



The Liberal Arts Hobby

INF1005/6: INFORMATION WORKSHOP

Winter 2018, Monday, 9:00-12:00

Dr. Jenna Hartel (jenna.hartel@utoronto.ca)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The *liberal arts hobby* (LAH) (Stebbins, 1994) entails the systematic and fervent pursuit during free time of knowledge for its own sake. People engaged in an LAH are not typically academics or researchers *per se*, but citizens who relish the quest for a profound understanding of arts, sports, languages, cultures, histories, sciences, philosophies, literary traditions, or politics. This activity attracts sometimes eccentric aficionados of quirky subjects such as an obscure historical figure, an ancient religion, or a particular baseball team, among innumerable possible topics. Liberal arts hobbyists are avid users of public information institutions such as libraries, archives, and museums, and are among the most active consumers and producers of content on the Internet. They constitute an exceedingly interesting and important population for the information professions because they have turned the acquisition and expression of knowledge—usually seen as a problem or work-driven scenario—into a form of leisure.

This 6-week workshop focuses on the liberal arts hobby and its information dimension. We will begin with a broad view of the leisure universe, drawing upon a theoretical framework of leisure that brings the distinct features and practices of the liberal arts hobby into clear view. Further insights will be gained by applying interdisciplinary concepts from the field of education, as well as quantitative data about LAHs specific to the Canadian context. To synthesize themes raised in the first year of studies, we will explore the social, technological, and material information phenomena that underlie this hobby realm. Over the duration of the semester, working in teams, students will learn and apply original research techniques to produce state-of-the-art reports on information phenomena within diverse LAH realms. The final session will have a celebratory spirit and include presentations from the groups and a survey of discoveries about the liberal arts hobby.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants in the course will gain:

- A sense of the range of leisure pursuits in North America and familiarity with a theoretical framework of leisure, *the serious leisure perspective* (Stebbins, 2001)
- Specialized knowledge in one form of leisure that is highly relevant to information institutions: the *liberal arts hobby* (Stebbins, 1994) with particular attention to its information dimension
- An interdisciplinary perspective on social scientific concepts associated with the LAH, such as the *adult learning project* (Tough, 1971)

- A rudimentary ability to conduct information research within an everyday life and leisure setting through the *ethnography of infrastructure* (Star, 1999) and *photographic inventory* (Collier & Collier, 1986)
- Original, in-depth knowledge about one liberal arts hobby and its information phenomena
- Practice in peer group collaboration
- An inkling of how to transfer discoveries and insights about LAHs to professional practice in information institutions across Canada

STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL LAND

I would like to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

The learning outcomes will be achieved through lectures, readings, and in-class workshop activities. A group research project provides a hands-on educational experience.

SUMMARY TABLE OF ASSIGNMENTS

Additional details about the assignments are provided at the end of the syllabus.

	% of Final Grade	Due	Description
Leisure "Map"	25%	start of Session 2	Working independently, produce a "map" of your leisure experience.
Research Report (introduction)	10%	see details	Working in a small group, produce a 1,000 word introduction to the liberal arts hobby selected by the group.
Research Report (solo chapter)	40%	see details	Working independently, produce a 4-5 page themed paper (chapter) on the liberal arts hobby selected by the group.
Presentation	25%	Session 6	Working in a small group, deliver a 20-minute presentation (with 5 minutes Q & A) to share the results of the research report with all.

STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR HEALTH CONSIDERATION

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please approach the instructor and/or the Accessibility Services Office as soon as possible. The Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals, and arrange appropriate accommodations.

ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND PLAGIARISM

It is the student's responsibility to become familiar with the following documents: The Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters and the Code of Student Conduct. Please consult the Inforum schedule for helpful workshops on how to avoid plagiarism; lack of awareness of plagiarism does not excuse the student committing the offence.

COURSE WEBSITE

A course website will be maintained via the U of T Portal. All students should log before the first Session of classes to be enrolled for important email notices. Weekly readings, handouts and other materials will be posted when appropriate. Presentations slides will be provided at the start of class and posted to the website by the day after class. Technical questions about the course website can be resolved at help section of the Portal or via email to: portal.help@utoronto.ca.

