MMC 5427: Research Methods
Social Media Fall 2016
College of Journalism and Communications
University of Florida

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Office Hours (via Skype): By Appointment, hours flexible to include evenings and weekends
Course Website: http://elearning.ufl.edu/

Course Communication: Please use email, Canvas mail, or Facebook to communicate with the instructor.

Course Description and Goals:
Students will be introduced to the basic foundations of research as they apply to the study of social media and strategic communications. Students will gain applied experience by conducting research to include data analysis, interpretation, and reporting results using methods common in the field of communications and the social sciences as a whole. Additionally, students will learn the importance of research to their own work and the implications of research findings.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will:
1. Identify foundational research concepts as discussed in lecture and readings
2. Explore both traditional and digital forms of research to include research basics, secondary data research, and original data collection
3. Understand the importance of historically validated, rigorous research methods for understanding how and why consumers utilize social media to the benefit of brands and social marketers
4. Develop sufficiently narrow research questions based on a topic or interest of choice
5. Be able to conduct qualitative and quantitative research relevant to the social media management practitioner
6. Apply appropriate research methods to digital inquiry

7. Evaluate and interpret statistical data for validity and to measure topics investigated
8. Identify the most appropriate methods of inquiry for use in social media research
9. Transfer knowledge gained to the professional communication arena in individual areas of interest
10. Develop critical thinking, analytical, and writing skills

Required Texts and Materials:

There are **no required textbooks** for this course. All readings will be provided in Canvas as PDFs or as a link to online materials.

Students must obtain a one-month FREE subscription to Dedoose, a qualitative and mixed methods data analysis web-based program. Students should *wait until Module 7* before signing-up for this site because we will only be using it during the second half of the term. It is the student's responsibility to cancel the service.

Engagement:

Online courses offer a unique opportunity for students to engage with the instructor and with one another on various platforms. We will utilize different platforms over the course of this term to foster engagement and communication aside from Canvas and Email:

1. A private course Facebook group
2. Periodic live meetings in Adobe Connect or via Skype

Students are highly encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities. The Instructor will provide more information on each one as the semester commences.

Teaching Philosophy:

As an education professional, my goal is to ensure that students are learning in a way that is not only useful for the duration of the course, but for the duration of a student's career in communications. To do so, I employ academic tools and concepts combined with practical applications to challenge students. In this way, students retain knowledge through repetition of course materials in various settings. Above all, I advocate active learning in my online classroom and will use any and all tools at my disposal to achieve that goal.

Instructional Methods:

As mentioned above, I use a variety of tools to enhance the learning experience of students in Research Methods. This term we will create discussion posts, use the Facebook page to complete assignments, submit four mini-research assignments, and conduct actual social media research through a two-phase project. We'll also have the opportunity to interact with one another through short live meetings spread throughout the term.

Expectations:

MMC 5427 is a graduate level course and the work students submit in this course should be a reflection of higher-level cognition, critical thinking, writing, and overall academic abilities. In addition, I expect students to complete all assignments on time, to be respectful of one another and the instructor, and to do their best work. These expectations apply not only to interactions within Canvas, but also to communication via email, on the Facebook page, during live meetings, etc.

Attendance Policy:

This is an asynchronously delivered course so there is no attendance requirement. However, students are responsible for all material posted in Canvas and the Facebook page to include announcements, grades, assignment updates, changes, etc.

Coursework:

Most of the coursework for this term will be submitted through Canvas. There are some exceptions as noted below:

- Lecture Response Posts   In Canvas
- Facebook Challenges   In the Facebook Group
- Mini-Research Assignments   In Canvas
- Live Meetings   In Adobe Connect or Skype
- Research Project   In Canvas

Assignments

All assignment information is also posted in the 'Assignments' tab or the 'Discussions' tab in Canvas.

Lecture Response Posts (LRP) (120 pts.)

Students will create ONE (1) Lecture Response Post (LRP) in each of the 12 modules in response to prompts and/or questions posed by the instructor during lectures; students must watch the lecture to obtain the questions and will only be able to view the discussion board once they have posted their own LRP. LRPs must be at least **400-500** words in length and should completely answer **each and every question** posed by the instructor. Students who fail to answer all questions will lose points. Where applicable, LRPs should include thoughtful responses and discourse that connect what is discussed throughout the lecture to the student's work or experience with digital communication. There will be twelve (12) LRPs this semester and each one is worth TEN (10) points.

