

NLIS 2026: Syllabus

1 Learning Goals

The course covers fundamental and current research in Information Systems. Topics discussed range across fields and methods. Students will engage in in-class discussions of seminal and frontier papers. Each session is attended by ten or fewer students and is led by an expert faculty, creating an engaging and intimate setting for emerging IS scholars to interact with and learn from their established peers. Faculty and students come from RSM, VU, and Tilburg and can thus form new cross-institutional ties. The course will equip students with a broad understanding of Information Systems research that will inform their own projects as well as prepare them for the job market.

2 Schedule & Topics

The course takes place across three two-day blocks, each day consisting of two three-hour sessions and each block hosted at one of the participating universities.

Block 1

Location: RSM, [Mandeville building](#), T09-67

Day 1: 29 January 2026, 9am – 4.30pm

Day 2: 30 January 2026, 9am – 4.30pm

Sessions:

1. Ting Li (RSM): IS Research Fundamentals

This session aims to familiarize students, particularly those in their first or second year of a PhD program, with the field of IS research. It serves as an introduction to a wide array of topics within the IS literature, setting the stage for future sessions that will delve into specific areas in greater detail.

2. Dominik Gutt (RSM): User-generated Content Research in IS

User-generated content is pervasive and utmost versatile. Whether we directly consume it, for instance in the form of videos or blog posts, or whether we use it to support or decision-making, in the form of online reviews, user-generated content is omnipresent. This makes it a premier topic to study for IS scholars. This session will provide students with an overview of the essential literature on user-generated content in Information Systems. Although mainly quantitative in focus, this course will appeal to students of various methodological traditions. Students will be familiarized with different angles on user-generated content, such as posting behavior, consumption behavior, or both. What scholars can learn from these studies is similarly multi-faceted, sometimes we learn something about the content, its format, or its dissemination but oftentimes we learn more about behavioral patterns of people interacting with the content. As for the tasks of this course, students will be asked to read assigned literature, present it in class, and engage in discussions with their peers.

3. Eric van Heck (RSM): Positioning Your Research in the Field of Information Systems

How can you ensure your PhD research makes a meaningful contribution to the Information Systems (IS) field — especially when your topic crosses disciplinary boundaries?

This session will help PhD candidates to develop the conceptual clarity and strategic awareness needed to position their research effectively within the IS discipline. The session explores what defines IS as an academic field and how it connects with related domains such as economics, management science, social sciences, computer science, and engineering.

Participants will examine foundational IS theories and frameworks (e.g., Whetten, Bacharach, Gregor, Hevner, Burton-Jones, and Piccoli,) and learn how to identify theoretical gaps, articulate contributions, and align their research with leading IS journals and scholarly communities. A key practical element is the HTREC method—Hook, Theory, Research Method, Evidence, and Community. It is illustrated with two examples, i.e., on the intersection of economics and information systems, and energy systems engineering and information systems, which guides PhD candidates in structuring and communicating their research for academic visibility and impact. By the end of the session, participants will have a clearer understanding of where and how their research fits within the IS landscape, how to frame it for theoretical and practical relevance, and how to engage meaningfully with the international IS research community.

4. Philipp Cornelius (RSM): Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding is a financing method that relies on small contributions from large groups of investors on online platforms. It has been used for a wide range of purposes, from new product development to art to charity. In this session, we review the crowdfunding literature from its early foundations to the latest results. We discuss the different perspectives people have taken, and we identify opportunities for new research.

Block 2

Location: Tilburg

Day 1: 26 March

Day 2: 27 March

Sessions:

5. Murat Tunc (Tilburg): FinTech

Digital technologies are reshaping financial markets. While FinTech is an emerging domain for scholars across various disciplines, IS researchers add value to this stream of literature by leveraging their technological expertise. This session explores the economic and strategic implications of emerging phenomena in financial markets. Topics include blockchain-based financial markets, copy trading, influencers, buy-now-pay-later services, and robo-advisors, among others.

