

INSS 5311: INTELLIGENCE AND INFORMATION (CRN 26544)
ONLINE COURSE
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
Spring, 2023

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I. Diana I. Bolsinger

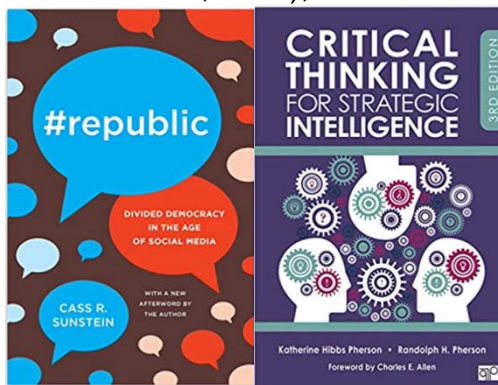
Office Hours: Given the variety of student schedules, let's make individual appointments to fit your convenience.

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II. TEXTBOOKS

Cass R. Sunstein, *#Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), ISBN-13: 978-0691143286 .

Katherine Hibbs Pherson and Raldolph H. Pherson, *Critical Thinking for Strategic Intelligence, 3rd Edition* (Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press, 2021), ISBN-13: 978-0691180908.



Additional reading and video assignments will be posted on Blackboard.

III. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon satisfactory completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- A. Describe the differences and connections between intelligence and information
- B. Understand how the proper use of intelligence relies upon analysts' ability to assess the credibility and gaps in available information
- C. Recognize the role that biases, cognitive shortcuts, and framing play in undercutting our ability to properly assess information
- D. Demonstrate an understanding of the links between democracy, national security, and the free flow of information
- E. Analyze how intelligence services, terrorist groups, and other actors can manipulate information for malevolent purposes
- F. Recognize the special problems involved with judging information in crises
- G. Apply analytic tools and methods used to judge intelligence to evaluate informational sources

This course examines the basic foundations and concepts for understanding information and its relationship to intelligence. It seeks to explain the process by which information can be converted into knowledge and understanding, particularly in the context of analyzing vexing national security problems. Emphasis is placed on "semantic" information and the significance of meaning and "influential" information or persuasion and its impact on human behavior. The course will also examine the emergence of an information society and the information revolutions experienced throughout human history with a focus on the current era of "Big Data" and its significance for open source intelligence collection and analysis.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Exams (25% each for 50% of your grade)

There will be two exams during the semester. Each exam will include multiple choice and short-answer questions. You may take each exam at any time during the given windows (**March 13-17 for the midterm** and **May 5-11 for the final.**)

If you know in advance that you cannot take an exam during its scheduled time period, you must contact me well before the exam. If you miss an exam due to an emergency, you must contact me as soon as possible. I will require documentation supporting your excuse for missing the exam to determine whether you will be given a makeup exam.

Both the midterm and final will involve open-book essay questions. You will be given several days between the time the questions are assigned and when your essay responses are due. The final will be cumulative.

You are not allowed to collaborate with other students on exams.

B. Topical papers (20% of your grade—10% each paper)

Students will be assigned two five-page writing assignments, in which they are asked to apply themes from the course to recent or historical events. The first assignment will be due by 11:59 on **February 19th** and the second by 11:59 on **March 12th**. Students will be provided with writing prompts and rubrics for both assignments a minimum of 7 days before their papers are due.

Before you begin your research and writing, please review item VIII below on academic dishonesty. If you have any questions regarding the proper use of material or ideas in your work, please ask me rather than risk potential misunderstandings.

C. Exercises (30% of your grade)

Each week, we will have a discussion or other activity relating to our course material. All exercises are due by **Sunday** at midnight. Late submissions will not be graded and a grade of "0" will be assigned

Participation in discussions and other activities will be graded according to the following³ criteria:

- 1) How well does the answer demonstrate critical thinking?
- 2) Does the student incorporate course material and/or current events into the answer?
and
- 3) Does the student provide an accurate and thorough answer?
- 4) When discussing controversial issues, does the student work to give a balanced and professional assessment of the problem as a whole?

V. OVERALL COURSE GRADING SCALE

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

NOTE: Final grades are a weighted average of assignments and exam grades. Final grades are not curved.

VI. COURSE COMMUNICATION

Please note that I will only use your UTEP email to communicate with you.

General expectations

Students are encouraged to take an active and engaged orientation to their own learning. Ultimately, the more students put into the process, the more they will learn. The following guidelines will create a comfortable and productive learning environment throughout the semester.¹

You can expect me:

- To do my utmost to provide you with an interactive and interesting class
- To reply to e-mails within 24 hours on weekdays and 48 hours on weekends. When I am traveling, I will respond in 48 hours.
- To assign coursework and reading that adequately covers the material and meets the learning objectives of the course while adhering to the time expectations for the course.
- To give a midterm and final exams that accurately reflect the material covered in class.