Lecture Response Posts (LRPs) Grading Rubric					
0	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
No Post is written or post includes plagiarized content (all outside content must be in quotations or student will receive a '0')	The post fails to meet the word count requirement. The post does not address all questions posed or offer a thoughtful, well-developed response for the questions that are answered. Post is not well organized. There are many spelling or grammar errors or outside content is not appropriately cited.	The post fails to meet the word count requirement but does respond to all questions posed (or vice versa). The responses however, are not well presented or well thought out. Ideas are not organized nor do they offer something new to the discussion. There may be several grammatical or spelling errors or outside content is not appropriately cited.	The post meets the word count requirement and answers all questions posed. The level of response is poor with disorganized ideas or the ideas are not well presented. There may be grammatical or spelling errors as well, or outside content is not appropriately cited or the post lacks content.	Post is accurate, relevant and well written. The student addresses all questions in the lecture with thoughtful and reflective ideas that have substance and depth. If used, outside content is cited appropriately (Ex. "According to Braddock (2016)..."). Post either does not meet requirement for word count or has spelling/grammatical errors or lacks content.	Post is accurate, relevant and well written. The student addresses all questions in the lecture with thoughtful, reflective ideas that have substance and depth. Ideas are original and offer something new to the discussion. If used, outside content is cited appropriately (Ex. "According to Braddock (2016)..."). Post meets requirements for word count and is without

					grammatical or spelling errors.

Each post is worth ten (10) points. Please see the rubric above for information regarding point distribution. All posts are due by **Sunday at 11:00 PM EST.** Create your post in Canvas, under the Discussion section (see left side toolbar) or access the discussion by clicking on the links in each module.

Facebook Challenges (80 points)

In nine of the twelve weeks this term the instructor will post an active learning research-related Facebook Challenge in the course Facebook Group. Students will follow directions for the Facebook Challenge as posted and earn up to TEN (10) points for each challenge they complete. There will be a total of 9 challenges posted, but students need only complete **eight of the nine challenges to fulfill the requirements of this assignment.** The challenges will be posted onto the group page no later than Monday of the week assigned and must be completed by Sunday evening at 11:00 PM EST each week for the challenges you choose to participate in. It is the students' responsibility to ensure that they complete at least eight (8) Facebook challenges.

Facebook challenges will be graded according to the following Rubric. Students can earn 0, 5, or 10 points for each Facebook Challenge they attempt. If a student receives a grade of '0' or '5' on any Facebook Challenge prior to the final challenge posted, they may attempt another Challenge at a later date to recoup those points. This applies to only one challenge and students must notify the instructor of their intention to re-attempt the assignment. Grades for re-attempts will be final.

Facebook Challenge Rubric		
0	5	10
Student submits work but does not meet all criteria for the assignment. Student plagiarizes work. Student fails to submit at least 8 of the 10 Facebook challenges and therefore receives a '0' on all Challenges up to a total of	Student meets some of the requirements for the assignment but fails to fully address the questions posed or conduct the assignment as described in the prompt. Student submits all requirements of the assignment but fails to	Student meets all the requirements for the assignment as outlined in the Facebook challenge prompt posted to the course Facebook page.

8.	meet the deadline provided in the prompt (students can earn half credit for Challenges up to three (3) days past the due date. Beyond that, all submissions will receive a '0').	

Mini Research Assignments (MRA) (100 pts.)

These assignments are spread throughout the semester and will offer opportunities for students to conduct small-scale research projects. Each assignment is different and full details are offered in the Assignments tab in Canvas. Students are required to complete all four (4) mini research assignments, for a total of 100 points.

Again, the goal is the make connections between research and social media. All mini research assignments are due **Sunday at 11:00 PM EST** of the week assigned.

Live Meetings (20 pts.)

