**J SCHOOL – SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM, COMMUNICATION, AND PUBLISHING**

**DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION**
**COURSE TITLE: SOCIAL MEDIA**
**COURSE CODE: CPMCSM250**
**3 semester credits**

## 1. DESCRIPTION

What do we mean by "community"? How do we encourage, discuss, analyze, understand, design, and participate in healthy communities in the age of many-to-many media? With the advent of virtual communities, smart mobs, and online social networks, old questions about the meaning of human social behavior have taken on renewed significance. Although this course is grounded in theory, it is equally rooted in practice, and much of the class discussion takes place in social cyberspaces. This course requires the active engagement of students and a willingness to experience a full immersion in social media practices. Much of the class discussion takes place in a variety of virtual world environments during and between face-to-face class meetings. Students who participate in this course will actively and productively engage in established and emerging forms of social media - and have some notion of how these practices affect the self and the community.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course students will:
- Identify, organize and interrelate the various forms of social media.
- Acquire digital literacy and competency in order to engage with social media platforms productively and responsibly.
- Acquire the vocabulary necessary to articulate and persuasively convey the many forms, nature, ideas and applications of social media
- Recognize and evaluate specific formal elements of social media such as various social networking websites.
- Learn how to create strategic content for social media platform.
- Be able to explain and apply core social media theories.
- Be able to research and identify a specific target audience for a social media campaign.

## 3. REQUIREMENTS

One communication course or equivalent.

## 4. METHOD

This course consists of lectures, class discussions, and projects. Mediums for instruction used will include, but are not limited to, interactive and hands-on activities which challenge thought processes, academic texts and studies, videos, slides, guided problem solving, and experiential and/or field learning activities where applicable.

This course features an Experiential Learning project for social media coverage at Palazzi Community Center events. Please, refer to the specific procedure on the course website for additional information

and details about the schedule.

## 5. TEXTBOOKS – FURTHER READINGS – RESOURCES

- Brown, Felix. *A Guide to Understanding the Correlation Between Social Media and Protest*. 2023. Available online here: https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lseupr/2023/02/15/a-guide-to-understanding-the-correlation-between-social-media-and-protest/
- Chan, Irene Cheng Chu; Chen, Zhaoyu; Leung, Daniel. "The More the Better? Strategizing Visual Elements in Social Media Marketing," *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*. 54. 2023.
- Cook, Julie & Lynes, Jennifer & Fries, Sarah. "Exploring Mistakes and Failures in Social Marketing: The Inside Story," *Social Marketing Quarterly*. 27. 2021.
- Darbinyan, Rem. *How AI Transforms Social Media*. Available online here: https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2023/03/16/how-ai-transforms-social-media/?sh=2ff91ea01f30
- Lawson, Cheryl. *Intro to Social Media*. Oklahoma State University. 2022.
- Opas et al. *Social Media Marketing Trends 2023*. Available online here: https://kurio.fi/v2/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Social-Media-Marketing-Trends-2023-Report-by-thenetworkone-x-kurio.pdf
- Van den Eynde, *Maximize Your Reach with the Latest Social Media Algorithms*. Available online here: https://storychief.io/blog/social-media-algorithms-updates-tips#:~:text=But%20don't%20fret%20%2D%20In,you%2C%20instead%20of%20against%20you.
- Van Dijk, Jose. *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media*. Oxford University Press, 2013. (Available in the Library)

### LIBRARIES IN FLORENCE
Please consult the posted schedules for official opening times of the university library. Also note that the library is for consultation only and it is not possible to borrow materials. The library is equipped with a scanner and internet access so that you may save or email a digital copy of the pages needed.
Students may also utilize additional libraries and research centers within the local community:

#### BIBLIOTECA PALAGIO DI PARTE GUELFA
Located in Piazzetta di Parte Guelfa between Piazza della Repubblica and Ponte Vecchio. Please consult the library website for hours of operation:
http://www.biblioteche.comune.fi.it/biblioteca_palagio_di_parte_guelfa/

#### BIBLIOTECA DELLE OBLATE
Located in via dell'Oriuolo 26. Please consult the library website for hours of operation:
www.bibliotecadelleoblate.it

#### THE HAROLD ACTON LIBRARY AT THE BRITISH INSTITUTE OF FLORENCE
Located in Lungarno Guicciardini 9. Please consult the library website for hours of operation. This library requires a fee-based student membership. For information: www.britishinstitute.it/en

## 6. FIELD LEARNING
Please consult your Official Registration for any mandatory field learning dates. Field Learning Activities cited in Official Registrations are an integral part of the course and also include an assignment that counts towards your final grade, details will be provided on the first day of class.

