

# COMM 3558: Social Media (OL)

School of Communication | Autumn 2020 | Section 17352

**Instructor:** Dr. Teresa Lynch (she/her)

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**Digital Office:** [Carmen Zoom Meeting Room \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

**Office Hours (online only):** Mondays 10:30am - 12:00pm and by appointment

**Graduate Grading Assistant:** Kyla Brathwaite

## 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:

- Understand implications of media becoming “social”
- Increase their knowledge of the structure and governance of social media
- Recognize strategies various entities (e.g., individuals, activists, organizations) adopt to use social media effectively
- 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 in-person meetings will take place. At the start of each week, all course content will be released via Module. The professor will provide a welcome video for the week that will include information about the week's content, updates about the course, and reminders for material that is due in the upcoming week.

## 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.

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 \(Links to an external site.\)](#)), and speakers/headphones. 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

My leadership and instruction in the classroom is an important part of my role as a professor here at The Ohio State University. 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 professor 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 in conversation in class or during office hours. No appointment is necessary to attend my office hours. Please stop by. We can learn a great deal by communicating.

## COURSE POLICIES

**Communication policy:** Because of the size of our class and its online nature, the communication policies serve to facilitate 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.

Things to avoid:

1. *Carmen mail/messenger & Carmen submission comments.* Both of these are unreliable and the professor **will not** check them regularly.
2. *Weekend emails and messages sent around 5PM or later on weekdays.* Under most circumstances, we will respond to messages of this sort on the next business day. Keep in mind that assessment deadlines are on Fridays at 11:59pm. I will not usually be available to reply to emails later in the day on Fridays, so plan accordingly.
3. *Sending emails that are not from your OSU email address.* Messages to our OSU accounts from non-OSU email services are regularly marked as spam and since their OSU cannot confirm their delivery, you may not use them as evidence of communication attempts.
4. *Unprofessional emails.* Please ensure that your email messages are professional and informative by including COMM3558 in the subject line, a salutation, adequate yet concise body text, closing, and your full name.
5. *Emails that require immediate attention.* We aim to answer emails with 24 hours of receipt on business days. Be proactive and plan ahead.

**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 source for information:** Your first and most important resource are the course [discussion boards](#) available in Carmen, because it is likely that another student has asked your question and the professor has already answered it. For general course questions, use the [General Course Questions discussion board](#). For assignment specific questions, use the specific discussion board for each assignment.
2. **Second source for information:** If you wish to remain anonymous or have sensitive questions, you may send me an email to set up an appointment or visit me during office hours.

**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. 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.

**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 me 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:** You must ensure that the work you submit is correct. 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. The professor will not inform you if your work fails these standards. If the professor cannot view your work when beginning to grade it, you will not receive credit for your submission. Standard lateness penalties apply to unprofessional work.

I will not tolerate 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 while in the classroom and in our online interactions. 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.

**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 professor 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> ([Links to an external site.](#)), 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](#) ([Links to an external site.](#)). If you experience a problem with an OSU system (email, Carmen) which OCIO have not reported, it will be your responsibility to raise a ticket with them. Only after they confirm your situation was out of your control will the professor 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).

Dr. Lynch will hold office hours through Ohio State's conferencing platform, Carmen Zoom. Dr. Lynch's digital meeting room can be accessed during posted office hours at [this link](#). ([Links to an external site.](#)) 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](#) ([Links to an external site.](#)) and students can [access support for Carmen Zoom here](#) ([Links to an external site.](#)).

**Grade appeals:** You may send your professor an email to instigate a grade appeal within 1 week after the grade posting 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.

**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 the professor 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 professor 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 \(Links to an external site.\)](#)) 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 professor, Dr. Teresa Lynch. 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 professor's modification with notice via Carmen to students.

## COURSE ASSESSMENTS

**Engagement Activities (EAs):** During each week when there is not an exam, students will have the chance to submit a brief response to an assigned prompt for the week in a private discussion board. These submissions combined constitute 20% of the final grade. There are 13 opportunities to submit. I will drop your lowest three scores. Each engagement activity is worth 2% of the final grade. These will be graded on a 0 - no submission/off topic submission, 1 - adequate submission, 2 - highly engaged submission. The professor has provided general tips and information about what constitutes a "highly engaged submission" at [this link \(Links to an external site.\)](#). In Weeks 7 and 8, we will hold a synchronous 1 hour discussion section each week via Zoom. Participation in this discussion will fulfill submission of a weekly engagement activity. Attendance is **not** required, but encouraged. If you are unable to attend the session (because the professor will have to select a time that unfortunately may not work for your schedule), you may still earn the points for that week's engagement activity by submitting a written response.

**Critical Reflection (CR):** In this assignment, students will engage in an in-depth critical reflection on an issue related to how a particular social movement organization utilizes social media. This

small project will require students to do some brief research, share a summary of what they learned, and then share their critical opinions publicly with their peers. Students must use course concepts/topics to inform their opinions in this assignment. The professor will provide further information about this project in advance.

