

Day/Time: Tuesday/Thursday, 11:00–11:50 a.m.

Location: 101 Biology Building East (BBE)

Instructor: Dr. Melissa Tully, E332 Adler Journalism Building, melissa-tully@uiowa.edu

Office Hours: Drop-in hours are 12–1:30 p.m. Tues./Thurs. You can also make an appointment.

DEO: Dr. David Ryfe, david-ryfe@uiowa.edu, E305B Adler Journalism Building

Sections	TA	Office	Office Hours
01, 02, 03	Emily Shearer	E331 AJB	Drop in: Wed. 3:30–6:30 p.m. or by appointment
04, 05, 06	Mehrnaz Khanjani	E339 AJB	Drop in: Mon./Wed. 5–6:30 p.m. or by appointment

See MyUI for section meeting times and locations.

Overview

Social Media Today (SMT) is a survey course with no prerequisites, intended for students of any major and interest. This course offers an overview of our current understanding 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 to ground our discussions. We then will examine what the rise of social media means for contemporary culture and society, focusing on a range of topics including, news, politics, and globalization. Finally, we will consider the future possibilities of social media in society. SMT satisfies the General Education requirement in Values, Society and Diversity.

Diversity and Discussion

In this class, we will be discussing current events and 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 don't like or disagree with, and we will also be respectful of others' ideas. However, we do not support hateful comments. This course is a place to explore new ideas and to think through the complexities of our socially mediated lives.

SJMC 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 outcomes:

Multiculturalism:

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

Media literacy:

- You will demonstrate knowledge of the basic tenets of media literacy and how media literacy relates to your personal media habits and professional development.
- You will develop critical thinking skills to analyze and interpret media messages through an understanding of media practices and institutions.

Law and ethics:

- You 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.

Media history:

- You will demonstrate an awareness of the historical origins of digital communication and the Internet and describe its effect on media industries with emphasis on their business models and audiences.

Course-Specific Objectives

By the end of the semester, you will 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 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 Reading, Viewing, and Listening

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*, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*, and *Social Media and Everyday Politics* 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.

Email and ICON

As per university policy, you are responsible for all class correspondences sent to your uiowa.edu email. Please check your email regularly for emails from me and your TAs. In addition, I will use ICON announcements as official communication for the class. I expect you to check ICON regularly. I prefer that you email me directly (not via ICON) at melissa-tully@uiowa.edu. We use ICON for all assignment submissions. You must submit your assignments as a Microsoft Word document (.doc or .docx) on ICON. We will not accept assignments via email or in any other format.

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 and participation in discussion section.

Late Policy

Assignments that are submitted late will incur 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 an 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.

Attendance Policy

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. Excused absences will only be granted in extenuating circumstances. Only your professor can grant excused absences.

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 professor 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.

Extra Credit

Although I cannot guarantee it, there may be extra credit opportunities during the semester. 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 professor. 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 to 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.

Assignments and 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 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 12; Due Week 14

Exam #1 (week 6) – 75 points

- Covers weeks 1–5, including material from lecture, readings, and discussion section.

Exam #2 (week 11) – 75 points

- Covers weeks 7–10, including material from lecture, readings, and discussion section.

Exam #3 (finals week) – 75 points

- Cover weeks 12–15, including material from lecture, readings, and discussion section.
- **Note:** Exam #3 will be held during our assigned final exam time. Do not make end-of-the-semester travel plans until the final exam schedule is made public.

Attendance and Participation – 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.
- 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 in class.
- 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.
- 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, you can write your IRP and turn it in to your TA.

Total Points = 500

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

A+	485-500	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 her office hours. If you feel like the situation has not been resolved after this conversation, please see me in office hours to discuss the situation and grade. **These conversations will not happen over email.** You must be in contact with us within one week of receiving your grade.

Helpful UI Resources

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

Schedule*

Week 1

Tuesday (1/15): Course Overview

Read: Zack Whittaker, (2018). “Popsugar’s Twinning App was Leaking Everyone’s Uploaded Photos,” *TechCrunch*.

Thursday (1/17): Defining Social Media

Read: danah boyd, (2014). Introduction (p. 1–28), *It’s Complicated*.

