COMM3558 | SOCIAL MEDIA

School of Communication — Summer 2021
Syllabus updated May 2, 2021 (log of changes available at bottom of syllabus)

Instructor
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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course functions to help students (1) acquire theoretical and practical knowledge about social media and (2) understand the ways in which social media influence individuals, groups, and society. Over the semester, we will discuss a range of topics related to social media. In this course, students will come to:

o   Understand implications of media becoming "social"
o   Increase their knowledge of the structure and governance of social media
o   Recognize strategies various entities (e.g., individuals, activists, organizations) adopt to use social media effectively
o   Learn about the characteristics, functionality, and usage of social media as distinct from traditional mass media and other forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC)

COURSE FORMAT

This course is an **online course**, which means that students will access 100% of the class material, activities, and assessments online via the Internet. No regular, required in-person meetings will take place. At the start of each week (Monday at 12:00 am Eastern), all course content will be released via Carmen Modules. These modules contain step-by-step instructions which will guide you through the required readings, lecture and supplementary videos, and any assignments due that week. It is *STRONGLY* recommended that you begin and end each week along with the course release schedule, as each week is meant to build on the last and each assignment due at the end of each week assumes you have completed the other content for the week already.

COURSE MATERIALS

All required readings and materials will be accessible through our Carmen site via the Files section. You can also access readings and materials by clicking through the links in the course modules. Lecture videos are hosted on YouTube and will be linked via the course modules.

Access to a computer/laptop, a high-speed Internet connection, current web browser with video-related plugins, Microsoft Office (available to OSU student free of charge), and speakers/headphones is required for this course. Students should not attempt to complete this course using a smartphone. This course is exclusively online. As a result, you must be comfortable working more independently than in an in-person classroom and using your computer, web-browser, and navigating Carmen. Additionally, you must ensure that your computer functions properly and that you use some form of data redundancy (e.g., cloud backups or physical duplication). Please see the technology policy below for more details.

TEACHING APPROACH

This course serves as a special topics in communication technology overview on social media. This makes for a course that will likely resonate with you on a personal level and a fun one for me to teach! Despite being a fun course, I maintain high standards for my own performance as the instructor and, consequently, will ask the same of you. Success in any undertaking requires consistent dedication and learning in your college classes is no different. The grade you earn in this course will reflect your effort. If you find yourself struggling to achieve what you are here to accomplish then *please* come speak with me so that I might help you strategize your approach to my class. Especially in the time of a pandemic, my (virtual) door is open.

Some of the topics we will cover might make you uncomfortable. I encourage you to get out of your comfort zone (within reason) and learn something new. Some topics might be controversial and you might find yourself disagreeing with me – wonderful! I strive to highlight the value of course topics by discussing how they matter in cultural, historic, economic, political, and practical contexts. I invite my students of all backgrounds and perspectives to engage with me. No appointment is necessary to attend your instructors' office hours. Please stop by. We can learn a great deal by communicating.

COURSE POLICIES

Sources of course information: Because this is an online class, quick questions regarding the course cannot take place in person. Thus, I have set up a system for you to access various forms of information about the course. Start at the top of this list and work your way down to find answers to your questions. This will usually be the most efficient and quick way to get information about the course.

1. **First sources for information:** Your first and most important sources of course information will be the Carmen Home Page, the Modules, and the Syllabus. Typically, answers to your questions have already been provided in one of these three places.

2. **Second source for information:** Your second resource for course information are the course discussion boards available in Carmen, because it is likely that another student has asked your question and the instructor or TA has already answered it. For general course questions, use the General Course Questions discussion board.

3. **Third source for information:** If you wish to remain anonymous or have sensitive questions, send the course TA an email or meet with them during their office hours. In short, your TA is your lifeline for this course. Your TA will have specific knowledge of your work and should be your resource for all questions and concerns regarding content, class scheduling, accommodations, or any other class related issues not addressed in the discussion boards.

4. **Fourth source for information:** If, after referencing the course pages, the discussion boards, and contacting your TA you feel that you still have questions or concerns, you may email the instructor: sweitzer.34@osu.edu

Communication policy: Because of the size of our class and its online nature, the communication policies serve to facilitate clarity, timeliness, collaboration, and simplicity. Please aim to adhere to the policy closely. Deviating from the policy may result in undue delays or us missing your messages altogether.