**Critical Reflection Reviews (CRR):** Following the CRA submission deadline, the professor will assign each student into small groups. Students will be responsible for viewing and posting comments on an assigned number of their peers' posted critical reflection submissions. These responses should respond completely to the instruction prompt, which the professor will provide in advance.

**Exams:** Students will have the opportunity to take two exams through Carmen. Each exam is worth 20% of the final grade for a total of 40% of the final course grade. The two exams are 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 as you would for a standard, in-person exam. 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. Students will a defined and announced amount of time to complete each exam and exams will contain approximately 25 questions. The time limit will greatly constrain the ability to look up individual answers. Students must be knowledgeable of the course material to perform well on the exam within the allotted time and must complete exams during the specified time window. Students will only have one attempt to complete each exam. 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 Exam Discussion Board](#) available in Carmen.

**Reading Quizzes:** In Weeks 6, 7, and 8 we will be considering material that is somewhat different in nature than the rest of the course. Rather than include this material on an exam, students will take a reading quiz that is intended to help you understand the material we are reading those weeks. This quiz will be open book and notes. The format will be the same as the exams (i.e., containing multiple-choice, true-false, and matching questions), but the quiz will not be timed. The quiz will be worth 10% of the final course grade.

**Syllabus Quiz:** Students will take one quiz this 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 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 2% of the final course grade.

## GRADING

The grade for this course is based on 2 exams, 1 reading quiz, 10 engagement activities, 1 critical reflection project, 1 set of critical reflection reviews, and 1 syllabus quiz.

Item	Total Percentage of Final Grade
Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Reading Quiz	10%
Engagement Activities	20%
Critical Reflection	20%
Critical Reflection Reviews	8%
Syllabus Quiz	2%

I will use the standard OSU grading scale. I will not round grades and do not offer extra credit. 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%	B 83.00-86.99%	C 73.00-76.99%	D 60.00-66.99%
A- 90.00-92.99%	B- 80.00-82.99%	C- 70.00-72.99%	E 0-59.99%
B+ 87.00-89.99%	C+ 77.00-79.99%	D+ 67.00-69.99%	

## 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](mailto:slds@osu.edu); [slds.osu.edu](http://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](mailto: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](http://ccs.osu.edu) ([Links to an external site.](#)) 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](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org) ([Links to an external site.](#)).

**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> (Links to an external site.). Students may learn about additional services offered on the OSU main campus by visiting <http://ssc.osu.edu> (Links to an external site.).

**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](#) (Links to an external site.), 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](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu) (Links to an external site.); 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12<sup>th</sup> 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 Sundays. Assessments for the week are due on Fridays by 11:59PM ET.**

Week	Date	Topic	Lecture Video	Material or Reading	Due Friday at 11:59pm
1	8/25 - 8/28	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	EA1

2	8/30 - 9/4	The Ruling of Social Media	Videos 2-1, 2-2	Obar & Wildman, 2015; Spar (2001); Tufekci (2016); Sonali & Karr video; Instagram's Algorithm video	Syllabus quiz; EA2
3	9/6 - 9/11	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)	EA3
4	9/13 - 9/18	The Social Basis of Social Media	Videos 4-1, 4-2	O'Sullivan & Carr (2018); Baym (2015); Jensen (2015); Patulny (2020); Context collapse video	EA4
5	9/20 - 9/25	Exam prep			Exam 1
6	9/27 - 10/2	Interacting with the Publics	Videos 6-1, 6-2	Murthy (2018) excerpt; Mundt, Ross, & Burnett (2018); Tufekci (2017) Ch. 1; Torturra video	EA5
7	10/4 - 10/9	Organizing through Social Media I	Videos 7-1	Tufekci (2017) Ch. 2, 3; Framing TedTalk; 5 Filters of the Mass Media Machine video; Ciampaglia & Menczer, 2018	EA 6 or attendance in synchronous session
8	10/11 - 10/16	Organizing through Social Media II	Videos 8-1, 8-2	Tufekci (2017) Ch. 5; Garrett (2016); All Hail the Algorithm video; AI can be biased video	EA7 or attendance in synchronous session; CR

					project due; Reading Quiz
9	10/18 - 10/23		Peer CR reviews		CR reviews
10	10/25 - 10/30	Selective-Self Presentation	Videos 10-1, 10-2	Walther et al. (2015); Smith & Sanderson (2015)	EA8
11	11/1 - 11/6	Body Image via Social Media	Videos 11-1, 11-2	Fox & Vendemia (2016); Yeshua-Katz & Martins (2013); Selfie Filters video	EA9
12	11/8 - 11/13	Authenticity and Social Media Savvy	Videos 12-1, 12-2	Schreurs & Vandenbosch (2020); Authenticity video	EA10
13	11/15 - 11/20	Social Media and Social Support	Videos 13-1, 13-2	Cook, 2020; Bazarova, 2020; Gonzales, Lynch, Kwon, & Fritz (2016)	EA11
14	11/22 - 11/25	Disinhibition and Deindividuation	Videos 14-1, 14-2	Sutton TEDTalk (2018); Xiao (2019); Suler, 2005	EA12
15	11/29 - 12/4				Exam 2
Finals	12/6 - 12/11				