SPECIAL ADD/DROP DEADLINES

INF1005/6 is a compressed course with special add/drop deadlines. For INF1005H the add deadline is January 12 and the drop deadline is January 22. For INF1006H the add deadline is March 2 and the drop deadline is March 12.

COURSE PROTOCOLS

Sessions will last 2.5 - 3 hours and include a 15-minute break. Please arrive at 9:00 to get settled and gather handouts; class begins at 9:10 *sharp*. Before each lecture by the instructor, PowerPoint handouts (with selected slides) will be provided for note-taking and a complete PowerPoint lecture slide deck will be posted to the course website the next day. Assigned readings and multimedia content should be done in advance of class. Participation (attendance) is considered a significant element of the course.

A NOTE ON TECHNOLOGY

Research has established that student learning declines as a result of the in-class use of laptops and other computing and communications devices. Not only are understanding and retention inhibited for the *user* of these tools, but positive outcomes are diminished for *bystanders*, too. Therefore, to enable the best learning experience for all, laptops should only be used if they are *critical* for your success in the course. Phones should be placed on silent and put away during class time. Anyone engaging in disruptive use of technologies will be asked to stop. A 15-minute break will be provided to manage personal computing and telecommunications during the morning that the class meets.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES & ASSIGNED READINGS

Each class meeting will include: a lecture to introduce key ideas, a short break, followed by discussion and activities in a workshop mode. The assigned readings, listed below, will be available on the web, through U of T e-resources and on the course website. By design, the reading load is heavier at the beginning of the course, and significantly reduced in the last few weeks to allow a focus on independent reading and project work. The references are listed in a recommended reading order.

Session 1 – Introduction to the Course and “The Serious Leisure Perspective”

Workshop: After the lecture we will play a game called “Finish My Lecture!” In *ad hoc* teams, you will be challenged to synthesize and extend the ideas from the lecture. Brainstorming, analysis, informal presentations, and a sense of humour are required.

Stebbins, R. A. (2001). Serious leisure: An overview. In *New directions in the theory and research of serious leisure* (3-26). New York: Edwin Mellen Press. Available in Blackboard, and Inforum: GV14.45 .S74 2001 – Course Reserves – [check availability](#)

Visit *The Serious Leisure Perspective* website: www.seriousleisure.net. Go to the Digital Library and review the series “Leisure Reflections” by Robert A. Stebbins; select and read one “Leisure Reflections” of interest to you. Next, go to the Bibliography and the area on Library and Information Science; review the publications and reflect on the range of topics.

Shen, X. S., & Yarnal, C. (2010). [Blowing open the serious leisure-casual leisure dichotomy: What's in there?](#) *Leisure Sciences*, 32(2), 162-179.

Session 2 – Hobbies and the Liberal Arts Hobby

Leisure “map” due at the start of class; come prepared to share yours with peers.

Workshop: After the lecture we will formulate the small groups for the research report assignment. The newly convened teams will engage in a series of guided ice-breakers and rudimentary tasks to get organized for the project.

Stebbins, R. A. (2001). The Liberal arts hobbies. In *New directions in the theory and research of serious leisure* (27-40). New York: Edwin Mellen Press. Available in Blackboard, and Inforum: GV14.45 .S74 2001 – Course Reserves – [check availability](#).

Lee, C. P. & Trace, C. B. (2009). [The Role of information in a community of hobbyist collectors.](#) *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 60 (3), 621-637.

Yakel, E. (2004). [Seeking information, seeking connections, seeking meaning: Genealogists and family historians.](#) *Information Research*, 10 (1).

(optional) Gelber, S. (1999). Introduction: Context and theory. In *Hobbies: Leisure and the culture of work in America* (1-22). New York: Columbia University Press. Available in Blackboard and Roberts Course Reserves: GV1201.38.G45 1999X – [check availability](#).

(optional) Gelber, S. (1999). Occupations for free time. In *Hobbies: Leisure and the culture of work in America* (23-56). New York: Columbia University Press. Available in Blackboard and Robarts Course Reserves: GV1201.38.G45 1999X - [check availability](#).

