Representation, Organization, Classification, and Meaning-Making

Description
Fundamental epistemological and ontological issues in the use of knowledge and information in human activities. Analysis of issues in language, representation, interpretation, semantics, meaning-making, perception, conception, and cognition, integrating perspectives from multiple disciplines and traditions.

Course Structure
3 contact hours per week; 2 hour lecture and 1 hour tutorial (small group discussion on contemporary, concrete issue and/or case studies to supplement lectures). Occasional guest lectures. 50-100 pages of reading each week.

Deliverables and Evaluation
1. Sorting things out: an epistemological case study (30%)
This assignment has two parts. In the first part, students will describe the physical or intellectual organization of a specific object (e.g., databases, cell-phones, ATM kiosks, the layout of a museum, buffet, art gallery, department store, grocery store, children’s library, a menu, a store catalogue) and analyze that organization in relation to its underlying epistemological assumptions. In the second part of the assignment, students will describe an alternative organization of the same entity that is based on different epistemological assumptions.
Due date: Week 4

2. Group representation project (30%)
Working in groups, students will prepare a representation of the content of a newspaper article; the representation can take a variety of forms, e.g., a poem, a performance, a visual image, an XML schema. This representation will then be used as a basis for analyzing the article in terms of amplification, distortion, signal loss, etc., and for examining how the article’s content or “essence” is affected or shifted by the different representations of it.
Due date: Weeks 7 and 8
3. Individual position paper (30%) and group debate (10%) on issue in ROCM; 3 topics: TBA

_Due dates: Week 10 (position paper), Week 12 (debate)_

**Schedule**

**Week 1**  
Introduction to the course: Contexts, principles, issues, and terminology  

**Week 2**  
Information, knowledge, and organization  
Weinberger, David. 2007. Everything is Miscellaneous: The Power of the New Digital Disorder. New York: Times. (Chapters 1, 2, and 3)

**Week 3**  
Contexts of classification: The case of International Classification of Diseases  

**Week 4**  
Cognition of classification  

**Week 5**  
Classification illustrated  

**Week 6**  
Types of representation  


Week 7  Representation in the digital age

Week 8  Representation across disciplines
Readings: TBA

Week 9  Ethics of classification and representation

Week 10  ROCM in libraries – guest lecture
ROCM in archives – guest lecture

Week 11  ROCM in museums – guest lecture
ROCM in a digitally mediated organization – guest lecture

Week 12  3 debates on ROCM issues

Week 13  Wrap-up: reflections on themes