Course delivery: Fully online, via eCollege (https://ecollege.rutgers.edu). Check for course announcements, lectures, assignments, assessment criteria, and other course materials on the site frequently throughout the semester. Textbooks are to be obtained separately.

Instructor: Eric C. Schwarz, MLIS
Email: eschwarz@rutgers.edu (I check email every day; email me again if you do not get a response within 48 hours.)
My Rutgers home page: http://comminfo.rutgers.edu/directory/eschwarz/index.html
Office/consultation hours: By appointment.

Course email address: (redacted). The “rams” class email address emails the entire class at each student’s official address on file with Rutgers, which may be different from the student’s eCollege address. Also, the official address must be used to send the message as well.
Alternative: Use the form within eCollege to email the entire class OR specific people (the instructor and/or other students). This tool will deliver the message almost instantly and send you a copy. Tip (also applies to threaded discussions and any other online forms): If the message is more than a couple of sentences, type it outside of eCollege then paste it in; otherwise it’s easy to delete your draft or suffer a crash (problem with eCollege, your browser, your connection, your computer) that will erase your work.

For all assignments, where a number of pages is specified, keep in mind that this means double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman, with 1-inch margins.

SC&I IT Services offers help with a variety of technology problems. They are located in the SC&I Building in Room 120 (first floor); 848-932-5555; help@comminfo.rutgers.edu.

ECollege help: help@ecollege.rutgers.edu; 24-hour support from vendor (Pearson): 877-778-8437; Local (Rutgers) help: 848-932-4702 (M-F 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Eastern time). Also see the “New to Online?” unit at the end of the weekly listings within eCollege.

Catalog Description:

Principles and practices associated with searching of a variety of information resources, based on services for information users. Structure of resources relevant to searching. Information retrieval (IR) models, including Boolean (exact match), ranking (best match), and interactive models. Web search engines. Web reference sources. Interactive processes in information seeking and searching; mediation and interviewing process to model users. Search strategies and tactics for effective searching. Presentation and evaluation of search results. Searching exercises and assignments include database vendors such as ProQuest, EBSCOhost and
Factiva among others; the Web; and other reference sources.

Pre- and Co-requisites: None.

Course Learning Objectives:
Students will achieve an integrated understanding of aspects of searching for electronic information, including tools and techniques, systems, functionality, quality factors, searching languages and how to use them. Specific objectives include these skills:

A. Identify and describe components of current information retrieval systems. Assessment of achievement of this objective will be done through participation in discussion boards.
B. Develop and utilize search strategies including source identification and selection and alter strategies during the search process to achieve desired results. This work will be demonstrated in the searching exercises and completion of the final client project.
C. Utilize search techniques and tools to retrieve, refine, and assess query results from web-based resources and commercial databases through human-computer interaction. This capability will be demonstrated in the searching exercises and completion of the final client project.
D. Evaluate authority and reliability of retrieved results as demonstrated in searching exercises and completion of the final client project.
E. Interact with clients (users) to identify, assess information needs, evaluate retrieved results, and make changes to the search strategy based on evolving user needs. This work will be demonstrated through completion of the final client project.

Unit-level learning objectives are included in the Course Outline and Calendar section of the syllabus.

Instructional Objectives:
The course provides a base for additional learning necessary to cope with the ever-changing pragmatic world of searching. Students will learn skills related to human and computer interaction as well as the theories on which the skills are based. Searching electronic sources is a multi-part relationship of the information seeker, the searcher, the information provider, and the technology tools used in the process. The course is intended to help students gain professional skills that can be used for one’s own research, as a professional search intermediary, a search coach, and as a developing search expert.

A. Content: The content structure of various information resources in databases, on the Web, and in other reference sources as they affect searching. This includes types of databases, structure of records, structure of indexes and files, free and controlled vocabulary and differentiation of databases and content aggregators and their respective interfaces and search capabilities.
B. Systems: Various models of information retrieval (IR) systems, the Web search engines, and reference services, particularly as relevant to searching. This includes search models such as Boolean searching (or exact match) and ranking (best match), implications for search construction and use in command-driven systems and web search engines including classification on the Web and reference resources.
C. Person to person interaction: User information seeking as the context for searching,
the process of mediation and interviewing involved in user modeling. Information seeking by users, including task and context orientation. Roles of users and intermediaries, including user modeling. Effective mediation and interviewing of users.


E. \textit{Results}: Alternatives in presentation of results to users and evaluation of retrieval results. Preparation and display of results. End-user assistance and services. Collaborative processes for sharing information. Content curation. Evaluation of results.