There will be three (4) live meeting opportunities this term worth five points each. Each live meeting will have a different purpose and will be scheduled as we move through the semester. The meetings will occur either in our Adobe Connect room (group) or via Skype (individual) and will last approximately 15-30 minutes each. There will be two group and two individual meetings. Above all, the goal is for students to have an opportunity to interact with one another and with the instructor in a more informal setting. Students will earn points for each live meeting attended and group live meetings will be scheduled by vote. Live Meetings will occur during the weeks of modules 3, 6, 8 and 11 and will be scheduled prior to those modules either via a Google Doc (individual) or via a Facebook Poll (group). Dates are subject to change at the instructor's discretion.

Research Project (2 Parts, 90 pts. each)

The Research Project offers students an opportunity to explore a topic of their choosing from both a quantitative and a qualitative perspective. Students will work with the professor early in the course to determine a sufficiently narrow topic for exploration

that is relevant to social media management. To start the process of choosing a topic, students must email a list of 3 topic ideas to the instructor via email or Canvas mail no later than **Sunday, 9/4 at 11:00 PM EST.** During the week following this initial email students will meet one-on-one with the instructor to finalize their topic choice and research question(s). A Google Doc meeting schedule will be provided for students to select a time for this meeting.

Part 1 (90 Pts.)

For the first part of the research project, students will select **one of two** quantitative methods described in the lecture for module 3: Quantitative Research Overview. Students may either conduct **an online survey OR a social media content analysis**. Full instructions for each of these methods are provided in the 'Assignments' tab in Canvas under 'Research Project Part 1.' The instructor must approve the method before the student begins the project so that we can ensure a suitable method of inquiry is chosen based on the topic and research question(s).

Students will conduct either the online survey or the content analysis, analyze and interpret the data, and then discuss the results in a **6-8 page APA-style paper** (visuals included, references and appendices excluded). Here are the requirements of the paper:

I.   Introduction: Includes basic information about the topic and situates the topic within the context of digital communication
II. Literature Review: A brief synthesis of the most recent research with this topic in the field of communications, and the research questions
III. Method: Students should describe the method and key concepts related to the method
IV. Results: Describe the results of the study conducted and if possible include a graph, chart, etc. to visually represent the findings
V.   Appendices: Codebook for the content analysis, raw data for the survey

Deadlines for Research Project Part 1

Sunday, 9/4 Topic Email
Sunday 1st Draft Literature Review (no grade assigned, for feedback)
Sunday 1st Draft Method Section and Survey/Codebook (no grade assigned, feedback only)
Sunday 1st Draft Results Section (no grade assigned, feedback only)
Sunday 10/2 at 11:00 PM EST, Final Draft of Research Project Part 1 DUE for grade

<u>Part 2 (90 Pts.)</u>

To create a mixed methods project, students will utilize the **same topic and written submission from Part 1** and add Part 2 to create a mixed methods study. The written piece from Part 1 will be revised to include information regarding the second portion of the project. For the second part of the research project, students will select **one of two** qualitative methods described in the lecture for module 7: Qualitative Research Overview. Students may either conduct **a focus group OR three depth interviews**. Full instructions for each of these methods are provided in the 'Assignments' tab in Canvas under 'Research Project Part 2.' The instructor must approve the method before the student begins the project so that we can ensure a suitable method of inquiry is chosen based on the topic and research question(s) from Part 1.

Students will conduct either the focus group or the depth interviews, transcribe and code the data for key themes, and then present the results as an addition to the work done in the first part of this project. These components must be submitted in Canvas:

1. Audio or video recording of the focus group or interviews
2. Document with a transcription of the interviews
3. Color coded document with key themes highlighted (see instructions in Canvas)

The Summary document should be APA-style and include a description of the method you chose, how your sample was selected, a confirmation that informed consent was signed, and a discussion of your key themes and findings. Conclude the summary with implications for the field and future research suggestions.

These sections from Part 1 should be revised to add the method and results from your qualitative research portion:

I. Method: Students should describe the method and key concepts related to the method
II. Results: Describe the results of the study conducted and if possible include a graph, chart, etc. to visually represent the findings

These sections will be new additions to Part 2 that will incorporate the sum total of your research from Part 1 and Part 2. This is your opportunity to discuss your findings within the context of digital communication to include the implications and practical applications of the knowledge you've discovered.

III. Discussion: Situate the findings within the greater social media arena and explain the implications of your findings for brands/social media managers
IV. Conclusion: Discuss limitations to your study (if any) and how future researchers could approach your topic

Your final submission for Part 2 of this assignment will include the Introduction and Literature Review from Part 1, the revised Method and Results sections, and the newly created Discussion and Conclusion Sections. You must also submit the appendix materials for Part 2 (recordings, transcriptions, coding document).

This project is intended to provide you with a completed mixed methods digital communication research document that you can add to your professional portfolio of skills and outputs.

Deadlines for Research Project Part 2

Due 11/13 at 11:00 PM EST

Point Values

Assignment	Point Value
Lecture Response Post (LRP) 10 pts. each	120
Facebook Challenges 10 pts. each	80
Mini Research Assignments (MRA) (4)	100
Live Meetings (4)	20
Research Project Part 1	90
Research Project Part 2	90
Total Points	**500**

Feedback

One of the most important ways that professors can interact with their students is through feedback on assignments. You can expect to receive very specific, constructive feedback on your work to include discussion posts and major assignments. In some instances, I will provide track changes documents to assist students with writing skills to improve their work. As a general rule, you should receive your scores and feedback on submitted posts within 5-7 days. More time is required to complete the grading process for major assignments and will be dependent upon the number of students enrolled in the course.

Modules

Module/Week	Topics	Assignments
Module 1, 8/22-8/28 Course Overview	Introduction to the Course and Syllabus, Social Media and Research	Lecture Response Post (LRP)
Module 2, 8/29-9/4	Introduction to Research; Topic Selection and Research Questions; The Literature Review	LRP, Research Topic Email due 9/4, FB Challenge 1
Quantitative Research Methods		
Module 3, 9/5-9/11	Overview of Quantitative Research, What is Data?	LRP, MRA, Live Meeting (Individual)*, FB Challenge 2
Module 4, 9/12-9/18	Content Analysis	LRP, FB Challenge 3
Module 5, 9/19-9/25	Survey, Statistical Analysis	LRP, MRA, FB Challenge 4
Module 6, 9/26-10/2	Experimentation	LRP, Live Meeting (Group)* Research Project Part 1 DUE 10/2
Qualitative Research Methods		
Module 7, 10/3-10/9	Overview of Qualitative Research	LRP, FB Challenge 5
Module 8, 10/10-10/16	Interview	LRP, MRA, Live Meeting (Individual)*, FB Challenge 6
Module 9, 10/17-10/23	Focus Group, Qualitative Coding Methods	LRP, FB Challenge 7
Module 10, 10/24-10/30	Observation & Ethnography	LRP, MRA, FB Challenge 8

Module 11, 10/31-11/6	Mixed Methods, Reporting Results	LRP, Live Meeting (Group)*, FB Challenge 9
Module 12, 11/7-11/13	Research Ethics and Course Review	LRP, Research Project Part 2 DUE 11/13

*Live Meetings are TBD and will occur approximately during these weeks, subject to change at the instructor's discretion

Grading Scale

A	92.5-100	463-500
A-	89.5-92.4	448-462
B+	86.5-89.4	433-447
B	82.5-86.4	413-432
B-	79.5-82.4	398-412
C+	76.5-79.4	383-397
C	72.5-76.4	363-382
C-	69.5-72.4	348-362
D+	66.5-69.4	333-347
D	62.5-66.4	313-332
D-	59.5-62.4	298-312
E	59.4 and Below	0-297

University Graduate Level Grading Policy: http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/
Grades for this graduate course will be based on the total points earned over the term.

Course Policies

▪ Student Effort
As with any course, students will benefit from their own effort in learning the class materials and participating fully in activities, group work, readings, etc. Student grades are often a good reflection of their attitudes and motivations in coursework.

▪ Professionalism
Students are expected to maintain the appropriate level of professionalism, cooperation, and language in all aspects of this course including, but not limited to, weekly posts and responses to said posts, written assignments, presentations, and interactions with the instructor and colleagues. Students should also incorporate suitable standards for grammar, spelling, and word choice. Please see the Online

Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue for a refresher if necessary:
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/.

▪ Deadlines
Follow all deadlines as printed in the course syllabus and weekly modules. Late work may or may not be accepted at the discretion of the instructor.

Students should utilize time management skills when completing assignments, particularly when dealing with other concerns present in daily life (jobs, children, other commitments, etc.). Students are strongly encouraged to work ahead of schedule to avoid missed deadlines, particularly in the case of final assignments.

▪ Communication
If students have questions or concerns they are encouraged to communicate with the instructor via email or Skype. Please allow 48 hours for email responses or to schedule a Skype appointment unless otherwise indicated throughout the semester.

▪ University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities:
Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.
Students with Disabilities who may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to notify the instructor and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) so that reasonable accommodations may be implemented. DRC is located in room 001 in Reid Hall or you can contact them by phone at 352-392-8565. University counseling services and mental health services:

▪ Netiquette: Communication Courtesy
All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats. See the link below for more details on exercising proper netiquette in this course.

http://teach.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/NetiquetteGuideforOnlineCourses.pdf

▪ Getting Help:
For issues with technical difficulties for E-learning in Canvas, please contact the UF Help Desk at:

● Learning-support@ufl.edu
● (352) 392-HELP - select option 2
● https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml

** Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues MUST be accompanied by the ticket number received from LSS when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You MUST e-mail your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

Other resources are available at http://www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help for:
- Counseling and Wellness resources
  o http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx
  o 352-392-1575
- Disability resources
- Resources for handling student concerns and complaints
- Library Help Desk support

Should you have any complaints with your experience in this course please visit http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaints to submit a complaint.

▪ Course Evaluation
Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at https://evaluations.ufl.edu
Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results

▪ University Policy on Academic Misconduct
Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php.

Students are expected to adhere to the University of Florida Code of Conduct https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code

If you have additional questions, please refer to the Online Graduate Program Student Handbook you received when you were admitted into the Program.

The University of Florida Honor Code was voted on and passed by the Student Body in the Fall 1995 semester. The Honor Code reads as follows:

Preamble: In adopting this Honor Code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. A student-run Honor Court and faculty support are crucial to the success of the Honor Code. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon the community acceptance and enforcement of the Honor Code.

The Honor Code: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity."

On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied:

"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

For more information about academic honesty, contact Student Judicial Affairs, P202 **Peabody Hall, 352-392-1261.**

- Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when an individual presents the ideas or expressions of another as his or her own. Students must always credit others' ideas with accurate citations and must use quotation marks and citations when presenting the words of others. A thorough understanding of plagiarism is a precondition for admittance to graduate studies in the college.

You are responsible for knowing the definition of plagiarism and various kinds of academic dishonesty. Ignorance, i.e. "I didn't realize that was plagiarism" is not an acceptable response, and will not excuse you from academic dishonesty violations, if discovered. While you are responsible for reading and understanding UF's policy in its entirety, examples of academic dishonesty include:

- o Using phrases or quotes from another source without proper attribution or quotation marks
  - For purposes of this class, five or more words (verbatim) from a source without proper attribution or quotation marks will be considered plagiarism.
- o Paraphrasing without proper attribution
- o "Forgetting" to source material you use (same as above, intentional or not)
- o Passing off others' ideas as your own
- o Turning in the same assignment or paper for two courses, i.e. "dual submission."
- o Stealing and/or copying other students' work, whether on a test or assignment
- o Bribery
- o Fabrication of material

If you have any questions about plagiarism, or how to properly cite or attribute sources, please ask. I am always happy to show you how to correctly do this in your scholarly work.

Cheating: Cheating occurs when a student circumvents or ignores the rules that govern an academic assignment such as an exam or class paper. It can include using notes, in physical or electronic form, in an exam, submitting the work of another as one's own, or reusing a paper a student has composed for one class in another class. If a student is not sure about the rules that govern an assignment, it is the student's responsibility to ask for clarification from his instructor.

Misrepresenting Research Data: The integrity of data in mass communication research is a paramount issue for advancing knowledge and the credibility of our professions. For this reason any intentional misrepresentation of data, or misrepresentation of the conditions or circumstances of data collection, is considered a violation of academic integrity.

Any violation of the above stated conditions is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program and will result in revocation of the degree if the degree previously has been awarded.