1. **Follow the guidance provided in the sources of course information when you have questions.** We have worked to set up information in a format that is readily accessible for you at any time of day or night. Please use this system so that you do not have to wait for us to respond and so that we are not overwhelmed with requests for information we have already provided.

2. **Practice professionalism in every exchange.**

    1. I will not tolerate incivility or similar disruptions to my online classroom including threatening behavior or inappropriate language/derogatory speech. I expect that all students in this course will maintain civility, professionalism, and decorum in all interactions for this course. I reserve the right to dismiss any student who is non-compliant with this policy. Additionally, I reserve the right to report disruptive students to the Dean of Students and/or University Police. This document shares some tips on how to successfully interact with your peers and instructors online.

    2. Ensuring that your email messages are informative and receive a timely response requires attention to a few key details:

1. ***Send emails from your OSU email address to our OSU email addresses.*** Messages to our OSU accounts from non-OSU email services are regularly marked as spam and because they use systems external to OSU, technology services cannot confirm their delivery. Consequently, you may not use them as evidence of communication attempts.

2. ***Include the course number (i.e., COMM3558) in the subject line*** so we know which course you're referencing.

3. ***Address the email to the recipient with a salutation*** (e.g., Hi Mr. Sweitzer,) so that we know whose reply you are seeking. In some instances, the instructor may forward your message to the teaching assistant, if they are the more appropriate recipient of the message and vice versa.

4. ***Keep message text on topic, specific, and concise.*** If you are messaging with a request, state it explicitly and the reason(s) for the request. If you are messaging for clarification on a topic, make sure to check the discussion boards to see if an instructor has already addressed your question/concern.

5. ***Close the email with your full name.*** Each of your instructors is engaging with hundreds of students this semester. Making your identity clear as the sender of a message will aid us in communicating with you more efficiently.

6. ***Understand that emails sent around 5pm or later on weekdays and on weekends may not receive immediate replies.*** Just as with each student in this class, your instructors are people with personal lives and obligations outside of this class. We aim to answer emails within 24 hours of receipt on business days. Under most circumstances, we will respond to messages sent after 5pm and on weekends on the next business day. Keep in mind that assessment deadlines are on Sundays at 11:59pm. We will not usually be available to reply to emails over the weekend, so please be proactive and plan accordingly.

3. ***Avoid Carmen mail/messenger and Carmen submission comments.*** This is not a reliable way to reach your instructors and we will not check these services regularly. The best way to reach us directly is via the discussion boards and email.

Deadlines: Assume that all deadlines are in Eastern Time (ET).

Late work: Students may submit all assessments late with a penalty. Penalties for late work increase cumulatively and are calculated automatically by the Carmen gradebook.

Submitting work 1 second after the deadline yields a -2% point penalty for the submission. For each additional hour after the deadline, you lose an additional -2% off the submission. After 50 hours have passed from the deadline (for most assignments, this is Wednesday at 2:00 am), the penalty is 100%, and thus the assignment can no longer be turned in.

Unenrollment: OSU does not recognize unenrollment as a valid excuse for missing work. If you become unenrolled from the course for any reason, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor and establish alternative means to submit work prior to the specified deadline. If you suspect that this policy will affect you, I recommend saving the syllabus to your local computer or printing it out for reference.

Professionalism in submissions: You must ensure that the work you submit is correct, uncorrupted, accessible, and complete. Submitting files that are corrupt, the wrong version, the wrong format, missing components, the wrong file type, etc. is unprofessional. It is your responsibility to check on the integrity of your work immediately following submission. Your instructors will not inform you if your work fails to meet these standards. If the instructors cannot view your work when beginning to grade it, you will not receive credit for your submission. Standard lateness penalties apply to unprofessional work.

Technology: Students must use technology outside of the classroom because this is an online delivered course. Students must regularly check their OSU email account, the Carmen course page for information, materials, updates, and to participate in group discussions. Students must maintain access to a computer/laptop, a high-speed Internet connection, current web browser with video-related plugins, and speakers/headphones throughout the course of the semester. The instructor will link lectures through the Carmen Modules for each week.

