**Overview**

Social Media Today (SMT) is a survey course with no prerequisites, intended for students of any major and interest. It satisfies the General Education requirement in Values, Society and Diversity. This course offers an overview of our current understanding of a wide range of social media phenomena from the point of view of researchers, professionals, and critics. We will begin with a brief history of communication technologies, including the first instances of social engagement online. Next, we will discuss key conceptual and theoretical developments that ground informed discussions of social media. We then will examine what the rise of social media means for contemporary culture and society, focusing on a range of topics including: journalism, politics, globalization, and marketing. Finally, we will consider future possibilities for digital and social media.

**Diversity and Discussion**

In this class, we will be discussing current events and contemporary social issues, including potentially sensitive subjects such as sexual harassment, hate speech, and violence. We will also be discussing political and cultural topics from a variety of perspectives. In Lecture and Section, we support the open presentation and discussion of viewpoints, even those we disagree with or don’t like, and we will also be respectful of others’ ideas. This course is a place to explore new ideas and to think through the complexities of our socially mediated lives.

**JMC Learning Outcomes:**

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is committed to your academic and professional success. In line with this commitment, we have identified particular learning outcomes for the JMC curriculum. Our course addresses the following learning outcomes:
Media literacy:
• Students will demonstrate knowledge of the basic tenets of media literacy and how media literacy relates to their personal media habits and professional development.
• Students will develop critical thinking skills to analyze and interpret media messages through an understanding of media practices and institutions.

Multiculturalism:
• Students will demonstrate sensitivity to and understanding of the cultures, histories, perspectives, and socio-economic and political situations of diverse groups.

Law and ethics:
• Students will demonstrate an ability to anticipate and recognize ethical issues when they arise and to reason through them taking multiple perspectives and contexts into account.
• Students will demonstrate an ability to explain their ethical approaches and reasoning about a particular dilemma in terms that can be understood by a diverse group of people.

Media history:
• Students will demonstrate an awareness of the historical origins of digital communication and the Internet and describe its effect on print and online media industries with emphasis on their business models and audiences.
• Students will demonstrate an ability to explain the historical origins of recent examples of convergent digital news and entertainment media.

Course-specific Objectives
By the end of the semester, students should be able to:
• Understand the historical roots and recent antecedents of contemporary social media
• Recognize and apply major theoretical and conceptual issues in social media studies
• Understand how social media affect various aspects of contemporary life
• Navigate the world of social media in a more professional way
• Read critically and analyze information posted on and about social media
• Write analytically about digital and social media

Required readings
We will read a variety of academic and journalistic accounts of social media in our lives. You are expected to complete the readings by the start of lecture indicated. All required readings are posted on ICON. It's Complicated, and Personal Connections in the Digital Age are available on reserve in the SJMC Resource Center and may be checked out for two-hour periods. In addition, we will listen to podcast episodes and other audio or watch videos related to the weekly topics. You are expected to watch/view before your discussion section for the week indicated.

We will also read chapters from the following book:
Burgess, Jean. (2017). The SAGE Handbook of Social Media. Sage Publications Ltd. This book is available in electronic format in the UI Main Library. You can link to the book through the doi below. Off-campus, you will have to sign in with your hawkid and password for access for the book:
You can download chapters as pdf files.

**Email and ICON**

As per university policy, you are responsible for all official correspondences sent to your @uiowa.edu email. Please check regularly for emails from me and your TAs. ICON announcements and discussion boards will also be used as the official communication medium for this class. You will need to check regularly and keep up to date with course changes and developments. You will need to submit assignments on ICON. Assignments should be submitted and will be accepted as Microsoft Word documents only. We will not accept assignments via e-mail or in any other format.

If you need to get in touch with me by e-mail send it directly to me at sujatha-sosale@uiowa.edu, and not through ICON.

**Discussion Sections**

Discussion sections meet weekly at your scheduled time. In section, you will explore course concepts, work on in-class exercises, and discuss examples related to the weekly topics. You are encouraged to bring a computing device (e.g. laptop, tablet, smart phone, etc.) to discussion section. You will be graded on your attendance as well as participation in discussion section.

**Late Policy**

Assignments that are submitted late will face a 10 percent penalty per day late, beginning at the exact due date/time and including weekends and holidays. For example, an assignment that would have received a 93% if it were turned in on time will receive a 83% if submitted ten minutes late, 73% if submitted two days late, and so on. After 5 days late, the assignment will receive a 0 (zero).