\textit{Course Approach}:

Each week, a variety of methods will be used to help students learn theory and skills. Students will work independently to read relevant texts, view lectures and multimedia content and other resources; and participate with others in threaded discussions of readings. \textbf{Students should retrieve articles via the Rutgers University Libraries site as an exercise in searching. The instructor will post articles unavailable via RUL to the Doc Sharing area of eCollege.}

\textit{Required Course Texts (to be purchased or rented)}:


\textit{Recommended Course Text}:


All references and citations for the class need to be in APA format. The following sources, as well as the materials found within the Course Home module, may prove useful:

- \texttt{http://libguides.rutgers.edu/learningapa}
- \texttt{http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html}
- \texttt{http://www.apastyle.org/learn/quick-guide-on-references.aspx#Websites}
- \texttt{https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/}
- \texttt{http://www.merlot.org/merlot/viewMaterial.htm?id=433689}

\textit{APA formatting tools}:

- RefWorks: \texttt{http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/refworks}
- RefWorks Flow: \texttt{http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/flow}
- BibMe: \texttt{http://www.bibme.org/website}
- Citation Builder available from ProQuest’s Discover More Corps (DMC): After login to DMC, select ProQuest K-12 Collections, then ProQuest Research Companion, then Use Information, then Citation Builder.
Coursework:
The class is structured around multiple components: 1) lectures, 2) readings with discussion board analyses, 3) searching exercises, and 6) the client term project.

A. Required readings and discussions: Students will read a given set of journal articles and/or selected chapters from books each week. Within groups, randomized each week, students will analyze the readings, compare and contrast them to others completed in the course and make connections with the readings and the practical exercises in the online threaded discussions. Discussions will also be held during and following searching assignments. Each student shall be prepared for the discussion and/or for asking and answering questions based on the readings or searching experiences. Participation in the discussion boards will be graded based on the discussion board rubric.

B. Searching exercises: Hands-on exercises will consist of using ProQuest and Factiva, Google and other Web search engines, and library resources to search for answers for a given set of questions, using a variety of tactics to vary effectiveness. Various advanced features will be also subject of experimentation. The results of the search exercises will graded based on the general rubric for searching exercises, or where noted, rubrics for specific assignments.

C. Client term project: Each student shall undertake a client project resulting in four staged reports. In the project, the student will act as an intermediary in answering a user’s information need using various resources. The situation should be real-life, i.e. involving a real user with a need, real interactions, and real submitted answers. The rubrics for each client project report are included in the instruction document for the project.

Methods of Assessment:
- Discussions, with critical analysis of readings (15 weekly, 2 points each): 30 points
- Searching exercises (10 at 4 points each): 40 points
- Client term project: 30 points
  - Client project proposal: 3 points
  - Initial strategy, results and presentation to client, and evolution of search: 6 points
  - Close-to-final results and assessment, user evaluation and feedback: 6 points
  - Client project report and results to user, reflection and assessment: 15 points

TOTAL: 100 points

Each project is graded on the standard 0-100 scale, with eCollege weighting each item as appropriate. A separate Grading Rubrics document, available under Course Home, offers more detailed guidance.

Grading scale with points and corresponding letter grades:
- A: 91 to 100 points
- B+: 85 to 90 points
- B: 80 to 84 points
- C+: 74 to 79 points
- C: 70 to 73 points
- F: 69 points and below
Students who have a grade of C or below as of the midterm warning period (March 2-13, 2015) will receive an email notification of the grade status. (Your instructor will submit the warning via the electronic grading system, and the system will generate the email.) The warning email will not state the grade to date; for that, students should check the eCollege gradebook or ask the instructor.

**Course Participation:**
Course participation, collaboration, and community building are evident through the Discussion boards. Students are expected to post responses to instructor-provided questions and comment on other students’ postings. Discussion boards provide opportunities for critical thinking, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of key course content. Deadlines for postings and comments in the discussion boards are to be adhered to throughout the semester; and if not observed, may adversely affect grades.

**Deadlines:**
The weekly work for this course is to be completed on Fridays (searching exercises and term project items), and Mondays (weekly discussions), by the end of the day (meaning one second after 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern time). This staggered schedule is designed to help students manage their workflows.

Deadlines for assignments are to be adhered to throughout the semester; and if not observed, will adversely affect grades. If there are extenuating circumstances, students are advised to contact the instructor immediately. Work will be accepted up to one week late and will incur a half-grade penalty. After one week, a zero will be entered into the gradebook.

**Study Habits and Assignments:**
If you begin to fall behind or have other pressing problems or issues, please contact me right away. Do not wait until the situation becomes critical.

Careful and timely reading and study as well as completion of all written assignments by the expected dates are critical to your success in this course. Lectures will highlight specific areas only. Do not expect full-coverage lectures. Make notes on the readings as you go along.

All assignments should be labeled with your Name, Week Number, and Date. Assignments should be saved as YourLastName_Week X.docx.

Where directed, submit work to the dropbox in the online course. Emailed work will not be accepted without permission of the instructor.

I’ll use Microsoft Word’s *Track Changes* and *Comments* features to mark corrections and comments on returned assignments and papers. Usually when you open the returned paper, you’ll see the tracked changes already on. If not, click the Review tab, then in the Tracking pulldown, select *Final: Show Markup*. You can also select *Final, Original: Show Markup* or *Original*, and under Changes, *Accept* or *Reject* the changes one at a time or all at once. Under Comments you can use the icons to go to *Previous* and *Next*, and also delete them one at a time or all at once.
**Ethical Conduct:**

Your course grade and, in fact, your place in the university may be compromised by any unethical conduct regarding intellectual property. Be sure to treat others’ work with respect and give citations in the appropriate manner (see the Publication Manual of the APA). Please read the complete university policy on academic integrity and the code of student conduct (each available at [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers)), and subsequently, be careful about quoting and citing material.