Session 3 – Research Techniques: Ethnography of Infrastructure and the Photographic Inventory

Workshop: This session is devoted to learning and practicing two research techniques that will be applied in the research report. Each method will be introduced in a short lecture. Then, groups will have an opportunity to discuss the application of the technique in their project and to engage in practice exercises with coaching from the instructor.

Star, S. L. (1999). [The Ethnography of infrastructure](#). *American Behavioral Scientist*, 43 (3), 377-391.

Prosser, J. & Loxley, A. (2008). [Introducing visual methods](#). ESRC National Centre for Research Methods Review Paper. NCRM/10. (Chapters 1, 2, & 3 only.)

Collier, Jr., J. & Collier, M. (1986). The Cultural inventory. *Visual anthropology: Photography as a research method* (Rev. ed.), (pp. 45-64). Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. Available in Blackboard and Robarts: GN347.C64 1986 - [check availability](#).

Session 4 – Interdisciplinary View: Adult Learning Projects

Workshop: Utilizing the original interview guide developed by Tough (1968), groups will practice semi-structured interviews (on each other) to develop a better understanding of adult learning projects.

Tough, A. (1971). [The Adult's learning projects](#). Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. (Chapters 1, 2, 3, & 4 only).

Penland, P. (1979). [Self-Initiated learning](#). *Adult Education*, 29(3), 170-179.

Livingstone, D. W. (2007). [Re-exploring the icebergs of adult learning: Comparative findings of the 1998 and 2004 Canadian surveys of formal and informal learning practices](#). *The Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education*, 20(2), 1-24.

Stebbins, R. A. (2017). [Self-directed learning as a basis for complex leisure](#). *Loisir et Société/Society and Leisure*, 40(3), 377-387. .

Session 5 – Time as a Context for Information in Hobbies

Workshop: After the lecture will be an opportunity to work on the group project. Dr. Hartel will check on the progress of each team, answer questions and provide guidance.

In addition to reading Hartel (2010), locate and examine new materials associated with your

research report, study infrastructure, conduct a photographic inventory, and collaborate with your group.

Hartel, J. (2010). [Time as a framework for information science: Insights from the hobby of gourmet cooking](#). Paper presented at the 7th International Conference on Conceptions of Library and Information Science. *Information Research*, 15(4), colis715.

(optional) Savolainen, R. (2006). [Time as a context of information seeking](#). *Library & Information Science Research* 28(1), 110-127.

Session 6 – Conclusion and Group Presentations

The presentation is due during class.

Workshop: For the entire class, project teams will share their findings in a 20-minute presentation (+5 minute Q&A or discussion). Following standard procedures at professional conferences, presentations will be strictly timed.

No assigned readings; collaborate with your group.

(Reading List Service provided and links accessed by the Information Services Unit at the Inforum: Winter term, 2017-2018)

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments that are submitted late must have prior approval of the instructor; extensions are only available for medical reasons and do not receive the instructor's feedback. Please note that there can be no extensions on group projects (Research Report and Presentation).

LEISURE "MAP" (25% OF GRADE FOR A SINGLE, LARGE-FORMAT ARTWORK)

This course should stimulate reflections on your own leisure pursuits. To that end, the first assignment is to produce a "map" of your leisure life using the SLP classification system (attached and available at the SLP website) as a guide. Obviously, this is *not* a typical written assignment (e.g. an essay). By design, the assignment draws upon other conceptual, visual, creativity abilities. Aim to place the past and/or present leisure experiences from your own life into the structure of the SLP. Include examples of casual, serious, and project-based leisure; however, you *do not* have to illustrate *every* manifestation (e.g. play, relaxation...); be strategic and selective. Your map should be produced on 11" by 16" paper (provided in class) and include illustrations, photographs, and/or clip art along with labels and short sections of explanatory text. Be prepared to informally share your map with peers in class. The grading criteria for the leisure map will include: the demonstrated understanding of concepts presented in lectures and readings from Session 1 and the artful illustration and expression of your leisure experience.