## 7. COURSE MATERIALS
No additional course materials are necessary.

## 8. COURSE FEES

Course fees cover course-related field learning activities, visits, and support the instructor's teaching methodologies. Book costs are not included in the course fee. The exact amount will be communicated by the instructor on the first day of class.

## 9. EVALUATION – GRADING SYSTEM

10% Attendance
10% Participation
15% Assignments
20% Midterm Exam or Special Project (if applicable)
20% Final Project
25% Final Exam

A = 93-100 %, A- = 90-92%, B+= 87-89%, B = 83-86%, B-=80-82%, C+ = 77-79%, C=73-76%, C-=70-72%, D = 60-69%, F= 0-59%, W = Official Withdrawal, W/F = Failure to withdraw by the designated date.

## 10. ATTENDANCE – PARTICIPATION

Academic integrity and mutual respect between instructor and student are central to the academic policy and reflected in the attendance regulations. Student presence is mandatory and counts toward the final grade.

**Absences** are based on academic hours: 1 absence equals 3 lecture hours.
Two absences: 6 lecture hours, attendance and participation grade will be impacted.
Three absences: 9 lecture hours, the final grade may be lowered by one letter grade.
Four absences: 12 lecture hours, constitutes automatic failure of the course regardless of when absences are incurred.
Please note:
- The above hours refer to lecture hours. Please note that the contact / credit hour policy in the academic catalog includes additional distribution ratios according to delivery category. Ex: 1 absence equals 6 FL/SL/Lab hours or 9 EL hours.
- Hours may be distributed in different formats according to the academic course schedules.

### LATE ARRIVAL AND EARLY DEPARTURE

Arriving late or departing early from class is not acceptable. Two late arrivals or early departures or a combination will result in an unexcused absence. Travel is not an exceptional circumstance.

### TRAVEL (OR DELAYS DUE TO TRAVEL) IS NEVER AN EXCUSE FOR ABSENCE FROM CLASS.

It is the student's responsibility to know how many absences are incurred. If in doubt, speak with your instructor!

**Participation:** Satisfactory participation will be the result of contributing to class discussions by putting forth insightful and constructive questions, comments and observations. Overall effort, cooperation during group work, proper care of work space and tools, responsible behavior, and completion of assignments will be assessed. All of the above criteria also apply to Field Learning and site visits.

## 11. EXAMS – PAPERS – PROJECTS

The **Midterm Exam** accounts for 20% and the **Final Exam** accounts for 25% of the final grade. These comprise short-answer and essay questions.

**Assignments** account for 15% of the final course grade. Assignments are part of an experiential learning project at the Palazzi Community Center. This is a project connecting experience in real events with the course content, by involving students in events coverage operations at the Palazzi Community Center. Students are assessed based on their accuracy, cultural competence, punctuality, and formatting skills.

The **Final Project** accounts for 20% of the final grade. Students will develop a comprehensive social media strategy designed to optimize digital engagement for a chosen brand or organization suggested by the faculty. The Final Project will be presented in class at the end of the course.

## 12. LESSONS

| Lesson 1 | |
| --- | --- |
| **Meet** | In class |
| **Lecture** | History of social media. |
| **Objectives** | Acquire an overview of the history of mass media.<br>Identify the key definitions for social media.<br>Understand how the history of social media tells us valuable data about past, present, and future societies. |
| **Readings/Assignments** | Read: Lawson, pp. 58-63<br>Read: Van Dijk, Chapter 1. |

| Lesson 2 | |
| --- | --- |
| **Meet** | In class |
| **Lecture** | The power of digital marketing and SEO advertising.<br>The impact of social media on society and business, explored through case studies of successful and unsuccessful platforms over the years. |
| **Objectives** | Identify how marketing applies to social media with references to other media platforms.<br>Gain knowledge about the role and significance of SEO writing.<br>Identify the significance of marketing factors such as customer relationship and competitor analysis.<br>Recognize the role of social media marketing for businesses and companies.<br>Gain knowledge about the main winning and failing strategies that businesses have relied on from the birth of social media onwards. |
| **Readings/Assignments** | Read: Lawson, pp. 7-34.<br>Watch: SMMA Guide in 2023.<br>Assignment 1: Analyze the impacts that social media carried out on a Florentine business of choice. |

