdosta.edu/academic/turnitin.shtml>.

## Assignment Calendar

You will find a week-by-week assignment calendar that highlights readings and activities and lists due dates for all assignments in the BlazeVIEW website.

### Important Dates and Assignment Due Dates

Monday, Jan. 13: First day of classes. BlazeVIEW sites open for distance learning students.

Friday, Jan. 17: Drop-Add period ends.

Monday, Jan. 20: Martin Luther King Day. All VSU services closed, including the Odum Library.

Friday, January 31: Project #1 - Biography of a Database and Its Users.

Thursday, January 30: Live Classroom Lecture, 8 pm. Will be archived.

Friday, February 7: Practice Search #1. Selecting and combining keyword terms.

Friday, February 14: Search Term Safari #2. Finding and modifying thesaurus terms.

Friday, February 28: Practice Search #2. Formulating a complex search with multiple strategies.

Thursday, March 6: Midterm. **Last day to withdraw from a class without academic penalty.**

**Incompletes: If you have not submitted assignments due up to this point in the semester, you are not eligible for an Incomplete at the end of the semester. Informing your instructor that you plan to withdraw does not remove you from the course. You must request withdrawal through the office of the VSU Registrar. Contact your advisor and plan to withdraw from the course before 1 pm on March 6<sup>th</sup>.**

Friday, March 14: Independent Search Exam #1.

March 17-21: Spring Break. **VSU Offices and Odum Library are open.**

Friday, April 11: Dr. Search-It Post.

Friday, April 18: Independent Search Exam #2.

Monday, April 21: Post describing your topic for the client report.

Friday, May 2: Project #2. Client Report.

Friday, May 9: Review of the results of the Client Report received from your partner.

May 9: Spring semester ends.

May 10: Graduation ceremony for the VSU Graduate School begins at 6 pm.

\*A second Live Classroom will be scheduled later in the semester if requested by students.