

# INFO 697 – Social Theory and Philosophy for Information Systems – Spring 2005

## Syllabus

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The course “Social Theory and Philosophy for Information Systems” is an elective course being offered for the first time to PhD students in the School of Business. A goal is for each student to acquire (similar to what C. Wright Mills called “the sociological imagination) the philosophical imagination, the social theory imagination, and the systems imagination. One may properly expect scholars who are earning or who hold the degree of doctor of *philosophy* to be reflective, in a rigorous and philosophical way, about themselves, their scholarly knowledge, and their context; this course should spark a student’s imagination so that the student, whether during the course or many years after the course, will come to develop the expected philosophical attitude.

The course will cover every article in the anthology, *Social Theory and Philosophy for Information Systems*, edited by Leslie Willcocks and John Mingers (Chichester UK: John Wiley & Sons). Every week, one article in the anthology will be covered. The three students in the course will prepare for each week’s seminar in the following way: one student will write a summary of the assigned article and each of the other two students will independently write 2 or 3 questions about any aspect of the article that he finds unclear and would like the professor to clarify in the seminar. Each student will e-mail his completed assignment to allenslee@alum.mit.edu by noon of the day preceding the seminar. The professor will then e-mail copies of all the assignments to all the students, who will read them in preparation for the seminar discussion.

The VCU Honor System applies to all students at VCU. A statement of it is available at < [http://www.vcu.edu/provost/univ\\_policies/honor.htm](http://www.vcu.edu/provost/univ_policies/honor.htm)>. It defines plagiarism as “[r]epresenting orally or in writing, in any academic assignment or exercise, the words, ideas, or works of another as one’s own without customary and proper acknowledgment of the source.” It also defines and describes other violations of the VCU Honor System.

A student’s grade for the course will depend on the summaries he writes for three articles (60%, or 20% for each summary) and the questions he writes for seven articles (40%, or 5.7% for the set of questions for each article). Satisfactory attendance is required for a passing grade for the course. Satisfactory class participation is required for a passing grade for the course.

## SEMINAR READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK			PAGES	SUM- MARY*	QUES- TIONS*
1	19 Jan	Allen S. Lee, "Thinking about Social Theory and Philosophy for Information"	1-26		
2	26 Jan	M. Lynne Markus, "Fit for Function: Functionalism, Neofunctionalism and Information Systems"	27-55	B	L, W
3	2 Feb	Lucas D. Introna & Fernando M. Ilharco, "Phenomenology, Screens, and the World: A Journey with Husserl and Heidegger into Phenomenology"	56-102	L	W, B
4	9 Feb	Michael D. Myers, "Hermeneutics in Information Systems Research"	103-128	W	B, L
5	16 Feb	Stephen K. Probert, "Adorno: A Critical Theory for IS Research"	129-156	B	L, W
6	23 Feb	Heinz K. Klein & Minh Q. Huynh, "Critical Social Theory of Jürgen Habermas and its Implications for IS Research"	157-237	L	W, B
7	2 Mar	Leslie P. Willcocks, "Foucault, Power/Knowledge and Information Systems: Reconstructing the Present"	238-296	W	B, L
8	9 Mar	Matthew Jones, Wanda Orlikowski & Kamal Munir, "Structuration Theory and Information Systems: A Critical Reappraisal"	297-328	B	L, W

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\* B = Jeff Babb. L = Mike Lapke. W = Mitch Wenger.

WEEK			PAGES	SUM- MARY*	QUES- TIONS*
	16 Mar	<a href="#">spring break</a>			
9	23 Mar	Debra Howcroft, Nathalie Mitev & Melanie Wilson, “What We May Learn from the Social Shaping of Technology Approach”	329-371	L	W, B
10	30 Mar	<a href="#">topic: student’s choice</a>			
11	6 Apr	John Mingers, “Re-establishing the Real: Critical Realism and Information Systems”	372-406	W	B, L
12	13 Apr	<a href="#">topic: student’s choice</a>			
13	20 Apr	Yasmin Merali, “Complexity and Information Systems”	407-446		B, L, W
14	27 Apr	<a href="#">topic: student’s choice</a>			