THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA  
SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE  
Government Information LSC 637  
Course Syllabus  
Fall 2011

Credit Hours and Prerequisite:  3, LSC 553 Information Sources and Services  
Class Meeting & Hours:  SLIS Computer Lab (1st floor Marist Hall)  
               Monday 4:10 P.M. - 6:40 P.M. (August 29 - December 12)

Instructor Contact:  
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Course Description:  
Explores the selection, dissemination, and use of government information services in libraries.  
Examines government publishing practices and the development of specialized finding tools  
for successful information access. Focuses on congressional information, federal agency  
statistics, and data manipulation tools. Coverage includes government information from  
commercial indexing resources as well as government agency electronic sources freely  
available over the Internet.

Recommended Text:  
Peter Hernon, Harold Relyea, Robert Dugan, Joan Cheverie. United States  
Government Information: Policies and Sources. Westport, CT Libraries  
Unlimited, 2002. (Recommended)  
OR  
Morehead, Joe. Introduction to United States Government Information  
Sources. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1999. (Recommended)

Chaney, Deborah. The Complete Guide to Citing Government Information  
(Recommended)
I. Course Objectives

As a result of this course, the student will:

1. Develop competency in answering government information reference questions using primary sources, commercial publications and electronic databases.

2. Gain experience evaluating and comparing competing government information products and services.

3. Learn to use government statistical datasets and a geographic information system to manipulate, query, and map government collected data.

4. Understand the relations between government functions and publishing.

5. Know the bibliographic control used for government information.


7. Understand the documentation and publications of the major international/intergovernmental organizations.

8. Correctly cite government publications.
II. Course Requirements

Students are responsible for completing four sets of Research Questions, a Source Evaluation, and a Course Project/Paper by the due dates on the course schedule and according to the following guidelines:

1. **Research Questions**: Four sets assigned throughout the semester and each due two weeks later. Students are encouraged to confer with each other while completing each exercise. Each student, however, must turn in his or her own assignment. In completing the research questions, students should include a full citation, in proper form, for the source that answers each question*. Also include with each question a “research log” as described below**.
   
   * Include SuDoc Numbers and/or URLs. Consult class handouts.
   
   ** Keep a record of the steps (research log) taken in the resolution of each research question. Usually this process works best in a chart or brief narrative form. In general, note sources examined, headings/entries used, cross-references given etc. List sources consulted in which no relevant information was found along with those sources that proved more fruitful.

2. **The Source Evaluation**: This assignment will require students to compare and critically evaluate two of the sources introduced in the first half of the course. The finished evaluation should be approximately eight to ten pages in length, double-spaced. Students are expected to work independently on the Source Evaluation.

3. For the Course Paper/Project, each student will visit and evaluate a library that collects a substantial amount of government publications, OR compare and evaluate two depository library sites on the web. The paper will describe and discuss how the library organizes, manages and provides reader access to government information. In each case, students must consider the implications of the practices and decisions made by the particular library and the potential impact on readers. The paper should be eight to twelve pages in length, double-spaced. Additionally, students will summarize their findings and briefly present them to the class during a final class session.
III. Policies

ATTENDANCE and ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES:
Students are expected to attend class, and complete assignments and readings on time. Emergency situations that may prevent you from meeting these requirements should be discussed with the instructor.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:
You'll find Academic Affairs policies on "Academic Dishonesty" and on "Unethical Practices" in the University Policies and Procedures web page at http://policies.cua.edu/. You are held responsible for adhering to these policies. Incidences of academic dishonesty, defined by the University as "failure to observe rules of fairness in taking exams or writing papers, plagiarism, fabrication, and cheating" will result in a grade of F (0 points) on the project or exam in question, and will be reported to the Dean for possible further action (including failure in the course).

ADA ACCOMODATION:
Students with disabilities requiring accommodation under federal regulations must present a written accommodation request to the instructor by the second class meeting. It is strongly recommended that the student contact the Office of Disability Support Services, Suite 207, Pryzbyla Center (202-319-5211; email cua-disabilityservices@cua.edu, web http://dss.cua.edu). This is the University office responsible for disability accommodation and services, and its staff can answer questions about services and requirements regarding documentation. Special accommodations or other arrangements cannot be made without documentation approved by this office.

IV. Assessment

Grades will be computed as follows:
- 50% research questions
- 20% source evaluation
- 20% project/paper
- 10% class participation
V. Schedule

CUA Monday Holidays: Sept. 5 and Oct. 10 NO CLASS

August 29  Introduction to Government Information and Electronic
Sept. 12  Distribution; the Role of Government Printing Office,
Sept. 19  and the Federal Depository Library Program.
  Readings:
    • in Hernon: chapters 1,2,15,16
    • in Morehead: 1,2,3,4
  Work Assigned:
    • Sept. 19, Source Evaluation (due 11/7)
    • Sept. 19, Research Questions #1 (due 10/3)

Sept. 26  Legislative Branch Information, the influence of
Oct.  3  Commercial Vendors, Congressional Support Agencies
Oct. 17

Readings:
  • in Hernon: chapters 3,4
  • in Morehead: chapter 5
Work Assigned:
  • Sept. 26, Course Paper (due last day of class)
  • Oct. 3, Research Questions #2 (due 10/24)
Assignments due:
  • Oct. 3 Research Questions #1 (assigned 9/19)

Oct. 24  Presidential Information, Treaties, Administrative Law
Oct. 31
Readings:
  • in Hernon: chapters 5,6,10,11
  • in Morehead: chapter 6,7,8
Work Assigned:
  • Oct. 24, Research Questions #3 (due 11/7)
Assignments due:
- Oct. 24, Research Questions #2 (assigned 10/03)

Nov. 7  Declassified Documents, Technical Reports, Patents
Reading:
- in Hernon: chapters 7, 12
- in Morehead: chapter 10
Work Assigned: none
Assignments due:
- Nov. 7, Source Evaluation (assigned 9/19)
- Nov. 7, Research Questions #3 (assigned 10/24)

Nov. 14  Statistical Sources & Government Datasets
Nov. 21  Reading:
- in Hernon: chapter 13
- in Morehead: chapter 9
Work Assigned:
- Nov. 14, Research Questions #4 (due 11/28)
Assignments due:
- none

Nov. 28  Geographic Information Systems and Geospatial Data
Reading:
- in Hernon: chapter 14 and other provided by instructor
- in Morehead: chapter 12
Work Assigned: none
Assignments due:
- Nov. 28, Research Questions #4 (assigned 11/14)
Dec. 5  
**Government Maps and International/Intergovernmental Organizations**  
Reading:  
• provided by instructor  
Work Assigned: none, work on course paper/project

Dec. 12  
**Class Paper Presentations and Course Wrap-Up**

Reading: none  
Assignments due: *Course Paper/Project*  
(assigned 9/26)