Friday (1/18): Discussion

Week 2

Tuesday (1/22): History

Read: Digital Trends, (2016). “The History of Social Networking,” *Digital Trends*.

Rob Marvin, (2018). “Charting the Rise and Fall of Teen Social Media Popularity,” *PC Mag*.

Thursday (1/24): Causality

Read: Nancy Baym, (2015). Ch. 2: Making New Media Make Sense, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*.

Friday (1/25): Discussion

Read: Dan Robitzski, (2018). “India’s Government Blames Facebook’s WhatsApp for Mob Violence,” *Futurism*.

Week 3

Tuesday (1/29): Identity

Read: boyd, (2014). *It’s Complicated*, Ch.1: Identity.

Thursday (1/31): Personal Branding

Read: James Cohen and Thomas Kenny, (2016). Ch. 7: The Online Personal Brand, *Producing News and Digital Media: Your Guide to Savvy Use of the Web*.

Assigned: Professional Branding Assignment

Friday (2/1): Discussion

Week 4

Tuesday (2/5): Community

Read: Baym, (2015). Ch. 4: Communities and Networks, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*.

Thursday (2/7): Networks

Read: Lee Rainie and Barry Wellman, (2014). Ch. 1 and pages 48–57, *Networked*.

Friday (2/8): Discussion

Listen: Reply All, (2018). “INVCEL” (Episode #120). [Approx. 27 minutes]

Week 5

Tuesday (2/12): Participation

Read: Henry Jenkins, Mizuko Ito and danah boyd, (2016). Ch. 1: Defining Participatory Culture, *Participatory Culture in a Networked Era*.

Due: Professional Branding Assignment by 5 p.m. uploaded to section ICON site

Thursday (2/14): Exploitation

Read: Simon Lindgren, (2017). Ch. 9: Digital Power and Exploitation, *Digital Media & Society*.

Friday (2/15): Discussion

Listen: IRL, (2018). "Paid Attention" (Season 3, Episode 3). [Approx. 24 minutes]

Week 6

Tuesday (2/19): Exam Review

To do: Send questions before lecture for exam review

Thursday (2/21): Exam #1

No Discussion Section

Week 7

Tuesday (2/26): Privacy and Surveillance

Read: boyd, (2014). Ch. 2: Privacy, *It's Complicated*.

Listen: The Daily, (2018). "The Business of Selling Your Location." [Approx. 20 minutes]

Assigned: Case Study Paper

Thursday (2/28): Hacking and Leaking

Read: Mike Isaac and Sheera Frenkel, (2018). "Facebook Security Breach Exposes Accounts of 50 Million Users," *New York Times*.

Listen: Cyber, (2018). "SIM Hijacking and the Phone Number Ransom." [Approx. 26 minutes]

Friday (3/1): Discussion

Week 8

Tuesday (3/5): Social News

Read: Alfred Hermida, (2014). Ch. 4: The Daily We, *#TellEveryone: Why We Share & Why It Matters*.

Logan Molyneux, (2019). "Seeing Social Media for What It Is," *Nieman Lab*.

Kjerstin Thorson, (2019). "Time to Get Mad About Information Inequality (Again)," *Nieman Lab*.

Thursday (3/7): “Fake News”

Readings: Sue Shellenbarger, (2016). “Most Students Don’t Know When News Is Fake, Stanford Study Finds,” *The Wall Street Journal*.

Joshua Benton, (2018). “If You Hate the Media, You’re More Likely to be Fooled by a Fake Headline,” *Nieman Lab*.

Claire Wardle, (2018). “Forget Deepfakes: Misinformation is showing up in our most personal online spaces,” *Nieman Lab*.

Friday (3/8): Discussion

Listen: IRL, (2018). “Ctrl+Alt+Facts” (Season 2, Episode 7). [Approx. 37 minutes]

Week 9**Thursday (3/12): Everyday Politics**

Read: Tim Highfield, (2016). Ch. 1: Personal/Political, *Social Media and Everyday Politics*.

Thursday (3/14): Activism

Read: Highfield, (2016). Ch. 5: Collective and Connective Action, *Social Media and Everyday Politics*.