I can expect you:

- To participate fully in online class discussions, team exercises, and other class activities.
- To spend an adequate amount of time on the coursework each week, making an effort to understand the content.
- To share the responsibility of making our class a supportive, respectful, and safe environment for discussion and debate. To remember that our classroom is not a public venue. Postings on this site are private and to be shared only with me and

other members of the class. Think of this as preparation for a career where you may be entrusted with classified national security documents.

- To seek help when you need it.

Important Note: It is impossible to address questions of media manipulation in the current domestic environment without invoking partisan feeling. I take for granted that every student has political opinions. I respect your right to those opinions and do not want you to censor yourselves. That said, I also demand that each and every member of this class be treated with respect. Support your opinions with facts to the best of your ability. Never attack the individual. **Vulgar or derogatory language, racial stereotypes, or similar attempts to demean classmates will never be acceptable. Students who engage in this behavior risk failing the assignment or—if disruptive behavior continues after warning—failing the class.**

VII. TECHNOLOGICAL PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS

For all technological, hardware, software problems, lost files, and/or questions with Blackboard, as well as difficulties you are having during an exam, contact Technology Support Help Desk 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Tech support is set up to specifically address technical questions and problems about Blackboard. **If you have question on how to operate in the Blackboard Learning System, please check out the resources available at the [Blackboard Student Orientation site](#).**

Professors are not technical support staff.

Phone: 915.747.4357 or toll free: 1-877-382-0491

Website: <https://www.utep.edu/technologysupport/>

In-Person (Currently closed due to pandemic): UTEP Library, Room 300

Please regularly refer to Blackboard for links, documents, announcements, and calendar changes. You are responsible for staying up to date on all class information that is posted on Blackboard.

CHECK YOUR TECHNOLOGY

- To complete this course, you must have a computer with a reliable internet connection. Mobile devices are not reliable to access exams and use the discussion board.
- Blackboard (BB) Learning Management System. This entire course is run through UTEP's BB system, so students must activate and use their BB accounts regularly. Always log in using your UTEP name and password, and never as a "guest" (the guest option will kick you out after 15-20 minutes, which is problematic when taking a test because you will not be able to finish your test). All students are responsible for regularly logging in and checking for posted announcements, submitting assignments, participating in discussion boards, and taking tests through BB. Contact UTEP tech support for any questions or concerns regarding navigating in BB or learning how to do something in BB.
- Browser Information (See the left side of the menu on the main BB page for hardware, software, and browser checks) Firefox seems to consistently work the best, but other

supported Browsers include Chrome, Safari, and Internet Explorer. Be sure to “Allow pop-ups” for Blackboard Clear your browser cache

- Verify that you have the most updated version of “Java” <http://java.com>.
- All word documents should be saved with a “docx” extension identifying it as a Microsoft Word file or compatible with MS Word, Windows Media Player, Quick Time, Adobe Reader, Adobe Flash Player.
- We will be using Microsoft Excel for several exercises.

VIII. ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

If a student is suspected of cheating on the exams through collaboration with other students, the instructor will follow the University’s policy regarding student dishonesty, which may result in a grade of zero and referral of the student to the Office of Student Conduct. If a student is suspected of plagiarism, the instructor will follow the University’s policy regarding student dishonesty, which may result in a grade of zero and referral of the student to the Office of Student Conduct.

Academic dishonesty or cheating is simply unethical and not acceptable under any circumstances. Plagiarism is a form of cheating that involves stealing the words and thoughts of others. It is a very serious academic violation and cannot be tolerated. The most common form of plagiarism is using information or original wording in a paper or other assignment without giving credit to the source of that information or wording. Plagiarism also includes the direct copying of a source verbatim (word for word) and incorporating that copied material into your paper or assignment without first paraphrasing with proper referencing or placing the copied text into a direct quotation, again without appropriate footnotes or citations. Students must use their own words when not using direct quotes.

Direct quotes should be used sparingly and only when appropriate to provide examples, evidence, or illustrate specific points. Students cannot simply cut and paste wording or text from source material to artificially construct their papers, essays, and other assignments. This practice is also considered plagiarism, even if references are done properly.

Likewise, students must not submit work under their name that they did not do themselves. Students also may not submit work for this course that they produced for another course. If students are found to be cheating in any capacity including plagiarism and collusion, they will be subject to disciplinary action, per UTEP catalog policy. Cases of academic dishonesty will be sent to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution for adjudication and possible sanctions. Possible penalties for academic dishonesty include a zero for the assignment, a failing grade for the course, suspension, and even expulsion from the university.

Students are responsible for understanding their specific obligations to maintain academic integrity at all times. Please refer to the following link for further information on UTEP’s policies on plagiarism and academic dishonesty: <http://sa.utep.edu/osccr/academic-integrity/>.