For help with your password, university e-mail, Carmen, or any other technology issues, questions, or requests, contact the OSU IT Service Desk. Standard support hours are available at https://ocio.osu.edu/help/hours, and support for urgent issues is available 24x7.

Technical failure does not constitute an excuse for submitting work late. This rule is more important with online courses. You are, per course requirements, obligated to have regular access to a working computer/laptop and high-speed internet access. It is your responsibility to make sure your devices are in working order, which includes hardware and software. Technical problems which are documented by the University's Office of the Chief Information Officer will be permitted as these are outside of your control. You can view the status of OSU's systems on this page. If you experience a problem with an OSU system (email, Carmen) which OCIO have not reported, it will be your responsibility to contact the OSU IT Service Desk. Only after they confirm your situation was out of your control (requires documentation) will the instructor make an accommodation. Note that a situation like this is extremely rare. If you find yourself

experiencing a technical issue that impacts your ability to take part in essential class activities, your first response should be to make alternate arrangements (e.g., a computer lab).

The instructor and course TA will hold office hours through Ohio State's conferencing platform, Carmen Zoom. The instructors' digital meeting rooms can be accessed during posted office hours at the links provided at the top of the syllabus. Students may use the audio and video functions if a webcam and microphone are available. If not, there is still a chat function within Carmen Zoom for the student to live chat with the professor in the virtual office hours room. A guide to accessing Carmen Zoom is available online here and students can access support for Carmen Zoom here.

Grade appeals: You may send your instructor an email to instigate a grade appeal within 1 week after the grade posts in Carmen. Appeals must have strong evidence-based arguments that reference specific components of the assignment's grading criteria. Appeals can result in an unchanged grade, a higher grade, or a lower grade. To initiate an appeal, please download and submit this form via email to your TA.

Course leave: If you become seriously ill or something happens to you that prevents you from participating in the course for an extended amount of time (e.g., mental illness, taking care of an immediate family member, childbirth, etc.), you may apply for course leave. You must let both Matthew Sweitzer and Daniel Colon Amill know of your situation as soon as practical when you become aware of the need for leave (either the day you learn of the need or the next workday). If you qualify for leave, you can make up missed work up to 7 days prior to your leave request. Be proactive and let us know as soon as possible if you think you need leave. The instructor will not grant leave retroactively. For example, if you qualify for leave in week 2 but request leave in week 5, you cannot earn credit for work due in weeks 2 & 3. Course leave is similar to OSU's Family and Medical Leave (FML; see here for more information) and the professor will consider such requests on a case-by-case basis.

Peer interaction and public work: The structure of this course incorporates public posting and peer interaction. If you are not comfortable with this, I recommend you drop this course as I will not make any accommodations to this structure.

Tentative nature of syllabus: This syllabus represents an agreement between the students and the instructor, Matthew Sweitzer. Students enrolled in this class agree to the terms of the syllabus and understand that the policies, schedule, and deadlines outlined within it are subject to the instructor's modification with notice via Carmen or email to students.

COURSE ASSESSMENTS

Engagement Activities (EAs): during most weeks, students will have the opportunity to submit a response to a reflection assignment in a discussion board. The purpose of

these assignments is to allow students to react to and reflect on social media in their personal lives and engage with current events/topics in social media. There will be 8 opportunities to submit EAs. I will drop your lowest 3 scores at the end of the semester. Your five highest submissions combined constitute 50% of the final grade. Each engagement activity is equally calculated in the final grade (10 points each). These will be graded out of a maximum of 10 points, where 10 out of 10 represents an adequately engaged submission. Points will be deducted if components of the prompt are left unanswered or if the TA deems that a response does not address course-related concepts. The instructor has provided general tips and information about what constitutes an "adequately engaged submission" at this link. Please adhere to the Discussion Board Guidelines when engaging in discussion with your fellow classmates.