| Lesson 3 | |
| --- | --- |
| **Meet** | In class |
| **Lecture** | Experiential Learning Project (please, refer to the event calendar uploaded on the course website for further details) |
| **Objectives** | Gain an understanding of real-world application of social media. |
| **Readings/Assignments** | Final Project development |

| Lesson 4 | |
| --- | --- |
| **Meet** | In class |
| **Lecture** | Audience targeting and advertising creation. |
| **Objectives** | Identify how to enhance search engine visibility. |

| | Understand the significance of knowing the audience. Identify how to create a buyer persona. |
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| **Readings/ Assignments** | Read: Lawson, pp. 30-45, pp. 67-70 |

| **Lesson 5** | |
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| **Meet** | In class |
| **Lecture** | The use of audio, images, and video in social media. |
| **Objectives** | Identify how visual elements in social media marketing can be strategically designed and leveraged to elicit viewers' interest, desire, and action. Recognize the differences and relationship between audio and visuals in a social media setting. |
| **Readings/ Assignments** | Read: Chan et al. *The More the Better? Strategizing Visual Elements in Social Media Marketing*. Assignment 2: Delineate a social media strategy for a local brand. |

| **Lesson 6** | |
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| **Meet** | In class |
| **Lecture** | UGC (User Generated Content) platforms. |
| **Objectives** | Identify how UGC support creativity and promote cultural exchange of amateur or professional contents. Gain an understanding of the various strategies for building and nurturing an online community. |
| **Readings/ Assignments** | Read: Van Dijk, Chapter 5 and 6. |

| **Lesson 7** | |
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| **Meet** | In class |
| **Lecture** | MIDTERM EXAM |

| **Lesson 8** | |
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| **NA** | ACADEMIC BREAK |

| **Lesson 9** | |
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| **Meet** | In class |
| **Lecture** | The quest for the best algorithm. AI optimization in social media. |
| **Objectives** | Identify the current trends in algorithmic composition with references to the main social media platforms. Gain knowledge about the filter bubble theory. Identify the current and forecasted role of Artificial Intelligence in social media. Recognize the main implementations of AI in social media, namely content generation, moderation, and ad management. |
| **Readings/ Assignments** | Read: Van den Eynde, *Maximize Your Reach with the Latest Social Media Algorithms*. Read: Darbinyan, *How AI Transforms Social Media*. |

| **Lesson 10** | |
|---|---|
| **Meet** | In class |
| **Lecture** | Experiential Learning Project (please, refer to the event calendar uploaded on the course website for further details) |

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| **Objectives** | Gain an understanding of real-world application of social media. |
| **Readings/ Assignments** | Final Project development |

| **Lesson 11** | |
|---|---|
| **Meet** | In class |
| **Lecture** | Social media and society: social justice, activism, truth discernment and misinformation, and virality |
| **Objectives** | Identify the power of hashtags with references to key case studies. Understand how information is disseminated on social media platforms Gain knowledge about the impact of fake news. Identify how social movements engage online. |
| **Readings/ Assignments** | Read: Brown, *A Guide to Understanding the Correlation Between Social Media and Protest.* Assignment 3: Research about the uses of social media in relation to a movement, protest, or fight. |

| **Lesson 12** | |
|---|---|
| **Meet** | In class |
| **Lecture** | The significance of content and storytelling. |
| **Objectives** | Identify the significance of storytelling in a social media setting. Recognize the main tools to assess, analyze, and produce valuable content in relation to goals and audience. |
| **Readings/ Assignments** | Read: Lawson, pp. 92-98. |

| **Lesson 13** | |
|---|---|
| **Meet** | In class |
| **Lecture** | Challenges and trends. |
| **Objectives** | Identify the features and trends that the major platforms are pursuing. Gain knowledge about the forecasts about the landscape of social media for the near future. |
| **Readings/ Assignments** | Read: Opas et al. *Social Media Marketing Trends 2023.* |

| **Lesson 14** | |
|---|---|
| **Meet** | In class |
| **Lecture** | Wrapping up social media for the future. |
| **Objectives** | Acquire further knowledge about the main prospects of social media for the future. Identify the main jobs that deal with social media. Be able to define a detailed social media strategy for a brand. |
| **Readings/ Assignments** | Submit Final Project. Read: Lawson, pp. 108-113. |

| **Lesson 15** | |
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| **Meet** | In class |
| **Lecture** | FINAL EXAM |