6. Sijia (Catherine) Ma (Tilburg): Chatbot and Human-AI interactions

In this session, we will cover the topic of human-AI interactions and, in particular, chatbot design and interactions in IS literature. Artificial intelligence builds on big data analytics and machine learning / deep learning methods to provide a more automatic and intelligence decision support for various areas. Numerous questions arise regarding the adoption, usage, and particularly interactions of AI with human. We will learn from the literature and see how to facilitate the collaboration between human and AI, how AI has been used or may have impact for different industries, and how to manage AI in businesses. Furthermore, we will dive into the literature on chatbot design and interactions as a more concrete scenario and share the theoretical perspectives to answer relevant questions.

7. Ulrich Laitenberger (Tilburg): Online Labor Markets and Digital Work

In this session, we will cover the topic of online labor markets (OLMs) and digital work platforms, which connect organizations and workers globally for the exchange of services and tasks. These platforms transform how labor is organized, priced, and delivered, and have become a key focus in Information Systems and related disciplines. We will discuss how digital platforms shape employment relationships, incentives, and worker selection, as well as how algorithms and data-driven management practices affect fairness, productivity, and career development. The session will also address questions related to governance and

platform strategy—how platforms balance the interests of employers, workers, and clients, and how information asymmetries and reputation systems influence matching and performance. Finally, we will explore how the evolution of OLMs—through AI, automation, and hybrid forms of work—creates new challenges for researchers and policymakers, raising questions about labor substitution, upskilling, and the global distribution of digital work.

Block 3

Location: VU

Day 1: 21 May

Day 2: 22 May

Sessions:

8. Bart v/d Hooff (VU): Complexity in IS Research

In this session, we will discuss the basic tenets of Complexity Theory. Next, we will discuss examples of IS research where these have been applied – primarily focused on understanding (1) Business-IT alignment and (2) managing the increasing complexity of IS architectures, but also exploring other applications in published research. Then, participants will be invited to reflect on the possible value and applicability of complexity-related concepts in their own research.

9. Joey van Angeren (VU): Digital Platform Architecture

Open and modular architectures lie at the heart of the success of digital platforms such as iOS, PlayStation, and Salesforce. Such architectures enable the creation of participatory infrastructures, in which a variety of actors (e.g., a platform owners and app developers) jointly create and capture value. The IS discipline has a longstanding tradition of studying open and modular architectures. In this session, we will revisit seminal IS research on open and modular architectures. We will also discuss how those ideas have helped shape our understanding of contemporary digital platform architectures and their governance, management, and use.

10. Edona Elshan (VU): Bridging Theory and Practice in Information Systems Development: Reframing Practitioner Insights

This session will explore the intersection of theoretical frameworks and practitioner insights in the evolving field of Information Systems Development. With the rapid advancements in technology and the increasing adoption of low-code platforms and GenAI, there is a growing need to bridge the gap between academic research and industry practice.

11. Poster Session

We are organizing a poster session to give participants a chance to present their ongoing research in an open, engaging format. The goal is to spark informal discussions and receive constructive feedback. It's a low-threshold way to share ideas, build visibility, and connect—especially for early-stage projects that may not yet be ready for full paper submissions for a conference. The idea is to keep it informal. We will invite our KIN colleagues to drop by as well, so that you can get multiple perspectives.

Your poster should briefly summarize your research. Posters should be A1-sized (594 mm x 841 mm) and in portrait orientation. A good poster should be visually engaging and easy to read from a short distance (1 meter).

Use large fonts, clear headings, and a logical layout to guide viewers through your research. Use visual elements and avoid long blocks of text. The goal of the poster is to spark conversation with other attendees!

3 Session Setup & Assessment

Each lecturer has substantial freedom in how they design their session, but the basic framework is a focus on paper discussions. In each session, you can expect around five assigned readings which you will discuss. Usually, the discussion will be led by one or more students who have read a paper in more detail.

The course comprises 6 ECTS. Students will be graded for each session and a 15-page research proposal. Lecturers can choose how to grade each session (e.g., presentation of an assigned reading and/or course participation). Attendance is mandatory for all sessions.