

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY  
MASTER OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE  
MLIS 7110 Online Searching  
Syllabus—Spring Semester 2013  
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 manuals**

*EBSCOhost User Guide – Searching* (updated October 2012)  
[http://support.epnet.com/knowledge\\_base/detail.php?id=3866](http://support.epnet.com/knowledge_base/detail.php?id=3866)  
(Click on the “Document Download” link)

## 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), unp. Full-text available in Academic Search Complete.

"After the Research: Information Professionals' SECRETS for Delivering Results" by Angela Kansiger. *Online* 27 (2003), unp. 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 in it. See the section on “Technical Requirements” on page 8 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.
- Practice Search 2 (7 points) – searching using thesaurus terms.
- Practice Search 3 (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

16 points

A report that profiles a database and its functionality in two different interfaces. In the first part of the report, you will provide an overview of the database - its history, contents, audience, types of material included, scope and coverage, and frequency of updates. Devote the second part of the report to a short profile of the vendor that provides this database. Conclude your research with an exploration of the search features and functionality of the two interfaces you chose for the database.

## 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. If you are a new BlazeVIEW user, go to the BlazeVIEW help pages at <http://www.valdosta.edu/vista/students.shtml>. Then return to the BlazeVIEW page and login using your BlazeVIEW ID and password.

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.

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 hot line is 229-245-4357.

## Late or Missing Submissions

I use a progressive point deduction system for late submission of work whereby for the first assignment submitted late, I will deduct at least 1 point. The second late submission will lose at least 2 points. If you submit late a third time, you will lose at least 3 points, and so forth. If you inform me of extenuating circumstances **before** the deadline, we can work out a solution for submitting an assignment without penalty. Completely skipping an assignment is not acceptable in graduate school. To be eligible for an A in this course requires completing every assignment.

## 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.

**Noncompliance with rules on appropriate use of resources will result in zero credit for those parts of the assignment affected.** If you are unsure about the parameters of an assignment, ask for clarification.

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.

**An overall grade of zero can be assigned to an entire paper or project if the instructor determines that its contents, or parts of its contents, were completed by a second party.** This, of course, does not apply to group projects that require collaboration on a final product.

### **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 hot line is 229-245-4357.

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.

### **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 SafeAssign, a tool within BlazeVIEW. For more information on the use of SafeAssign at VSU see [SafeAssign for Students](http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/SafeAssignforStudents.shtml) (<http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/SafeAssignforStudents.shtml>).

## Important Dates

Monday, January 7: First day of classes. BlazeVIEW sites open for distance learning students.

Friday, January 11: Drop-add period ends.

Monday, January 21: Martin Luther King Day. All VSU services closed, including the Odum Library.

Thursday, February 28: 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 5 pm on February 28<sup>th</sup>.**

March 18-22: Spring Break – Most University services closed. The Odum Library is open.

May 3: Spring semester ends. Graduation ceremony for the VSU Graduate School begins at 6 pm.

## 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.

**Assignment Due Dates at a Glance** (add one-day grace periods to each due date).

Monday, January 28: Project #1. Biography of a Database.

\*Wednesday, January 30: Live Classroom Lecture, 8 pm. Will be archived.

Monday, February 4: Practice Search #1. Selecting and Combining Keyword Terms.

Monday, February 11: Practice Search #2. Selecting and Combining Controlled Vocabulary Terms.

Monday, February 25: Practice Search #3. Formulating a complex search with multiple strategies in **PsycInfo**.

Monday, March 11: Independent Search Exam #1.

Monday, April 1: Dr. Search-It Post.

Monday, April 8: Independent Search Exam #2.

Monday, April 15: Post describing your topic for the client report.

Monday, April 29: Project #2. Client Report.

\*A second Live Classroom as searches become more complex will be scheduled later in the semester.