ZSRx 2013: Syllabus

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About this course

Welcome! ZSRx is a free, open, online course for Wake Forest University alumni and parents of WFU students. The course is designed to be a fun, collaborative environment for exploring tools and techniques for using the web to increase your productivity, your search effectiveness, your evaluation skills, and your awareness of issues related to privacy on the web.

> **Course specifics (bookmark these!)**
> Course Website: http://zsr.wfu.edu/zsrx13
> Google+ Community: http://goo.gl/iPJis
> Google Group: https://groups.google.com/d/forum/zsrx13

Who should participate?

Anyone who wants to be a better searcher, evaluator, and user of web tools and online information. So, everyone, really. Invite a friend!

What's the goal?

- Develop a habit of paying attention to how you use technology, how you search for information, and how you choose information when doing any kind of research
- Learn strategies for constructing an effective web search
- Explore basic and advanced features of search tools like Google Web search, Google Scholar, Google Books, and Google News Archive, among others.
- Experience what it means to evaluate online information for quality, credibility, and relevance
- Engage in discussions surrounding the issues of privacy, "Big Data," social filters, and "filter bubbles"
- Discover and integrate new and useful tools into your online life to make finding,

saving, sharing, and using information easier.
- Connect with others interested in enhancing their own information skills and online experiences

Schedule and topics

Module 1 (March 18 - March 24): Paying attention to paying attention online: Taking steps to build smart search habits and eliminate garbage search results
Module 1 Reflection: Is Google Making us Stupid?
Module 2 (March 25 - March 30): Channeling your inner Google ninja: Advanced search tricks and specialized search tools to find the best stuff out there
Module 2 Exercise: Search Challenge!
Module 3 (April 1 - April 7): Watching the web watching you: Navigating filter bubbles, search engine optimization, and privacy online
Module 3 Reflection: What's (not) in your filter bubble?
Module 4 (April 8 - April 14): Putting the web to work for you: Awesome tools to manage your information and automate your online life
Module 4 Exercise: Teach a New Tool!

How this course works

Being a free online course, this will probably be different than most other courses you've taken in the past--perhaps different even from many online courses you may have experienced. Each week, you will receive an email containing an introduction to that week's module, a list of suggested activities, and a link to that week's content. Obviously, ZSRx is not offered for credit, so it is perfectly fine if you just want to dabble, but if you really want to engage with the content (and you should! It's really good!), then you'll find the assignments, reflections, and ongoing discussions to be invaluable.

Each week's content, rather than being prescriptive, will present you with a "menu" of readings, videos, activities, and tools to try. You are free to pick and choose any you want depending on your learning style, interests, or amount of free time. You'll find that the course as a whole will be the most successful if everyone chooses a variety of learning activities and shares what they've learned in the discussion spaces. The idea is that knowledge is constructed when we share our learning with one another. There are no grades, no hard deadlines, and no risk--just lots of potential for learning.

How do I participate?

There are a number of ways you can take part in this class. Each week, there will be both structured and informal **group discussions** taking place concerning that week's topic. Usually the structured discussions will start with a prompt to guide your thinking, but you are more than welcome to start your own discussion thread, line of questioning, or topical discussion right alongside the "official" discussions. Feel free to share resources, ask questions, reflect on experiences, and even challenge (politely and constructively) the

materials or the contributions of others.

In weeks one and three, you'll be encouraged to publicly reflect upon your learning in the course. These **public reflections** can take any form, but it is suggested that they be a bit more substantial in terms of content. Think of these as standalone blog posts that others can comment on. Many participants will simply contribute these reflections to the discussion forum for comment, but there are other ways to contribute, as well--personal blogs, for example.

Finally, in weeks two and four, you'll be guided through the process of learning new tools and techniques by completing **guided assignments.** The guided assignments will allow you to choose a new search or web tool you've never used before and explore it with "training wheels." They're designed to be fun and to encourage your experimentation with unfamiliar tools.

Who's driving this thing?

Kyle Denlinger, the eLearning Librarian at ZSR, will be the main course facilitator. Kyle has his MA in Information Science & Learning Technologies from the University of Missouri--Columbia, and he is a huge geek* about the web, learning technologies, and what librarians call "information literacy"--the skills needed to find, evaluate, and use information responsibly. You'll also see a few other ZSR librarians stop in from time to time to share their experiences and offer their expertise. You can contact Kyle at denlinkd@wfu.edu
*It's OK, he's also the one writing this.

Course background

ZSRx was created as a way to reach out to parents and alumni to give them a taste of the instruction Wake Forest students receive from the librarians at the Z Smith Reynolds Library. ZSRx is an offshoot of LIB100, "Accessing Information in the 21st Century," a 1.5 credit course that is taken by more than 800 Wake Forest students each year. The specifics of LIB100 vary by instructor, but in every class, students learn to select a research topic, locate reference materials, scholarly books, scholarly journal articles and scholarly web sites relevant to their topic. Along the way, students become familiar with the ZSR Library and its catalog, online databases, and sources of good scholarly information on the web. Students learn to cite sources appropriately in either MLA or APA style. Strong emphasis is given to learning to evaluate information to determine how appropriate it is for research and whether it is credible, scholarly information. Issues of copyright, plagiarism and the impact of the Internet on research are also covered.