

	<b>AUF</b>	<i>The American University of Florence</i>		<b>SYLLABUS</b>	Rev. 8 April 2025 Academic Affairs
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Format revised 2025  
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Florence University of the Arts (FUA) is an academic institution for study abroad in Florence, Italy. FUA collaborates with The American University of Florence (AUF), an international university offering US-style undergraduate and graduate degrees, in a cooperation to offer study abroad programs with a diverse breadth and depth of academic curriculum.

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## **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**

There are no prerequisites for this course.

### **4. METHOD**

This course consists of lectures, class discussions, projects, and interaction with the local community. Mediums for instruction used will include, but are not limited to, interactive and hands-on activities which challenge thought processes, integrate relevant academic sources, may include multimedia references, propose creative problem-solving, and other appropriate forms of delivery as deemed appropriate to the course's purpose.

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. TEXTBOOK – FURTHER READINGS – RESOURCES**

TEXTBOOK (Copy available at the university library):

- 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-the-networkone-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)

The textbook is mandatory for course participation and completion. Where applicable additional materials may be provided by the instructor.

## **LIBRARY**

Course participants may access the campus library. Please consult the library site for resources such as collections, borrowing, scanning and wifi connection, and research: <https://www.auf-florence.org/Library/the-library/>

## **6. COURSE MATERIALS**

No additional course materials are necessary.

## **7. 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. If this course requires a fee, the exact amount is communicated prior to enrollment.

## **8. GRADING AND EVALUATION & ATTENDANCE**

10% Attendance

10% Participation

20% Assignments

20% Midterm Assessment

20% Final Project

20% Final Exam

The above grade breakdown percentages reflect the grading scale standards in the “Grading and Evaluation System” section of the catalog.

## Attendance

Class participation is mandatory. Based on the hours defined in the Academic Catalog's attendance policy, students may miss up to 2 class encounters delivered as lecture hours. A third absence constitutes a course failure.

Please note that absence hours may vary according to the learning methodology, as per the academic catalog policy on credit hours: [https://catalog.auf-florence.org/standard\\_regulation](https://catalog.auf-florence.org/standard_regulation)

## 9. EXAMS / PROJECTS / ASSIGNMENTS

**Midterm Assessment:** The midterm assessment accounts for 20% of the final course grade. Please note that the assessment consists of an online submission via the course portal. The format includes short definitions and open questions relating to the topics discussed in class.

**Final Exam:** The final exam is cumulative and accounts for 20% of the final course grade. It comprises short-answer and essay questions

**Final Project:** 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.

**Assignments:** 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.

## 10. COURSE OUTLINE

<b>Lesson 1</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	History of social media.
<b>Objectives</b>	Acquire an overview of the history of mass media. Identify the key definitions for social media. Understand how the history of social media tells us valuable data about past, present, and future societies.
<b>Readings/ Assignments</b>	Read: Lawson, pp. 58-63 Read: Van Dijk, Chapter 1. Assignment #1 assigned, due by next lesson: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Analyze the impacts that social media carried out on a Florentine business of choice.</li></ul>

<b>Lesson 2</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	The power of digital marketing and SEO advertising. The impact of social media on society and business, explored through case studies of successful and unsuccessful platforms over the years.
<b>Objectives</b>	Identify how marketing applies to social media with references to other media

	<p>platforms.</p> <p>Gain knowledge about the role and significance of SEO writing.</p> <p>Identify the significance of marketing factors such as customer relationship and competitor analysis.</p> <p>Recognize the role of social media marketing for businesses and companies.</p> <p>Gain knowledge about the main winning and failing strategies that businesses have relied on from the birth of social media onwards.</p>
<b>Readings/ Assignments</b>	<p>Read: Lawson, pp. 7-34.</p> <p><a href="#">Watch</a>: SMMA Guide in 2023.</p> <p>Assignment #2 assigned, due by next lesson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delineate a social media strategy for a local brand.</li> </ul>

<b>Lesson 3</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	Audience targeting and advertising creation.
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Identify how to enhance search engine visibility.</p> <p>Understand the significance of knowing the audience.</p> <p>Identify how to create a buyer persona.</p>
<b>Readings/ Assignments</b>	Read: Lawson, pp. 30-45, pp. 67-70

<b>Lesson 4</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	The use of audio, images, and video in social media.
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Identify how visual elements in social media marketing can be strategically designed and leveraged to elicit viewers' interest, desire, and action.</p> <p>Recognize the differences and relationship between audio and visuals in a social media setting.</p>
<b>Readings/ Assignments</b>	<p>Read: Chan et al. <i>The More the Better? Strategizing Visual Elements in Social Media Marketing</i>.</p> <p>FINAL PROJECT OVERVIEW.</p>

<b>Lesson 5</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	UGC (User Generated Content) platforms.
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Identify how UGC support creativity and promote cultural exchange of amateur or professional contents.</p> <p>Gain an understanding of the various strategies for building and nurturing an online community.</p>
<b>Readings/ Assignments</b>	<p>Read: Van Dijk, Chapter 5 and 6.</p> <p>MIDTERM ASSESSMENT ASSIGNED, due prior to next class meet.</p>

<b>Lesson 6</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	The quest for the best algorithm. AI optimization in social media.
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Identify the current trends in algorithmic composition with references to the main social media platforms.</p> <p>Gain knowledge about the filter bubble theory.</p>

	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.
<b>Readings/ Assignments</b>	Read: Van den Eynde, <i>Maximize Your Reach with the Latest Social Media Algorithms</i> . Read: Darbinyan, <i>How AI Transforms Social Media</i> .

<b>Lesson 7</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	Social media and society: social justice, activism, truth discernment and misinformation, and virality
<b>Objectives</b>	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.
<b>Readings</b>	Read: Brown, <i>A Guide to Understanding the Correlation Between Social Media and Protest</i> . Assignment #3 assigned, due by next lesson: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research about the uses of social media in relation to a movement, protest, or fight.</li></ul>

<b>Lesson 8</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	The significance of content and storytelling.
<b>Objectives</b>	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.
<b>Readings</b>	Read: Lawson, pp. 92-98.

<b>Lesson 9</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	Challenges and trends.
<b>Objectives</b>	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.
<b>Readings</b>	Read: Opas et al. <i>Social Media Marketing Trends 2023</i> . FINAL PROJECT DUE

<b>Lesson 10</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class
<b>Lecture</b>	Wrapping up social media for the future.
<b>Objectives</b>	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.
<b>Readings</b>	Submit Final Project. Read: Lawson, pp. 108-113.

<b>Lesson 11 Final Exam</b>	
<b>Meet</b>	In class

**Lecture**

FINAL EXAM