**Attendance Policy**

Excused absences will only be granted in extenuating circumstances. Excused absences will be granted only if (a) you are missing class for a documented illness, mandatory religious obligation, or University-sponsored activity, (b) you email your professor and your TA prior to the start of the class period you are missing, AND (c) you provide official documentation within one week of the absence. In your email, include your section number, date of absence, and reason for absence. Only your professor can grant excused absences.

Absences must be accompanied by a form available under Student Tools on ICON (ask the instructor if you cannot locate the form). Once you fill the form the instructor will determine whether the absence is to be excused or not. This is a new requirement by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

**Missed Class**

If you miss class, it is your responsibility to learn what was covered that day and acquire notes from your fellow classmates. Please do not send the following emails to your instructor or TA:

1. “What did I miss?”
2. “Did I miss anything important?”

The answer to #1 is “Lots,” and the answer to #2 is “Yes.” We are happy to discuss course content during office hours, but we cannot cover the material with the same amount of detail as we can during lecture and discussion section.
Assignments / Grading

Professional Branding Assignment – 50 points
• For this assignment, you will assess your online brand and create a brand management strategy for a professional brand that would position you well for your ideal post-graduation job. You will create a professional profile on LinkedIn (or another professional social networking site) and write a 500- to 750-word paper that discusses your brand audit, your ideal post-graduation job, and your brand management strategy.
• This assignment will be discussed in greater detail in lecture and discussion section.
• Assigned Week 3; Due Week 5

Case Study Paper – 75 points
• For this assignment, you will take a key concept identified during the first five weeks of the semester and apply it to a contemporary issue or event in the news. You will write a 750- to 1000-word paper that demonstrates a clear understanding of the concept and a thoughtful and engaging application of the concept to your case.
• This assignment will be discussed in greater detail in lecture and discussion section.
• Assigned Week 7; Due Week 9

Social Media Campaign Critique – 75 points
• For this assignment, you will select a social media campaign and analyze it using key principles of social media marketing discussed in class. You will write a 750- to 1000-word paper that includes a description of the campaign and an assessment of its successes and failures.
• This assignment will be discussed in greater detail in lecture and discussion section.
• Assigned Week 10; Due Week 14

Exam #1 (week 6) – 75 points
• Covers weeks 1–5, including material from lecture, readings, and discussion section.

Exam #2 (week 12) – 75 points
• Covers weeks 7–10, including material from lecture, readings, and discussion section.

Exam #3 (finals week) – 75 points
• Cover weeks 11, 13–15, including material from lecture, readings, and discussion section.
• Note: Exam #3 will be held during our assigned final exam period. The date and time for Exam #3 will be announced by the Registrar early in the semester. Do not make end-of-the-semester travel plans until the final exam schedule is made public.

Attendance and Participation (A&P) – 50 points
• Every student gets one “grace” absence from discussion section. Each additional unexcused absence will result in an automatic 5-point deduction from your Participation and
Attendance grade. For example, 3 unexcused absences from discussion section will result in a maximum Attendance and Participation grade of 40/50. See attendance policy below.

- Your participation grade will reflect our assessment of your preparedness, cooperation, and contribution. While attendance means “showing up,” preparedness means completing the assigned readings and tasks on time, cooperation means working well with others, and contribution means adding value to class discussions and activities.

**Instant Reaction Papers (IRP) – 25 points**

- Throughout the semester, you will be asked to write down your immediate reactions to topics and/or examples discussed in lecture and discussion. You will be given sufficient time to write your instant reaction papers.
- There will be a total of 6 instant reaction papers (5 points each) throughout the semester. We will drop your lowest scoring paper. Instant reaction papers will not be announced in advance and cannot be made up. Instant reaction papers are due by the end of the class period.
- You are welcome to use laptops, tablets, or other computing devices to write your instant reaction papers and upload them directly to ICON. If you prefer, we will supply paper for this assignment, and you can write your IRP and submit it to your TA.

**Total Points = 500**

**Helpful Resources**

- Writing Center: [http://www.uiowa.edu/~writingc/](http://www.uiowa.edu/~writingc/)
- Speaking Center: [http://clas.uiowa.edu/rhetoric/for-students/speaking-center](http://clas.uiowa.edu/rhetoric/for-students/speaking-center)
- Tutor Iowa: [http://tutor.uiowa.edu/](http://tutor.uiowa.edu/)
- Academic Resource Center (ARC): [https://uc.uiowa.edu/student-success/arc](https://uc.uiowa.edu/student-success/arc)

**Grading Scale:** Your final grade will be determined by the total number of points earned during the semester.

A+ 485-500 pts  B+ 435-449  C+ 385-399  D+ 335-349
A  465-484  B  415-434  C  365-384  D  315-334
A- 450-464  B- 400-414  C- 350-364  D- 300-314
F  299 and below

**Grade Inquiries**

If you have questions or concerns about a grade, please speak with your TA in person during your TA’s office hours. If you feel like the situation has not been resolved after this conversation, please see me during my office hours to discuss the situation and grade. These conversations will not happen over email. You must contact us within one week of receiving your grade.

