

**VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**MASTER OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE**  
**MLIS 7370 Information Architecture**  
**Syllabus--Spring Semester 2007**  
Three Credit Hours

**Instructor:**

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***Course Description:***

**Prerequisite or corequisite: MLIS 7000 or consent of the instructor.** Theory and techniques of designing Web sites for effective information delivery. Study of organization, labeling, navigation, and indexing systems is included.

***About Information Architecture:***

Information architecture (IA) is the area of information science that analyzes the need for an information service, and then determines a system that meets those needs in terms of appropriate form, function, metaphor, navigation and interface, interaction, and visual design. As defined by Richard Saul Wurman, a philosopher of information and communication who coined the phrase, IA is the practice of making information understandable and delivering it in a manner that conveys an intended meaning.

IA determines the organization, labeling, navigation, and indexing systems that are required to support both the browsing and searching of audiences of users in today's online information environment. It plays a crucial role in determining whether users can easily find the information they need.

***Course Objectives:***

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Assess the usability of an online information service
- Identify appropriate changes to the organization, labeling, navigation and indexing that will enhance the form and function of that site for its audiences.
- Explain the Basic Technological Framework of the World Wide Web
- Articulate Good Design Practice
- Effectively Manage and Guide the Web Development Process from a user-centered view
- Explain the Legal and Ethical Considerations of Web-based Content
- Quantifiably Evaluate the Efficacy of any Website

***Class Activities:***

Class activities include a set of readings, assignments and quizzes, online discussions, and a term project. Assignments will provide students with conceptual and practical understanding of

different aspects of information design, usability analysis, and graphic and navigational layout, students in the course test out their understanding on these principles on real online services. Self-test quizzes will help students measure their understanding of the course content. Students should participate in online meetings to discuss and share their opinions of the week's topics, assignments, and readings. The purpose of the individual project is to allow students to demonstrate and apply their understanding of information architecture principles to real-world problems. Term project should include creation of a small scale static website and a report that assesses applied information architecture principles in the individual project website.

**Textbooks and Required Readings:** There are two required texts for the course,

- Rosenfeld, Louis, and Peter Morville. "*Information Architecture for the World Wide Web*". 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge, Mass.: O'Reilly, 2002. ISBN: 0596000359
- Evans, Jessica. "*Microsoft Office FrontPage 2003*". Boston, Mass.: Thomson Course Technology, 2004. ISBN: 0619273534

**Suggested Reading:**

- Morville, Peter. "*Ambient Findability*". Sebastopol, California: O'Reilly, 2005. ISBN: 0596007655

This is not a course in HTML scripting per se, nor is it expected that the student will have any prior knowledge of web development activities but it is the responsibility of the student to have a basic understanding of the Internet and general computing literacy. This course will enable the student to obtain the web development skills from a user-centered view. Nevertheless, students will have access to tutorials, exercises and self-assessment content that uses Microsoft FrontPage 2003 web authoring tool. **Students will have the option of selecting their tool of choice when completing their assignments. If you choose to use another HTML editor instead of FrontPage, instructor must be notified in advance and you don't have to purchase Jessica Evans' book.** There are also required, supplemental readings for each of the course's topical units. These readings are made available to students through the web, as either html documents (websites) or pdf files. It is expected that each student will have the ability to download and open up both pdf files and Word (doc) files.

**Grading:**

The weekly assessments of different online services, plus the instructor's weekly feedback on those assessments, gives each student experience with the course's term project--each student's personal assessment of the workability of an online information service using the already-familiar checklist of criteria. A new site that have not been discussed or analyzed in class is assigned to each student, whose task is to complete this final assessment for a significant portion of his or her course grade.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

- Participation: 15%
- Assignments: 15%
- Quizzes: 5% (bonus)
- Readings: 5%
- Group project: 25%
- Peer Review: 10%
- Individual Project: 30%

Final grades will be assigned as follows:

- A – 91-100
- B – 81-90
- C – 71-80
- D – 60-70
- F – 0-69

Assignment Submission:

- Deadlines for each graded activity are clearly stated on the MLIS 7370 Course Calendar posted on the course home page on WebCT Vista.
- There is 1-day grace period for each graded activity after its original due date.
- Missing a deadline for any graded activity may result in a reduction in your grade (i.e., 10% deduction from the original mark for each day after 1-day grace period) unless you can arrange a mutually acceptable alternative with the instructor.

### ***Course Requirements:***

#### **Participation (15%)**

1. The course is designed for online delivery.
2. Students should participate in online meetings to discuss and share their opinions of the week's topics, assignments, and readings.
3. Date and time information for online meetings will be made available on WebCT.
4. All questions regarding content, assignments, quizzes, and readings should be posted to class discussion board on WebCT.
5. Students are expected to answer such questions posted by their classmates and it will count towards their grade.