Due: Case Study Paper by 5 p.m. uploaded to section ICON site

Friday (3/16): Discussion

In-class viewing: PBS, (2017). “The Open Mind: Twitter and Tear Gas.”

Spring Break – Enjoy**Week 10****Tuesday (3/26): Globalization**

Read: Peter Vanham, (2018). “Here’s What a Korean Boy Band Can Teach Us About Globalization 4.0,” *World Economic Forum*.

Tuesday (3/28): Global Flows

Read: Brian Ekdale and Melissa Tully, (2014). Makmende Amerudi: Kenya’s Collective Reimagining as a Meme of Aspiration, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 31(4), 283–298.

Friday (3/29): Discussion**Week 11****Tuesday (4/2): Exam Review**

To do: Send questions before lecture for exam review

Thursday (4/4): Exam #2**No Discussion Section**

Week 12**Tuesday (4/9): Brands and Marketing**

Read: Anthony Young, (2014). Chapters 2 and 10, *Brand Media Strategy*.

Jarry Lee, (2018). “What Does it Cost to be Big on Instagram?” *Buzzfeed News*.

Taylor Lorenz, (2018). “Rising Instagram Stars Are Posting Fake Sponsored Content,” *The Atlantic*.

Assigned: Social Media Campaign Critique

Thursday (4/11): Politics and Marketing

Read: Jennifer Stromer-Galley, Jerry Robinson, and Patricia Rossini. (2016). “What message are candidates sending via social media?” *U.S. News & World Report*.

Andrea González-Ramírez, (2018). “Love Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s Instagram? Here’s What Her Body Language Reveals,” *Refinery29*.

Friday (4/12): Discussion**Week 13****Tuesday (4/16): Political Campaigns and Elections**

Read: Andy Kroll, (2018). “Cloak and Data: The Real Story Behind Cambridge Analytica’s Rise and Fall,” *Mother Jones*.

Highfield. (2016). Ch. 7: The Everyday of Elections, *Social Media and Everyday Politics*.

Thursday (4/18): Harassment, Bullying and Trolling

Read: boyd, (2014). Ch. 5: Bullying, *It’s Complicated*.

Whitney Phillips, (2018). The Oxygen of Amplification (Part 1). *Data & Society*.

Friday (4/19): Discussion

In-class viewing: *Data, Democracy and Dirty Tricks*

Week 14**Tuesday (4/23): Speech and Censorship**

Read: Brett Johnson (2016). Speech, Harm, and the Duties of Digital Intermediaries: Conceptualizing Platform Ethics. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 32(1): 16–27.

Listen: IRL, (2017). “Free Speech, Limited.” [Approx. 20 minutes]

Thursday (4/25): Bias

Read: Noah Berlatsky, (2018). “Google Search Algorithms Are Not Impartial,” *NBC News*.

Hannah Kuchler, (2018). “Tech’s Sexist Algorithms and How to Fix Them,” *Financial Times*.

Due: Social Media Campaign Critique by 5 p.m. uploaded to section ICON site

Friday (4/26): Discussion

Listen: The Daily, (2018). "Putting Fake News on Trial." [Approx. 20 minutes]

Week 15

Tuesday (4/30): Futures

Reading: Kevin Kelly (2016). "The Internet Is Still at the Beginning of Its Beginning,"
Huffington Post.

Thursday (5/2): Exam Review & Course Evaluations

To do: Bring one question for Exam #3 review

Friday (5/3): Discussion

Finals Week

Exam #3– time/date TBD

**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.*

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences: Policies and Resources

Administrative Home

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 other policies. These policies vary by college (<https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook>).

Electronic Communication

Students are responsible for official correspondences sent to their UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for all communication within UI ([Operations Manual, III.15.2](#)).

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 should then discuss accommodations with the course instructor (<https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/>).

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).

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>).

CLAS Final Examination Policies

The final exam schedule for each semester 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 final exam information. No exams of any kind are allowed the week before finals (<https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-examination-policies>).

Making a Complaint

Students with a complaint should first visit with the instructor or course supervisor and then with the departmental executive officer (DEO), also known as the Chair. Students may then bring the concern to CLAS (<https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities>).

Understanding 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, definitions, and the full University policy, see <https://osmrc.uiowa.edu/>.