**Extra Credit**

Although we cannot guarantee it, there may be limited extra credit opportunities during the semester. Extra credit will be offered for participation in approved research projects or for attendance at approved events. Students will be notified of these opportunities via email. You should not anticipate that the amount of extra credit offered will be great enough to make a significant impact on your final grade.
Academic Misconduct

Students are not allowed to collaborate with each other on course assignments and exams. Do not share your work with others or ask others to see their completed assignments – both are considered academic misconduct. If you need assistance on your work, please meet with your TA or course instructor. Clear evidence of academic misconduct will result in a failing grade for the assignment/exam and possibly the course. Per college policy, we are required to report academic misconduct the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences.

According to the University of Iowa Academic Policies, academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Using direct quotations without quotation marks and/or without crediting the source
- Paraphrasing information and ideas from sources without crediting the source
- Failing to provide adequate citations for material obtained through electronic research
- Downloading and submitting work from electronic databases without citation
- Submitting material created/ written by someone else as one’s own, including purchased papers, artistic works, photography, and electronic media.

In short, plagiarism occurs whenever someone else’s work or idea is presented as your own. Students are responsible for understanding this policy. If you have questions, please ask your TA or professor for clarification.
Schedule

**Due to the contemporary nature of the subject matter, the schedule is subject to change. Changes to topics and readings will be noted in lecture and on ICON.**

Week 1

Tuesday (1/21): Course Overview
   **Reading:** Mashable article, “Bill would ban auto-play videos…”

Thursday (1/23): Defining Social Media
   **Reading:** boyd (2014), Introduction (p.1-28), from *It’s Complicated*

Friday (1/24): Discussion

Week 2

Tuesday (1/28): History
   **Reading:** “The History of Social Networking,” *Digital Trends.* (2016)

Thursday (1/30): Technology-Society Relationship
   **Reading:** Nancy Baym. (2015) Chapter 2: Making New Media Make Sense, from *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*

Friday (1/31): Discussion
   **Reading:** Facebook’s WhatsApp limits users to five…

Week 3

Tuesday (2/4): Identity
   **Reading:** boyd, (2014) Chapter 1: Identity, from *It’s Complicated*

Thursday (2/6): Personal Branding
   **Readings:**

   Christina DesMarais. (2017, January 16). Why You Need a Personal Brand and How to Build It on Social Media.” *Inc.com*

   **Assigned:** Professional Branding Assignment

Friday (2/7): Discussion
**Week 4**

**Tuesday (2/11): Community**
Reading: Baym. (2015), Chapter 4 – Communities and Networks, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*

**Thursday (2/13): Networks**

**Friday (2/14): Discussion**

**Week 5**

**Tuesday (2/18): Privacy**
Reading: boyd (2014) Chapter 2: Privacy, from *It's Complicated*

**Thursday (2/20): Surveillance**
Reading: Privacy and Surveillance (Chapter 25 from *Sage Handbook of Social Media*)

Listen: The Daily (2018). “The Business of Selling your Location” (Approx. 20 minutes)

Due: Professional Branding Assignment

**Friday (2/21): Discussion**
Reading: Weinberg (2018) Why should I use DuckDuckGo instead of Google

**Week 6**

**Tuesday (2/25): Exam Review**
To do: Post questions in the ICON discussion area latest by 7 pm the day before class for exam review

**Thursday (2/27): Exam #1**

**Friday (2/28): No Discussion Section this week**

**Week 7**

**Tuesday (3/3): Participatory Culture**

Viewings: What is participatory culture? *Audiopedia*.
Henry Jenkins. (2013, May 7.). Participatory Culture (Big Thinkers Series)

**Thursday (3/5): Labor and Exploitation**
Reading: Simon Lindgren (2017). Ch. 9 Digital Power and Exploitation. *Digital Media & Society*


Assigned: Case Study Paper

**Friday (3/6): Discussion**

**Week 8**
**Tuesday (3/10): Addiction to social media**
Reading: boyd, (2014) Chapter 3: Addiction from *It’s Complicated*

