

Final Paper Assignment – INFO 203 (due May 15th 4pm) 2013

Please print two copies of your paper (double sided please) and place in the box labeled 'INFO 203 Final Papers' in the main office.

Write a paper on the problem space and issue (that you have turned in for assignment 3) related to the social and/or organizational aspects of information. Your paper should be an argumentative essay on this topic, making a convincing and well-founded argument about your specific issue by drawing from academic studies, theories and concepts from class, and other secondary sources as appropriate. In order to make your argument, you should not need to conduct your own study or data analysis (e.g. interviewing, surveys, focus groups, user studies, statistical analysis, etc.).

Your essay should be 10-15 pages, Times New Roman, 12 pt font, **double** spaced, 1 inch margins -- this is about 3300-5000 words. Note that the page limit is for primary text - space taken up by images, figures, or footnotes will not be counted. You should reference approximately 6-8 cited sources beyond course readings. **More than half need to be from academic sources.**

Your essay should be both specific to a particular phenomenon as well as in conversation with broader theories and concepts. We want to see that you are able to take theories, concepts, and readings from class as well as existing academic literature and use these resources to discuss an issue that is important to you. Your "argument" does not need to be a controversial or political stance -- it can be something such as "We should be using concept [X] to understand the socio-technical issue [Y] because it helps us better understand [Z]." Your paper and line of argumentation can take many forms, such as:

- explaining a current social/organizational problem and giving design, research, and/or policy recommendations based on existing academic studies or theoretical concepts
- critiquing an existing technological solution for a social/organizational problem using one or more theoretical perspectives or course concepts
- critically analyzing the assumptions made about technology and society in the media or in academic studies
- comparing and contrasting different theoretical perspectives as they apply to a particular topic or problem area
- critically reviewing the existing academic literature on a particular problem field, and proposing future studies to address gaps
- analyze the historical development of a technology (or technological solutions to a social/organizational problem) from one or more theoretical perspectives

Concentrate on both the content and the structure of your argument. Be clear as to the overall goal and direction of the paper from the beginning. Make sure you are explaining your points clearly and thoroughly with logic and evidence. Consider having a non-expert (possibly someone outside of the class) look over your paper when you're done, and ask: did you explain

your concepts clearly? Do they understand what you're arguing? Did the paper unfold logically, or does it come across as stream-of-consciousness writing?

Our principal focus for grading is the quality of your research and writing. Please note that our grading criteria will include five main areas:

- 1) A focused and clear problem space, detailing both a specific issue and what this specific issue is an instance of (e.g. the history of the telephone as a study of the roles that users play)
- 2) A clear justification for your particular approach to this problem space (“So what?!?”)
- 3) Argument construction and support (demonstrating sound logic and evidence)
- 4) Appropriate and sufficient depth of secondary research for a course paper (specifically citations are well-selected, well understood, and properly introduced in the paper itself)
- 5) Organization/writing (includes proper use of grammar, citations, etc – spell check!!)

Remember to **use the citation practices outlined on the course Web site.**