UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
Virtual Campus

INFORMATION SYSTEMS & TECHNOLOGY HONOURS
OVERVIEW – Special Topics in Information Systems

2011
SEMESTER 2

Craig Blewett & Rose Quilling
and
Guest Lecturers – U.Mass (USA)

Special Topics
In Information Systems

think WHAT comes next…

BEYOND THE ORDINARY

"Never before in history has innovation offered promise of so much to so many in so short a time." (Bill Gates)

Information Systems & Technology is by its very nature a discipline that is characterised by change. The frontiers are constantly being pushed out as new and exciting opportunities are developed. However, with this comes the need to be aware of emerging trends, issues, and how to deal with the constant state of flux that is experienced in IS&T.

This module will explore some of the issues and implications of emerging trends within Information Systems & Technology. The objective is not to give students an in depth knowledge of all trends, but rather to examine some of them in detail, and provide students with the tools and frameworks to explore other topics within the discipline in future.

TITLE OF MODULE

Special Topics in Information Systems

MODULE CODE

ISTN731 and ISTN431

CREDIT VALUE OF THE MODULE

16 credit points

PREREQUISITES FOR THIS MODULE

Bachelor's Degree with appropriate IS&T majors, and acceptance on to the Honours Programme

PURPOSE OF THE MODULE

The purpose of this module is to explore some of the emerging trends within Information Systems and Technology and equip students with the tools and experience to critically engage and evaluate global IT trends.

"All is flux – nothing stays still"

(Heraclitus 6 BC)

OVERVIEW

This module focuses on emerging technologies and how they impact locally and globally. Some of the topics that could be expected include;

- Overview of various trends, such as the Gartner Hype Cycle report
- Cyber Identity - how to create and manage it
- Global Network Readiness Index report and it's ranking of various countries
- Challenges of the Bottom of the Pyramid
- Trending technologies such as microblogs, Web 2.0, social networks, etc.

One of the biggest trends in international IS&T is that lots of work is done virtually and through international virtual collaborative teams. As such, this course traditionally includes lectures presented by professors from the University of Massachusetts, and cross-country teams between South Africa and the USA. Additionally the entire course is virtual, and so all communication, learning, etc takes place through a variety of virtual platforms.

Due to the technological nature of this course, only students who are comfortable using and learning through these environments should register for the module.

TYPES OF DELIVERY AND NOTIONAL STUDY HOURS

This course will be delivered using only technology mediated mediums. This means that there will be no face-to-face lectures or tutorials. These will include some or all of the following;
- Social Learning Network
- Blogs
- Threaded discussion
- Wiki's
- Microblogs
- Podcasting
- 3D Virtual Worlds
- Video conferencing/ Skype

Computer mediated forms of teaching and learning are increasing at a rapid rate all over the world. There are numerous reasons for this, but one of the more important is because it supports a social constructivist style of learning. This means that students are able to build their knowledge together, rather than simply have it "talked at them" individually. It allows for increased options when it comes to the timing and location of the learning experience. In addition it opens up many opportunities to use a rich variety of delivery mediums, and provides access to academic and business experts.

As this course is delivered in a virtual manner, and as the course (see below) is continuous assessment, students are required to constantly engage with the course material. This means that students will be required to spend a considerable amount of time in the various online environments used to present the material.

Notional Study Hours

The anticipated number of hours that a student can expect to spend on this module is 160 notional study hours. This is made up of approximately;

- 5 hours of virtual lectures/discussions
- 75 hours of self directed study (blogging, forums, wikis, podcasts, reading, research)
- 79 hours of learning through assignments
- 5 hours on presentations

DULY PERFORMED (DP) CERTIFICATE REQUIREMENTS

There are no DP requirements for this module.

METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

This course is based on a continuous assessment method. Students will undertake various tasks and assignments as part of the examination process.

Method of Assessment & Contribution

The assessment is based on the student's ability to complete the various Assignments. Also it is important to note that 10% of the mark is allocated to students' ongoing participation in activities. Activities are released weekly to help scaffold the learning process and prepare students for assessments. Not all activities carry marks, however students will be graded on their engagement during these activities.

Note. There is no exam for this module.

Special Topics in IT Credit

A credit will be granted for Special Topics in IT to students who have a final module mark of at least 50%.

LECTURES

As mentioned, there are no physical lectures. However virtual lectures via skype or other platforms may be scheduled. Students will be required to be available online during these lecture times. All communication, submissions etc will take place through the virtual environment.

PRESCRIBED & RECOMMENDED TEXTS

There is no prescribed text as students are expected to make use of a wide range of textbooks and online material that is available on this topic. You will be given a list of useful resources for each of the Learning Activities.

COMMUNICATION MEDIA

Communications between lecturers, tutors and students should either take place through the Social Learning Network (details will be emailed) or through email.

- Craig Blewett – blewett@ukzn.ac.za or craigblewett@gmail.com
- Rose Quilling – quillingr@ukzn.ac.za or rosemaryquilling@gmail.com

Except in the case of weekends and holidays *(unless required and then by prior arrangement only)*, a period of 24 hours will be regarded as sufficient time for students to have acquainted themselves with any emails or notices posted on the Social Network Learning Environment.