**Thursday (3/12): Cyberbullying**
Reading: boyd, (2014) Chapter 5: Bullying from *It’s Complicated*

**Friday (3/13): Discussion**

**SPRING BREAK! No classes Tuesday March 17, Thursday March 19, Friday March 20**

**Week 9**
**Tuesday (3/24): Inequality**
Readings: Reading: boyd, ch. 6 Inequality

**Thursday (3/26): Gender**
Due: Case Study Paper

**Friday (3/27): Discussion**
Reading: Atanasova (2016) Gender-specific Behaviors on Social Media

**Week 10**
**Tuesday (3/31): Social Media Marketing**

**Thursday (4/2): Social Media Marketing**
Reading: Social Media Marketing (chapter 26 in *Sage Handbook of Social Media*)
Assigned: Social Media Campaign Critique

Friday (4/3): Discussion
   Reading: Lorenz (2018) Rising Instagram stars are posting... The Atlantic

Week 11
   Tuesday (4/7): Race
   Readings TBA

   Thursday (4/9): Global media – case study
   Readings TBA

   Friday (4/3): Discussion

Week 12

   Tuesday (4/14): Exam Review
      To do: Post questions in the ICON discussion area latest by 7 pm the day before class for exam review

   Thursday (4/16): Exam #2

   Friday (4/17): No Discussion Section this week

Week 13

   Tuesday (4/21): Consuming News
      Reading: Hermida, Social Media and Journalism (chapter 27 in Sage Handbook of Social Media)

      Molyneux (2019) “Seeing Social Media for What it is” Neiman Lab.

   Thursday (4/23): Producing News

   Friday (4/24): Discussion
**Week 14**

**Tuesday (4/28): Politics and Social Media Use**  

**Thursday (4/30): Politics and Social Media Use**  

**Due:** Social Media Campaign Critique

**Friday (5/01): Discussion**

**Week 15**

**Tuesday (5/5): Futures**  
**Reading:** Kevin Kelly (2016, June 6). “The Internet Is Still at the Beginning of Its Beginning,” Huffington Post

**Thursday (5/7): Exam Review & Course Evaluations**  
**To do:** Bring one question for Exam 3 review

** Finals Week**

**Date to be given by the Registrar**
Teaching Policies & Resources — Syllabus Insert

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Information for Undergraduates

Absences and Attendance
Students are responsible for attending class and for contributing to the learning environment of a course. Students are also responsible for knowing their course absence policies, which will vary by instructor. All absence policies, however, must uphold the UI policy related to student illness, mandatory religious obligations, including Holy Day obligations, unavoidable circumstances, or University authorized activities (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/attendance-absences). Students may use this absence form to aid communication; the instructor will decide if the absence is excused or unexcused (https://clas.uiowa.edu/sites/default/files/ABSENCE%20EXPLANATION%20FORM2019.pdf).

Academic Integrity
All undergraduates enrolled in courses offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty. Misconduct is reported to the College, resulting in suspension or other sanctions, with sanctions communicated with the student through the UI email address (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code).

Accommodations for Disabilities
UI is committed to an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (such as mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related condition) by registering with Student Disability Services (SDS). The student is then responsible for discussing specific accommodations with the instructor. More information is at https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/.

Administrative Home of the Course
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the administrative home of this course and governs its add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and related policies. Other colleges may have different policies. CLAS policies may be found here: https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook.

Communication and the Required Use of UI Email
Students are responsible for official correspondences sent to the UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for all communication within UI (Operations Manual, III.15.2).

Complaints
Students with a complaint about an academic issue should first visit with the instructor or course supervisor and then with the Chair of the department or program offering the course; students may next bring the issue to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. For more information, see https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities.

Final Examination Policies
The final exam schedule is announced around the fifth week of classes; students are responsible for knowing the date, time, and place of a final exam. Students should not make travel plans until knowing this information. No exams of any kind are allowed the week before finals. Visit https://registrar.uiowa.edu/final-examination-scheduling-policies.
Nondiscrimination in the Classroom
UI is committed to making the classroom a respectful and inclusive space for all people irrespective of their gender, sexual, racial, religious or other identities. Toward this goal, students are invited to optionally share their preferred names and pronouns with their instructors and classmates. The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination and harassment against individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other identity categories set forth in the University’s Human Rights policy. For more information, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (diversity.uiowa.edu).

Sexual Harassment
Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community must uphold the UI mission and contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment must be reported immediately. For assistance, please see https://osmrc.uiowa.edu/.