Written assignments should be students’ own work. However, through online forums students are encouraged to offer suggestions to classmates. All class members are expected to uphold university principles of honesty, respect, good taste, and academic integrity.

Students are expected to express their ideas in a thoughtful manner and to demonstrate a tolerant and open mind toward the viewpoints of others. Violations of this policy will result in the removal of any offensive postings and a subsequent reduction in a student’s grade (e.g., Discussion Board).

**Students with Disabilities:**

Students with documented disabilities who wish accommodations in this class must do so through the Rutgers Disabilities Services Office. See [http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/](http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/) for details. SC&I Assistant Dean Kevin Ewell (kevin.ewell@rutgers.edu) will coordinate your services locally. Students who develop disabling medical problems or other issues during the semester that affect their ability to complete coursework should request advice from Kay Cassell (kcassell@rutgers.edu) or Kevin Ewell.

**Course Outline:**

Content for each week will be posted at least a week ahead of time. Required readings and specific assignments are listed within the eCollege course. Students are encouraged to post to the discussion forums throughout the week, not only on the weekend and Monday.

**Week 1:** Course introduction; Internet search engines (*Tuesday, Jan. 20 through Monday, Jan. 26*)

Due Monday, Jan. 26: Threaded discussion 1.

**Week 2:** Introduction to information retrieval (IR), exact match and best match systems, start searching tools (proximity operators, Boolean operators, field limiters) (*Tuesday, Jan. 27 through Monday, Feb. 2*)

Due Friday, Jan. 30: Searching exercise 1.

Due Monday, Feb. 2: Threaded discussion 2.

**Week 3:** Database construction and structure, search strategies (*Tuesday, Feb. 3 through Monday, Feb. 9*)

Due Friday, Feb. 6: Searching exercise 2.

Due Monday, Feb. 9: Threaded discussion 3.

Suggested: Submit brief term project proposal (ungraded) in advance of due date the following week.

**Week 4:** Database structure continued, search vocabulary and thesauri, search techniques (*Tuesday, Feb. 10 through Monday, Feb. 16*)

Due Friday, Feb. 13: Term project proposal.
Due Monday, Feb. 16: Threaded discussion 4.

**Week 5:** Search techniques and thesauri continued *(Tuesday, Feb. 17 through Monday, Feb. 23)*
Due Friday, Feb. 20: Searching exercise 3.
Due Monday, Feb. 23: Threaded discussion 5.

**Week 6:** Free-text searching, use of additional indices, refining search strategy *(Tuesday, Feb. 24 through Monday, March 2)*
Due Friday, Feb. 27: Searching exercise 4.
Due Monday, March 2: Threaded discussion 6.

**Week 7:** Business research, the invisible web *(Tuesday, March 3 through Monday, March 9)*
Due Friday, March 6: Searching exercise 5.
Due Monday, March 9: Threaded discussion 7.

**Week 8:** Query refinement, mediation with users *(Tuesday, March 10 through Friday, March 13; then Monday, March 23 through Wednesday, March 25)*

*Spring break dates: Saturday, March 14 through Sunday, March 22*
Due Friday, March 13: APA style exam passage (80 percent or higher); Term project item 2 (initial strategy report).
Due **Wednesday, March 25:** Threaded discussion 8.

**Week 9:** Information literacy: Content evaluation *(Tuesday, March 24 through Monday, March 30)* [Back to regular schedule]
Due Friday, March 27: Searching exercise 6.
Due Monday, March 30: Threaded discussion 9.

**Week 10:** Information literacy: User instruction *(Tuesday, March 31 through Monday, April 6)*
Due Friday, April 3: Searching exercise 7.
Due Monday, April 6: Threaded discussion 10.

**Week 11:** Displaying and presenting results *(Tuesday, April 7 through Monday, April 13)*
Due Friday, April 10: Searching exercise 8.
Due Monday, April 13: Threaded discussion 11.

**Week 12:** Subject-specific databases, evaluating results *(Tuesday, April 14 through Monday, April 20)*
Due Friday, April 17: Term project item 3 (close to final results report)
Due Monday, April 20: Threaded discussion 12.

**Week 13:** Semantic web and social networking *(Tuesday, April 21 through Monday, April 27)*
Due Friday, April 24: Searching exercise 9.
Due Monday, April 27: Threaded discussion 13.

**Week 14:** Image searching, analytics *(Tuesday, April 28 through Monday, May 4)*
Due Friday, May 1: Searching exercise 10.
Due Monday, May 4: Threaded discussion 14.

**Week 15:** Wrap up, synthesize, assess *(Tuesday, May 5 through Monday, May 11)*
Due Friday, May 8: Term project final report.
Due Monday, May 11: Threaded discussion 15.