RESEARCH REPORT (50% OF GRADE; 40% FOR A 1,000 WORD INDIVIDUAL PAPER AND 10% FOR A 750 WORD COLLABORATIVE INTRODUCTION)

The major written assignment in this course is a collaborative final report (5,000-6,000 words, total, references not included) on one variety of liberal arts hobby that fits within a broad category assigned by the instructor. You will work in teams of 5-6 that will be formed during Session 2. Some class meetings will include a period to work on the assignment with your team. As well, it will be necessary to devote time and effort to the project outside of class, in both an individual and group capacity.

Overall, your research report will characterize one type of liberal arts hobby and describe its information dimension; additional content-related guidelines are provided below. As a graduate-level academic assignment, concepts from the lectures and readings, and the research techniques taught in Session 3, must form the backbone of the study. At the same time, the assignment can be seen in a professional context: Imagine that you are introducing this hobby population to the staff of your library, archive, or museum in order to undergird the development of a special program to meet their needs. Whether seen in an academic or professional light, the reports should be insightful, accurate, and creative. Draw upon and cite any academic literature about your subject from across the social sciences; do not underestimate what is already published. Aim to emerge from this exercise as a leading expert in this liberal arts hobby and its information phenomena.

The research report should have an Introduction that is written collaboratively and one chapter per team member that is written independently (each chapter is roughly 1,000 words). Individual chapters should be based upon one of the themes below. All chapters are to be integrated into a single research report (with a table of contents) and submitted on paper at the due date.

- **Introduction (collaborative and required)**
Utilize the main concepts of the serious leisure perspective and the concept of the “adult learning project” to characterize your liberal arts hobby.

- **Historical Perspective**
Provide a history of your LAH, mentioning important founders, events, and intersections with popular culture. Though the history of the hobby can be the main narrative arc, focus as much attention as possible on the information dimension of the hobby.

- **Information and Time (Required)**
Draw upon Stebbins’ concept of the hobby career, Tough’s explication of an adult learning project and the episode, and/or Hartel’s model of three temporal arcs to display how the liberal arts hobby unfolds in time, and any synchronicity with information phenomena. (Examples will be provided in Session 5.)

- **Ethnography of Infrastructure (Required)**
With Star’s article as a point of departure, describe and analyze an element of the information infrastructure of your liberal arts hobby. For example, you may focus attention on an information system, classification scheme, website, the genre landscape of the hobby as revealed in WorldCat, or a seminal handbook/manual of the hobby. (Examples will be provided in Session 3.)

- **Photographic Inventory (Required)**

Following the Collier and Collier article and the lecture in Session 3, conduct a photographic inventory of an information space relevant to your liberal arts hobby. You may focus on a library, bookstore, personal collection or other information-rich setting. Utilize photographs and text together to display the information artifacts of the hobby in a natural context.

- **The Local Social World**

Profile your LAH in greater Toronto; describe the local social world as well as programs available through information institutions such as libraries, archives, museums, or clubs in the GTA. You may choose to informally interview the staff at a site that caters to your LAH population. This section should convey the local pulse of your LAH.

- **Critical Perspective(s)**

Problematize one or more information-related debates or controversies associated with your LAH.

The research report is to be submitted via email, one week following the start of the last class (9:10 on the subsequent Monday). Please use APA style and integrate the introduction and chapters into a coherent whole (though references should follow each chapter).

The grading criteria for the research report will include: the characterization of the liberal arts hobby; the demonstrated understanding of concepts presented in lectures and readings; the implementation of research techniques taught in class; the use of relevant scholarly writings outside of information studies; the quality of the writing; and the extent to which the sections are well integrated into a unified whole.

PRESENTATION (25% OF GRADE FOR A 20+5 MINUTE GROUP PRESENTATION)

Working in your group, present an overview or highlights of your discoveries to the class during Session 6. The presentation should last 20 minutes with 5 minutes for Q & A and discussion. Like all professional events it will be strictly timed. Make yours engaging, interactive, and multimedia, if possible. The grading criteria for the presentation is the same as the research report, with additional attention placed upon oral communication skills. Session 4 includes useful and creative tips for structuring and delivering the presentation.