Exams: Students will have the opportunity to take three exams through Carmen. The exams will each be open for one week and they are not timed. Each exam is worth 20 points, and the lowest of three scores will be dropped, for a total of 40% of the final course grade. The exams are all non-cumulative. The exams will rigorously test your knowledge about the course topics. I have designed the exams to be challenging for two reasons. First, their rigor will motivate you to keep up with the material each week and to study the material as you would in an in-person course. Second, all exams are open book and open notes.

The exam material will come from the lectures and the assigned readings/materials. The exam questions are applied rather than definition-based. Exams may contain multiple-choice, true-false, and matching questions. Each exam will contain 20 questions. Students must be knowledgeable of the course material to perform well on the exams. Students will only have one attempt to complete each of the exams. I **do not** allow group work on the exams and doing so constitutes academic misconduct. Please prepare well and do not wait until the last minute to start an exam, as technological issues can occur (see technology policy below for more details). If students have questions about the exams generally, they should use the General Discussion Board available in Carmen.

Syllabus Quiz: Students will take one quiz at the start of the semester that will cover the syllabus. Since we will not meet face-to-face at the start of the semester, this quiz will help motivate students to understand the policies and expectations in the course from the start of the semester. The other purpose of the quiz is to familiarize students with using the Carmen quiz system because this is how students will take the Exams in this course. Students may take this quiz as many times as they would like and the highest grade earned will be recorded. The quiz will constitute 10% of the final course grade.

C-Rep Extra Credit: Students may participate in the Communication Research Experience Program (C-Rep) to earn extra credit for this course. C-Rep is designed to give students direct exposure to the topics, goals, methods, and ethical issues of

communication research. Participation may take the form of any combination of the following:

- o Completing up to 3 hours of C-Rep research studies
- o Completing up to 3 alternative writing assignments

Extra credit is earned at 1% of the total course grade per hour of study participation, or 1% per alternative writing assignment. The maximum allowable extra credit earned per course is 3% of the final grade. Studies fill up quickly, especially over the summer when fewer studies are offered, so DON'T wait until the end of the semester! You may sign up for studies by visiting https://osucomm.sona-systems.com. Please direct any specific questions to the C-Rep manager, Olivia Bullock, at bullock.181@osu.edu.

GRADING

The grade for this course is based on 3 exams (lowest 1 dropped), 8 engagement activities (lowest 3 dropped), and 1 syllabus quiz.

Assignment	Drop Rule	Individual Component Points	Total Percentage in Final Grade
Engagement Activities 1-8	5 highest scores kept (drop 3 lowest)	10 points each	50%
Exams 1-3	2 highest scores kept (drop 1 lowest)	20 points each	40%
Syllabus Quiz	--	10 points	10%
C-Rep Extra Credit	--	+3 points	+3%
TOTAL		**100 points**	**100%**

I will use the standard OSU grading scale. I will not round grades. If this course is required for you to graduate or to avoid academic probation/expulsion, I expect you to perform at your best to avoid an undesirable outcome. Be proactive in working to earn the grade you want and understanding what this requires of you.

A	93.00-100%
A-	90.00-92.99%
B+	87.00-89.99%
B	83.00-86.99%
B-	80.00-82.99%
C+	77.00-79.99%
C	73.00-76.99%
C-	70.00-72.99%
D+	67.00-69.99%
D	60.00-66.99%
E	0.00-59.99%

OSU POLICIES

Academic misconduct. All work should be your original work. You must use citations when presenting ideas that are not your own using APA style. You must complete all submitted work by yourself. You may not reuse work from a past or current semester. It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct

Disability services. Students with disabilities (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions) that have been certified by the Office of Student Life Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office of Student Life Disability Services is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue; telephone 614- 292-3307, slds@osu.edu; slds.osu.edu.

Sexual misconduct/relationship violence. Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually

harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at http://titleix.osu.edu or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at titleix@osu.edu

Diversity. The School of Communication at The Ohio State University embraces and maintains an environment that respects diverse traditions, heritages, experiences, and people. Our commitment to diversity moves beyond mere tolerance to recognizing, understanding, and welcoming the contributions of diverse groups and the value group members possess as individuals. In our School, the faculty, students, and staff are dedicated to building a tradition of diversity with principles of equal opportunity, personal respect, and the intellectual interests of those who comprise diverse cultures.

