

**Social Media Today (JMC:1500:0AAA)**

Spring 2018

**Day/Time:** Tuesday/Thursday, 11:00–11:50 a.m.**Location:** 101 Biology Building East (BBE)**Instructor:** Dr. Brian Ekdale, E324 Adler Journalism Building, brian-ekdale@uiowa.edu**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 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 news, politics, and marketing. Finally, we will consider future possibilities for social media. SMT satisfies the General Education requirement in Values, Society and Diversity for students admitted before summer 2017 and the GE requirement in Values and Culture for students admitted after summer 2017.

**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 don't like or disagree with, 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.

**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:

***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.

***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.

***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 of contemporary social media
- Recognize and apply major theoretical concepts in digital 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 Readings

We will read a variety of academic and journalistic accounts of social media in everyday life. You are expected to complete the readings by the start of lecture for that day. All required readings are posted on ICON as PDFs or links. *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. *It's Complicated* is available as a free e-book (pdf linked on ICON).

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

### Electronic Communication and ICON

As per university policy, you are responsible for all official 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 and discussion boards as official communication for the class. I expect you to check ICON regularly. Please note that the ICON/Canvas email application has been known to have some bugs. I prefer that you email me directly (not via ICON) at brian-ekdale@uiowa.edu. We use ICON Assignments for all assignment submissions. You must submit your assignments as a Microsoft Word document (.doc or .docx). We will not accept assignments via email.

### 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% 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.

Please note that every student gets one “grace” absence from discussion section and every student gets to drop one Instant Reaction Paper from their final course grade. These accommodations are intended to cover minor illnesses (e.g., colds, coughs) that would not otherwise be excused.

### **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. 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 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
- Fabricating quotations or sources
- Submitting material created by someone else as your own

Students are responsible for understanding this policy. If you have any questions, please ask your TA or professor for clarification. Please note that we use plagiarism detection software to help us identify instances of academic misconduct.

## Assignments and Grading

### Professional Branding Assignment – 50 points

- For this assignment, you will evaluate your online personal 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 strengths and weaknesses.
- 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. Exam #3 will not be a cumulative exam.
- **Note:** Exam #3 will be held during our assigned final exam time. The date and time for our final exam 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 – 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 Attendance and Participation 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 being present by the start of class, preparedness means completing the assigned readings and tasks on time, cooperation means working well with

others during class discussion and group exercises, and contribution means adding value to class discussions and activities. In short, you need to do more than just “show up.”

### 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 must be in class when the instant reaction paper is assigned to receive credit. Instant reactions papers are due by the end of class.
- 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 on paper and turn it in to your TA before you leave class.

**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 your grade on an exam or an assignment, please speak with your TA in person during his or her office hours. If you feel like the situation has not been resolved after this conversation, please set a time to speak with your professor (preferably during office hours) to discuss the matter. **These conversations will not happen over email.** You must be in contact with us within one week of receiving your grade.

### Helpful UI Resources

- 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 (1/16): Course Overview

Reading: Sophie Gilbert. (2017, October 16). “The Movement of #MeToo,” *The Atlantic*.

#### Thursday (1/18): Defining Social Media

Reading: danah boyd (2014). *It's Complicated*, Introduction.

### Week 2

#### Tuesday (1/23): History

Readings: Digital Trends. (2016, May 14). “The History of Social Networking,” *Digital Trends*; and Nicholas Jackson & Alexis C. Madrigal (2011, January 12). “The Rise and Fall of MySpace,” *The Atlantic*.

#### Thursday (1/25): Causality

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

### Week 3

#### Tuesday (1/30): Identity

Reading: danah boyd (2014). *It's Complicated*, Ch. 1: Identity.

#### Thursday (2/1): Personal Branding

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

Assigned: Professional Branding Assignment

### Week 4

#### Tuesday (2/6): Privacy

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

#### Thursday (2/8): Speech and Censorship

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

### Week 5

#### Tuesday (2/13): Participatory Culture

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

Due: Professional Branding Assignment

#### Thursday (2/15): Exploitation and Labor

Readings: Simon Lindgren. (2017). *Digital Media & Society*, Ch. 9: Digital Power and Exploitation; and Emiko Jozuka. (2016, March 22). “As More Work Moves Online, The Threat of ‘Digital Sweatshops’ Looms,” *Motherboard*

**Week 6**

**Tuesday (2/20): Exam Review**

**Thursday (2/22): Exam #1**

[No discussion section this week]

**Week 7**

**Tuesday (2/27): Community**

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

Assigned: Case Study Paper

**Thursday (3/1): Networks**

Reading: Lee Rainie & Barry Wellman. (2014). *Networked: The New Social Operating System*. Ch.1 and pages 48–57.

**Week 8**

**Tuesday (3/6): Social News**

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

**Thursday (3/8): “Fake News”**

Readings: Alice Marwick & Rebecca Lewis. (2017). “Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online,” *Data & Society Report*. (pp. 1-48)

***Spring Break – Enjoy***

**Week 9**

**Tuesday (3/20): Global Culture**

Reading: *Digital Globalization: The New Era of Global Flows*. (2016). McKinsey Global Institute.

**Thursday (3/22): Global Culture (continued)**

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

Due: Case Study Paper

**Week 10**

**Tuesday (3/27): Cyberbullying and Online Aggression**

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

**Thursday (3/29): Digital Vigilantes and Online Mobs**

Readings: Jon Ronson. (2015, February 12). “How One Stupid Tweet Blew Up Justine Sacco’s Life,” *New York Times*; and Glenn Greenwald (2016, October 13). “On WikiLeaks, Journalism, and Privacy: Reporting on the Podesta Archive Is an Easy Call,” *The Intercept*.

**Week 11**

**Tuesday (4/3): Exam Review**

**Thursday (4/5): Exam #2**

[No discussion section this week]

**Week 12**

**Tuesday (4/10): Social Media Marketing**

Reading: Anthony Young. (2014). *Brand Media Strategy*, Ch. 2 and 10

Optional: Douglas Holt. (2016, March). "Branding in the Age of Social Media," *Harvard Business Review*.

Assigned: Social Media Campaign Critique

**Thursday (4/12): Facebook, Marketing, and Political Campaigns**

Reading: Andy Kroll. (2018). "Cloak and Data: The Real Story Behind Cambridge Analytica's Rise and Fall," *Mother Jones*.

**Week 13**

**Tuesday (4/17): Political Campaigns and Elections**

Reading: Daniel Kreiss and Shannon C. McGregor (2017). "Technology Firms Shape Political Communication: The Work of Microsoft, Facebook, Twitter and Google With Campaigns During the 2016 U.S. Presidential Cycle," *Political Communication*. OnlineFirst.

**Thursday (4/19): Guest Speaker: Sarah Banet-Weiser**

Reading: Sarah Banet-Weiser. (2012). *Authentic™: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture*, Ch. 2: Branding the Postfeminist Self.

**Week 14**

**Tuesday (4/24): Everyday Politics**

Readings: Tim Highfield. (2016). *Social Media and Everyday Politics*, Ch. 1: Personal/Political; and Sarah Jeong. (2016, December 14). "If We Took 'Gamergate' Harassment Seriously, 'Pizzagate' Might Never Have Happened," *The Washington Post*.

**Thursday (4/26): Social Movements**

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

Due: Social Media Campaign Critique

**Week 15**

**Tuesday (5/1): Future/Futurism**

Reading: Kevin Kelly (2016, June 6). "The Internet Is Still at the Beginning of Its Beginning," *Huffington Post*.

**Thursday (5/3): Exam Review & Course Evaluations**

**Final Exam – Tuesday (5/8) @ 7:30 a.m. in W290 Chemistry Building**

## The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences: Policies and Resources

### Administrative Home

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook at <https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook>.

### Electronic Communication

University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences ([Operations Manual, III.15.2](#)).

### Accommodations for Disabilities

The University of Iowa is committed to providing an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (which includes but is not limited to mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related conditions). A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet with the course instructor privately in the instructor's office to make particular arrangements. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between the student, instructor, and SDS. See <https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/> for information.

### Nondiscrimination in the Classroom

The University of Iowa 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](mailto:diversity@uiowa.edu), or visit [diversity.uiowa.edu](http://diversity.uiowa.edu).

### Academic Honesty

All CLAS students or students taking classes offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's [Code of Academic Honesty](#): "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the [IOWA Challenge](#). I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled ([CLAS Academic Policies Handbook](#)).

### CLAS Final Examination Policies

The final examination schedule for each class is announced by the Registrar generally by the fifth week of classes. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the date, time, and location of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site and will be shared with instructors and students. It is the student's responsibility to know the date, time, and place of a final exam.

### **Making a Suggestion or a Complaint**

Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident ([CLAS Academic Policies Handbook](#)).

### **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 have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI [Office of the Sexual Misconduct Response Coordinator](#) for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

### **Reacting Safely to Severe Weather**

In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the [Department of Public Safety](#) website.