The Serious Leisure Perspective

(version February 2013)

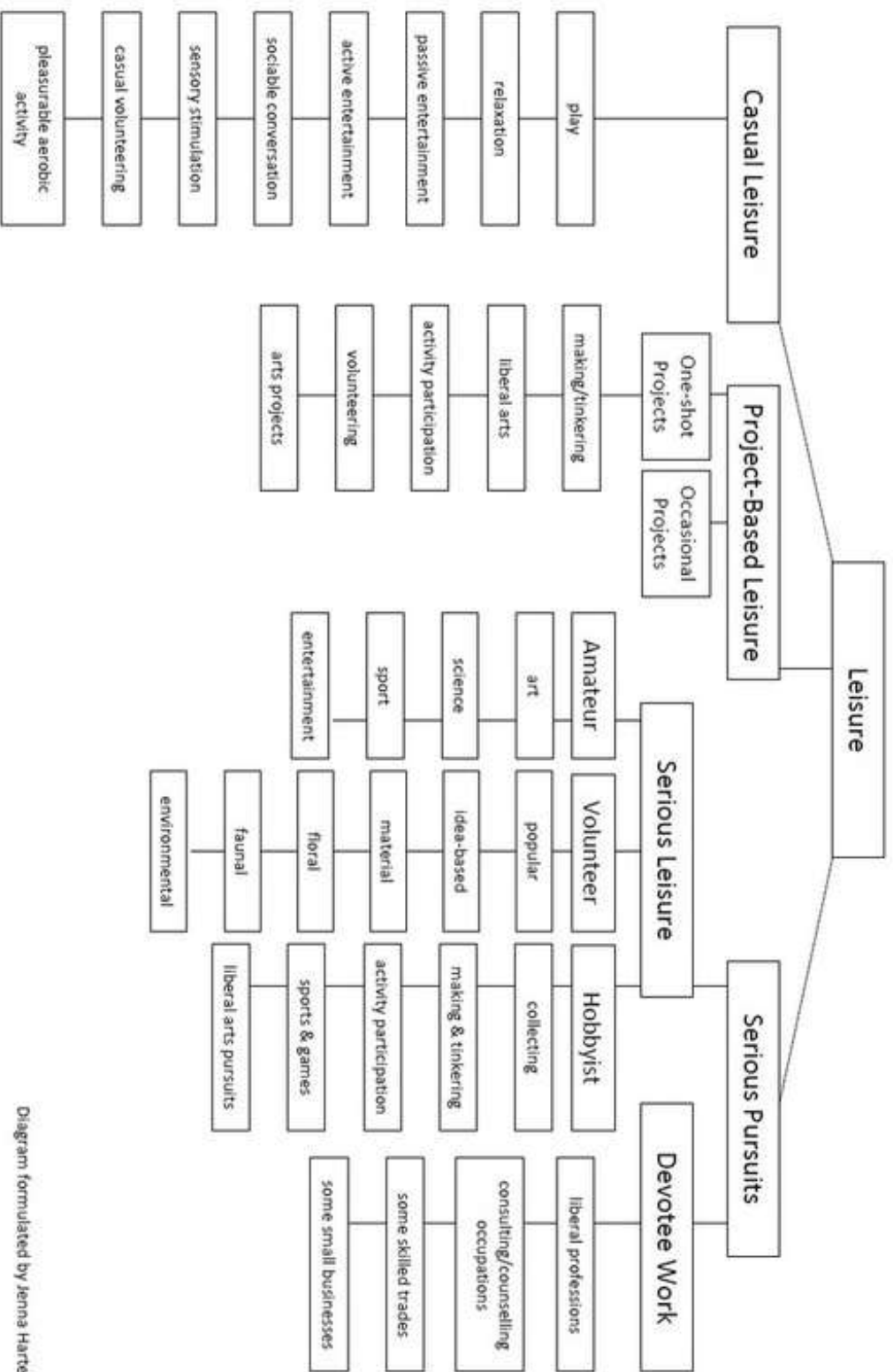


Diagram formulated by Jenna Hartel