Community Informatics

IST 222H | Schedule #: 14591 | Tues. & Thur. 3:05 - 4:20 p.m. | W219 Westgate Building

DR. JACK CARROLL
About the Instructor

Dr. Jack Carroll is a distinguished professor in the College of IST and primarily teaches courses related to human-centered design and human-computer interaction. As a socialcognitive scientist, his research has focused on the reciprocal relationship between human-computer interaction, psychology, and sociology.

His current research explores the mediation and support of human activities through interactive software systems, including how educational technology is used to support casebased and collaborative learning, and how we can understand and elaborate community-based information technology infrastructures.

Course Description:
Community informatics is most typically grounded in the sociology and psychology of community, viewed through a lens of the challenges and resources for community that are created by information technology. The proliferation of information technology has changed the way we think of and interact with our communities. Communities are also innovation infrastructures, creating new opportunities for public health, education, democratic deliberation, political activism, and economic development.

This course addresses how the definition of a community has changed and explores what it might mean for information infrastructures to contribute to our being human through daily interactions. It will also investigate current work related to community management of community data, coproduction of healthy old age, participatory local heritage, activism, and town/gown conflicts and innovations.

Learning Objectives:
This course aims to help students understand the evolution of community and its changing role in human life, and intends to equip students to reflect on their roles as members in various communities. Throughout the course, students will explore questions such as:

- What is and is not a community?
- Why and how has community been lost?
- Why can't humans share resources?
- How is a community a living laboratory?
- How do strong and weak ties combine to produce communities?
- What is community engagement?
- What is the role of innovation in contemporary community?
- How has community been fostered and undermined by information technologies such as bulletin board systems, social media, and digital government?

General Education:
This course will count as three hours of general education credit within the category of social-behavioral science (GS).

Target Audience:
This is an honors course open to any Penn State undergraduate student.

Evaluation Methods:
As an honors course, students will read, think critically, carry out projects, and write papers related to community informatics. The course involves service and fieldwork with local community groups.