IX. STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

I will make any reasonable accommodations for students with limitations due to disabilities,

including learning disabilities. Please contact me personally in the first week of class, to discuss any special needs you might have. If you have a documented disability and require specific accommodations, you will need to contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) in the East Union Bldg., Room 106 within the first two weeks of classes. The CASS Office can also be reached in the following ways:

Website: <http://sa.utep.edu/cass/>

Phone: (915) 747-5148 voice or TTY Fax: (915) -747-8712 E-Mail: cass@utep.edu

X. UTEP COURSE DROP POLICY

If unforeseen circumstances happen where a drop is necessary, students are responsible for initiating any course drop. It is the student's responsibility to determine how dropping courses may affect financial aid. **Students are limited to dropping no more than 6 courses over their entire academic career, including all courses taken at any public college or university in Texas.**

- A. Students who drop a course before the "official census date," the course will not appear on the transcript, and doesn't count toward the 6-course drop limit.
- B. Dropping a course after the official census date, but before the "course drop date" will generate a "W" in the course—although the drop shows on your transcript, a "W" does not lower your GPA. However, a "W" counts against your 6-drop limit.
- C. If the course is dropped after the "course drop date" or if the student just stops participating, taking tests, etc., UTEP requires the instructor to issue an "F" in the course that permanently remains on the transcript.
- D. UTEP also allows instructors to administratively drop any student because of too many times the student fails to submit assignments, discussion questions, or because of disciplinary reasons. In this case, the student will be notified of the course drop through their UTEP student email account. A "W" or an "F" will be issued. A "W" for these reasons counts against the 6-drop limit.

XI. CLASS CALENDAR*

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The course will be divided into two sections:

Part I: In the first part of the course, we will look at the fine—sometimes invisible--line between information and intelligence. Our study will include reviewing how technological changes have transformed our individual relationship with information and some national security implications of these developments. We also will note the impact of misinformation on two problems—terrorism and genocide—which intelligence analysts and policymakers have wrestled with in recent years.

Part II introduces the techniques and mindsets professional intelligence analysts use to acquire information, judge its intelligence value, and make sense of competing narratives. We will focus on the importance of identifying areas of uncertainty. We will use case studies, models, and survey analytic techniques for uncovering our own assumptions and biases. Finally, we will look at the emerging field of information integrity as a possible model for addressing our larger societal debate over how to handle and judge information.

*Please note that several of the readings listed below consist of short press articles and/or videos meant to tie course material to current events. These articles will be posted on Blackboard and, like all of this calendar, are subject to change.

Week	Topic	Primary Reading
Week 1: January 17-22	Introduction	Syllabus
Week 2: January 23-29	Information and Intelligence: What's the Difference?	Prunckun, "Intelligence Theory;" Heur, "Do You Really Need More Information?"
Week 3: January 30-February 5	Information, Learning, and Understanding: Sorting Out the Truth	Heur, "The Limits of Intelligence Analysis;" Nichols, "How America Lost Faith in Expertise;" Sunstein, #Republic, ch. 1.
Week 4: February 6-12	The Importance of Framing	Scheufele & Tewksbury, "Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming;" Gross, "Framing Persuasive Appeals"; Byman, "How Middle Eastern Conflicts are Playing Out; Berkowitz, "A Game Designer's Analysis of Q-anon.
Week 5: February 13-19	Mass Learning: Social Media, "Fake News," and Understanding	Sunstein, chs. 2, 3; Polleri, "Towards an Anthropology of Disinformation." First Topical Assignment Due February 19th.
Week 6: February 20-26	Information Wars	Sunstein, ch. 5; Bennetts, "Sixth Sense;" Wolfe, "Russia is Afraid of Western Psychic Attacks;" Yablon, "Menagerie of Israeli Spies," and NPR, "American Shadows."
Week 7: February 27-March 5	Tools for Terror	Cronin, <i>Power to the People</i> , ch. 7: "Innovation of Mobilization"; Sunstein, ch. 10; Williams, et. al., "A Dangerous Web."
Week 8: March 6-12	Information and Genocide	Mozur, "A Genocide Incited on Facebook;" Fisher, <i>Chaos Machine</i> ch. 7: "The Germs and the Wind;" Zelalem & Guest, ""Why Facebook Keeps Failing in Ethiopia;" Byman & Joshi, "Reventing the Next Social Media Genocide." Topical Assignment #2 Due March 12.
March 13-19	SPRING BREAK	None
Week 9: March 20-26	MIDTERM	None
Week 10: March 27-April 2	Learning In a Crisis	Neustadt & May, <i>Thinking in Time</i> , ch. 1;" Byman, "Nine Questions to Ask after a Terrorist Attack;" Bothe, "Facing the Beltway Snipers, Profilers Were Dead Wrong"
Week 11: April 3-9	Asking The Right Questions	Pherson & Pherson, ch. 2, Case Study III; "W.," Limits of Prediction."
Week 12: April 10-16	Using Models to Build Understanding	Pherson & Pherson, ch. 7, Case Study II; Scoblic and Philip E. Tetlock, "A Better Crystal Ball."
Week 13: April 17-23	Finding Information	Pherson & Pherson, ch. 8, Case Study V
Week 14: April 24-30	Evaluating Sources	Pherson & Pherson, ch. 9, 10.
Week 15: May 1-4	Prepare for Final	Study Guide on Blackboard
Finals: May 5-10	FINAL EXAM	None

ⁱ This section is a reproduced and modified version provided by the Elderly Center for Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation at Carnegie Mellon University:

