LIBR 514E: Taxonomies: Research and Evaluation – Course Syllabus (3)

We acknowledge that we are on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the hən̓ q̓ əmin̓ əm̓ speaking Musqueam people.

Program: Master of Library and Information Studies
Year: 2016-2017 Winter Session, term 1
Course Schedule: Mondays, 2:00 to 4:50 PM
Location: IKBLC, Room 156
Instructor: Aaron Loehrlein
Office location: SLAIS, Room 480
Office phone: 604-822-2843
Office hours: Wednesdays, 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM
E-mail address: a.loe@ubc.ca
Connect: http://connect.ubc.ca

Course Objectives:
Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

- Describe and interpret current issues regarding the creation and use of taxonomies [1.2, 3.1, 4.1]
- Evaluate taxonomies as tools for organizing information [1.2, 4.1]
- Design and revise taxonomies to address the social and cognitive issues that people encounter when searching for information [1.2, 2.2, 3.1]
- Make knowledgeable recommendations regarding the selection and use of specific taxonomies [1.2, 1.3, 2.1]

Course Topics:
- Hierarchical structure and labeling
- Navigating taxonomies
- Making inferences based on taxonomic structure
- Qualitative and quantitative theories that model the design and use of taxonomies
- Philosophical assumptions underlying taxonomies
- Studies of specific taxonomies
- Studies involving generic types of taxonomies

Prerequisites: MLIS and Dual MAS/MLIS: LIBR 506, LIBR 508, LIBR 509
MAS: completion of MAS core and permission of the SLAIS Graduate Adviser

Format of the course: Class meets on Thursday evenings. Class sessions will be primarily discussions, some of which will be led by students. Some class sessions will also include lectures by the instructor.

Required and Recommended Reading: Provided online, on the Connect website, or via UBC Libraries


• OptimalSort demo: http://www.optimalworkshop.com/optimalsort.htm

**Course Assignments**, Due dates and Weight in relation to final course mark.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Name</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Briefing Paper</td>
<td>Oct 17</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critiqued Taxonomy</td>
<td>Dec 7</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading Discussion</td>
<td>Varies by student</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation and attendance</td>
<td>Throughout the term</td>
<td>25%</td>
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**Assignment Descriptions**

*Leading a Class Discussion* – students will plan and manage a class discussion session of their choosing (approximately 20-30 minutes). Students will prepare supplemental readings, class activities, and discussion questions for the class, coordinated in advance with the instructor. Discussion topic selection will occur at our second class meeting.

*Taxonomy Briefing* – Students will select an existing taxonomy. They will write a short paper (approximately 1,000-1,500 words) that describes the function and form of the taxonomy. This paper will be due on October 16.

The taxonomy that is chosen should meet these criteria:

• The taxonomy has a user base. That is, there are people who actually use it. Taxonomies that are created as course projects often do not fit this criterion.
• The taxonomy should consist of:
  o Nodes/Headings/Terms
Relationships (nested relationships are okay)

- There should be a set of items that is organized by the taxonomy, even if it is just “sample” items.

- The taxonomy should be large enough to provide the basis for a meaningful description. At a minimum, the taxonomy should contain at least 50 nodes. However, the taxonomy should not be so large as to be overwhelming and impossible to analyze. For example, the Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) taxonomy has approximately 25,000 headings. If you choose to describe MeSH, or another large taxonomy, you should describe the taxonomy at a high, general level.

- It does not matter if the taxonomy is formally referred to as a “taxonomy.” Many taxonomies are referred to as thesauri, subject heading systems, classification schemes, etc. As long as it fits the criteria above, the particular name given the taxonomy is not an issue.

Write a brief description of the taxonomy (approximately 1,000-1,500 words). The description should cover these points, but is not limited to these points:

- The name of the taxonomy
- The conceptual domain of the taxonomy. That is, what concepts in general are covered by the taxonomy. Your description should what you feel are the major concepts in the taxonomy. Also, if applicable, provide a few illustrative examples of topics that the taxonomy covers in less detail. Feel free to use your own intuitions in identifying the concepts covered by the taxonomy.
- The person or organization who maintains the taxonomy
- The people, or types of a people (e.g., a profession) for whom the taxonomy has been designed.
- The typical use or uses of the taxonomy. For example, it may be used to organize and provide access to a set of documents. If so, briefly describe the documents, who is likely to use them, and what they are likely to use them for.
- Also, describe your initial impression of the taxonomy. Does it seem to be useful? Are there any features of the taxonomy that are a cause for concern?

**Revised Taxonomy** – Working separately or in groups, students will propose a revision to the taxonomy that they have selected. The students should select a particular section of the taxonomy and redesign it, so that it can better meet the use to which it is put. Alternately, the student may focus on one or more aspects of the taxonomy (users, relationship types, etc.) and propose revisions to that aspect. Additional details regarding this assignment will be provided later in the semester. Students will informally present and discuss their proposals in the last session of class.

Course Schedule [week-by-week]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics and Readings</th>
<th>Discussion Leader(s)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introduction and course expectations</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep 12</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Foundations</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep 19</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lambe, P. (2007) (Connect)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Defining our terms (pp. 1-12)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Taxonomies can take many forms (pp. 13-48)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Hedden, H. (2011) (Connect)</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Taxonomic Structures</td>
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<td>Sep 26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optional Reading:</td>
<td>Tennis, J. T. (2012)</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Oct 10</td>
<td>No Class: Thanksgiving</td>
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| Week 6 | Oct 17 | Taxonomies in Health Care | - Bowker and Star (2000) (Connect)  
  - *The Kindness of Strangers* (pp. 53-106)  
  - ICD as Information Infrastructure (pp. 107-134) |
  - *Note*: Only the first 23 pages are required  
| Optional Reading: | Nisbett (2003) (Connect) |
| Week 8 | Oct 31 | Concept Theories | - Jacob (2002) (Connect)  
| Week 9 | Nov 7 | Conceptual Grounding | - Szostak (2011) (UBC Libraries)  
| Week 10 | Nov 14 | Navigation | - Whitentong (2013) (online)  
- Kim, Jacko, & Salvendy (2011) (UBC Libraries) |
<p>| Week 11 | Nov 21 | Card Sorting | - Righi et al (2013) (online) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 12</th>
<th>Taxonomies and Folksonomies</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OptimalSort demo</td>
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</table>
|        | Keshet (2011) (UBC Libraries)  
|        | Reamy (2010) (online)  
| Week 13 | Presentations |

**Attendance:** The calendar states: “Regular attendance is expected of students in all their classes (including lectures, laboratories, tutorials, seminars, etc.). Students who neglect their academic work and assignments may be excluded from the final examinations. Students who are unavoidably absent because of illness or disability should report to their instructors on return to classes.”

**Evaluation:** All assignments will be marked using the evaluative criteria given on the [SLAIS web site](http://www.students.ubc.ca/access/drc.cfm). All assignments will be marked using the evaluative criteria given on the SLAIS web site.

**Written & Spoken English Requirement:** Written and spoken work may receive a lower mark if it is, in the opinion of the instructor, deficient in English.

**Access & Diversity:** Access & Diversity works with the University to create an inclusive living and learning environment in which all students can thrive. The University accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with the Access and Diversity unit: [http://www.students.ubc.ca/access/drc.cfm](http://www.students.ubc.ca/access/drc.cfm). You must register with the Disability Resource Centre to be granted special accommodations for any on-going conditions.

**Religious Accommodation:** The University accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations. Please let your instructor know in advance, preferably in the first week of class, if you will require any accommodation on these grounds. Students who plan to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments, cannot assume they will be accommodated, and should discuss their commitments with the instructor before the course drop date. UBC policy on Religious Holidays: [http://www.universitycounsel.ubc.ca/policies/policy65.pdf](http://www.universitycounsel.ubc.ca/policies/policy65.pdf).

**Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism

The Faculty of Arts considers plagiarism to be the most serious academic offence that a student can commit. Regardless of whether or not it was committed intentionally, plagiarism has serious academic consequences and can result in expulsion from the university. Plagiarism involves the improper use of somebody else’s words or ideas in one’s work.

It is your responsibility to make sure you fully understand what plagiarism is. Many students who think they understand plagiarism do in fact commit what UBC calls "reckless plagiarism." Below is an excerpt on reckless plagiarism from UBC Faculty of Arts' leaflet, "Plagiarism Avoided: Taking Responsibility for Your Work," [http://www.arts.ubc.ca/arts-students/plagiarism-avoided.html](http://www.arts.ubc.ca/arts-students/plagiarism-avoided.html).
"The bulk of plagiarism falls into this category. Reckless plagiarism is often the result of careless research, poor time management, and a lack of confidence in your own ability to think critically. Examples of reckless plagiarism include:

- Taking phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or statistical findings from a variety of sources and piecing them together into an essay (piecemeal plagiarism);
- Taking the words of another author and failing to note clearly that they are not your own. In other words, you have not put a direct quotation within quotation marks;
- Using statistical findings without acknowledging your source;
- Taking another author's idea, without your own critical analysis, and failing to acknowledge that this idea is not yours;
- Paraphrasing (i.e. rewording or rearranging words so that your work resembles, but does not copy, the original) without acknowledging your source;
- Using footnotes or material quoted in other sources as if they were the results of your own research; and
- Submitting a piece of work with inaccurate text references, sloppy footnotes, or incomplete source (bibliographic) information."

Bear in mind that this is only one example of the different forms of plagiarism. Before preparing for their written assignments, students are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with the following source on plagiarism: the Academic Integrity Resource Centre [http://help.library.ubc.ca/researching/academic-integrity](http://help.library.ubc.ca/researching/academic-integrity). Additional information is available on the Connect site [http://connect.ubc.ca](http://connect.ubc.ca).

If after reading these materials you still are unsure about how to properly use sources in your work, please ask me for clarification.

Students are held responsible for knowing and following all University regulations regarding academic dishonesty. If a student does not know how to properly cite a source or what constitutes proper use of a source it is the student's personal responsibility to obtain the needed information and to apply it within University guidelines and policies. If evidence of academic dishonesty is found in a course assignment, previously submitted work in this course may be reviewed for possible academic dishonesty and grades modified as appropriate. UBC policy requires that all suspected cases of academic dishonesty must be forwarded to the Dean for possible action.