#### **Assignments (20%) & Quizzes (5%)**

- Students will complete weekly assignments that provide an opportunity to demonstrate familiarity with the course content.
- Web page assignments must be uploaded to VSU server and hyperlinks to web pages must be submitted through WebCT.
- Website review assignments must be submitted as Microsoft Word documents through WebCT.
- Collaboration on homework assignments is encouraged. You may consult outside reference materials, other students, or the instructor. However, all of your solutions should reflect your understanding of the subject matter at the time of writing.
- Assignments will provide students with conceptual and practical understanding of information architecture principles and usability.

Self-test quizzes are designed to help students measure their understanding of the course content.

**Readings & Discussions (10%)**

The articles cover broad areas of navigation and labeling systems, metadata, design and documentation, and ethics in information architecture. Readings will be made available to students as pdf files or links to original material through WebCT.

Students should post their views about each article at the designated area on the message board for discussion.

**Group Project (25%)**

Groups of three or four students are expected to develop a Website assessment guideline for Academic Library, Public Library, or Digital Library websites. A guideline should include:

- A Heuristic Evaluation of several websites for a particular type of library
- Screen Captures
- Proposed Changes
- List of criteria to evaluate a library (academic, public, or digital) website

We will discuss more in the class about this project.

**Peer Review (10%)**

Two separate groups working on the same topic will review each other's reports. Peer reviews will be carried out on designated places on the class discussion board.

**Individual Project (30%)**

- The purpose of the term project is to allow students to demonstrate their understanding of basic information architecture principles covered in the class by designing and implementing a simple static website.
- Each student is expected to design his/her MLIS portfolio website.
- A report must be submitted documenting the design process and a usability analysis of the website.

A portfolio website must be developed by using:

- A website template to maintain look and feel
- An external CSS file
- Meta tags (i.e., Dublin Core)
- A form

***VSU Web Server***

Every student registered for the class must have a web space on a VSU server to turn class assignments and term project in. Please apply for an account to have a web space in a VSU server. Visit this link: <http://www.valdosta.edu/chiron/> and enter Instructor Name as "Fatih Oguz." Please give 1 week for the application to be processed and access instructions to be sent. Valid VSU email address must be provided (ie, hotmail will not do), in order to communicate your access information. Instructions on how to use this space are available at <http://www.valdosta.edu/it/web/vwwwaut/index.shtml>

***Technological Requirements:***

As this is an online course that also focuses its attention on online information services, students must have almost daily access to the Internet. That access will use email and the web (through the student's browser) for class-related communication. As mentioned above, it is expected that each student will be capable of dealing with pdf files and Word documents (doc files).

Course communications will use . . .

1. WebCT Vista email system and discussion board are official means of communication in this class. In addition, VSU email system may be used alternatively in case WebCT Vista fails.
2. A WebCT Vista website, used by the instructor to make links available for each unit of the topical units

***Distance Learning Support:***

A VSU reference librarian, Ms. Shiloh Smith, is responsible for coordinating library services for off-campus VSU students. She may be reached by email at [shismith@valdosta.edu](mailto:shismith@valdosta.edu) or by phone at 229-245-3717. An online guide for distance education students is on the Odum Library Web site at <http://www.valdosta.edu/library/services/distanceeducation.shtml>. Chat reference is available at <http://www.valdosta.edu/library/ask.shtml>.

***VSU Policies:***

Please become aware of and be guided by these VSU policies.

- Access Office for Students with Disabilities: <http://www.valdosta.edu/ssp/index.shtml>
- Academic Dishonesty, p. 254 of Graduate Catalog, 2006/07: [http://www.valdosta.edu/catalog/0607/grad/grad\\_251-280.pdf](http://www.valdosta.edu/catalog/0607/grad/grad_251-280.pdf)
- Student Code of Conduct: [http://www.valdosta.edu/stulife/handbook/pages\\_39-48.pdf](http://www.valdosta.edu/stulife/handbook/pages_39-48.pdf)
- Equal Opportunity Statement: <http://www.valdosta.edu/eopma/eos.shtml>
- Sexual Harassment: <http://www.valdosta.edu/legal/shp.html>
- Additional VSU MLIS policies: [http://www.valdosta.edu/mlis/student\\_resources/](http://www.valdosta.edu/mlis/student_resources/)

***Student Agreement:***

Enrollment in this class signifies that the student has agreed 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 according to circumstances that may arise during the course of the semester.