Copyright disclaimer. The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Students must consider copyright law before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

Student life issues. As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you are or someone you know is suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

Student academic services. Academic Services' website provides support for student academic success. Students can obtain information on advising issues such as tutoring, transfer credits, academic standing, and contact information for Arts and Sciences advisors at http://advising.osu.edu/welcome.shtml. Students may learn about additional services offered on the OSU main campus by visiting http://ssc.osu.edu.

COVID-19 Accommodation Process. The university strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. In light of the current pandemic, students seeking to request COVID-related accommodations may do so through the university's request process, managed by Student Life Disability Services. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can

privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. **SLDS contact information:** slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The schedule below is tentative and subject to change. A log of documented changes is available at the bottom of this page for any adjustments to the schedule.
Refer to the weekly modules for the most up-to-date material list. All materials, readings, and videos are available via the modules.

Typical weekly structure: I will release new content on Mondays at 12:00 am Eastern. Most assignments for the week will be due at 11:59 pm Eastern the following Sunday. The lone exception is Exam 3 in the last week, which will be made available on Saturday at 12:00 am Eastern and will be due the following Friday (July 30th) at 11:59 pm Eastern.

Week	Topic	Lecture Video	Material or Reading	Due Sunday at 11:59pm unless otherwise indicated
1 5/12-5/16	What Do We Mean by Social Media?	Videos 1-1, 1-2	Syllabus; boyd & Ellison (2008, excerpt); Perrin & Anderson (2019); Humphreys (2016, excerpt); Rosen (2012); Two Step Flow video; Diffusion of Innovation video; History of Social media video	Syllabus Quiz
2 5/17-5/23	The Ruling of Social Media	Videos 2-1, 2-2	Obar & Wildman, 2015; Spar (2001); Tufekci (2016); Sonali & Karr video; Instagram's Algorithm video	Engagement Activity 1
3 5/24-5/30	The Technological Basis of Social Media	Videos 3-1, 3-2	Walther and Jang (2012); Fox and McEwan (2017); Golbeck & Aral (article); Deepfake video (WSJ); Nuñez (2019)	Engagement Activity 2
4 5/31-6/6	The Social Basis of Social Media	Videos 4-1, 4-2	O'Sullivan & Carr (2018); Baym (2015); Jensen (2015); Patulny (2020); Context collapse video	Exam 1
5 6/7-6/13	Interacting with the Publics	Videos 5-1, 5-2	Murthy (2018) excerpt; Mundt, Ross, & Burnett (2018); Tufekci (2017) Ch. 1	Engagement Activity 3

	Week	Topic	Lecture Video	Material or Reading	Due Sunday at 11:59pm unless otherwise indicated
6	6/14-6/20	Organizing through Social Media I	Video 6-1	Tufekci (2017) Ch. 2, 3; Framing TedTalk; Ciampaglia & Menczer (2018); Bennett & Segerberg (2012; optional)	Engagement Activity 4
7	6/21-6/27	Organizing through Social Media II	Videos 7-1, 7-2	Tufekci (2017) Ch. 5; Garrett (2016); All Hail the Algorithm video; AI can be biased video	Exam 2
8	6/28-7/4	Selective-Self Presentation	Videos 8-1, 8-2	Walther et al. (2015); Smith & Sanderson (2015)	Engagement Activity 5
9	7/5-7/11	Body Image via Social Media	Videos 9-1, 9-2	Fox & Vendemia (2016); Yeshua-Katz & Martins (2013); Selfie Filters video	Engagement Activity 6
10	7/12-7/18	Authenticity and Social Media Savvy	Videos 10-1	Authenticity video; Lisa Rhee video	Engagement Activity 7
11	7/19-7/25	Disinhibition and Deindividuation	Videos 11-1, 11-2	Sutton TEDTalk (2018); Xiao (2019); Suler (2005); Romano (2020)	Engagement Activity 8
12	7/26-7/30	Social Media and Social Support	Videos 12-1, 12-2	Cook (2020); Bazarova (2020); Gonzales, Lynch, Kwon, & Fritz (2016)	Exam 3* **DUE FRIDAY 7/30**

Changelog: