

# Course Syllabus

## Social Media in Journalism

Wednesdays  
6:15 p.m. - 7:05 p.m. ET (Period 11)  
1090 Weimer Hall

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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**Office Hours:** Via Zoom by appointment.

I am available for questions through email (CANVAS messaging/email can be faulty at times). Emails will typically be answered within 24 to 48 hours, excluding weekends.

If you have technical issues, please contact the UF Helpdesk at [352-392-4357](tel:352-392-4357) or at [UF Help Desk online](#).

### Course Description

Social media continues to be the largest segment of online usage. The attention economy it creates and its users demand creates unique challenges for organizations and businesses to share their content in meaningful ways.

This course will look at the ways social media can be used to reach audiences - how to communicate stories, plan sustainable strategies, and measure the outcomes and use of content. We'll discuss ethics and best practices in reaching those audiences and in how to handle crisis communications, trolls, and misinformation.

### Course Objectives

In this course, you will:

1. Study and analyze social media accounts of news organizations, brands, organizations and public figures.
2. Create and critique social media posts.
3. Learn about goal setting voice and tone.
4. Learn about social media listening and measuring results of social media work analytics.
5. Develop a framework for managing the ethical implications of using social media

6. Attain social media certification from HubSpot.

## Course Requirements

### Course Reading

Please read this entire document during the first week of the semester. If anything is not clear to you, ask me for clarification before the last day of Drop/Add (January 12, 2024). Please make sure to check the course Canvas site at least once per week in case there is a change in the schedule or other announcements.

### Textbooks and Readings

Our primary text for the class will be [Fundamentals of Social Content Strategy](#) by Liz Gross. This eBook is available for free; you can download the book using the link above.

You will also have regular readings from journals, articles and websites. These will be linked in Canvas. There is no fee for these materials. Some might require students to log into the library with the UF VPN.

### Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.

### Technology Requirements

- **You'll need a mobile device and reliable internet access.** This can get expensive, and I respect your financial situation. However, this is a web-based class, and learning to publish from these devices is a huge part of the class and your future as digital creators.
- **Social media account.** During this course, students will be required to use a social media platform of their choice based on their social media strategy planning assignment. Several graded assignments will require the use of this account. You will need to add the social media application to your mobile device. Students may create accounts under pseudonyms if they are uncomfortable using their own names.
- The best way to become familiar and comfortable in a social environment is with immersion. **The time you spend online during this class should be time to read, interact, play and create.** Always use the opportunity to learn and grow. The time you spend on social media during this class should be considered an investment in your future, but personally and professionally.

## Course Assignments

A large amount of classwork will occur out of class time. You can complete this work as your schedule permits. *Assignments will be listed and LINKED on the Course Schedule page. Deadlines will be provided in Canvas.*

Journalism – and social media – is a deadline business. Assignments are due by their assigned dates. I will deduct 10% from the overall score for anything turned in 24 hours after the deadline; anything received 24 hours after the deadline will not be graded unless you've contacted me in advance to let me know there will be a delay. If an illness or a personal emergency will prevent you from completing an assignment on time, please contact me in advance of the deadline. If advance notice is not possible because of a genuine emergency, written documentation will be required. I am always available if you have a question or concern.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Assignment deadlines in Canvas are usually set for 11:59 p.m. If you submit after the deadline, your assignment is marked as late. It is common to miss deadlines like this if you wait to the last minute – wi-fi fails, computers crash, power goes out. Please do not wait until the last minute to turn in an assignment. I am happy to look over any draft of your assignments prior to posting or sending it for the deadline. I am available to review drafts up to 48 hours prior to a deadline.

- **Presence and Participation – 20%**

Participation is expected. You will be expected to demonstrate that you are thinking about the issues by asking questions, offering your own opinions and sharing justifications for those opinions, participating in class debates, and keeping your eyes and ears open for current events you can share that may relate to class discussions. Please be respectful of the contributions of others and help create a class environment that is welcoming and inclusive. In addition to reading these materials, please get in the habit of paying attention to developments in social media. You may be called on to share things you uncover in your independent readings.

Absences due to illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements, etc., will be handled in accordance with UF policies; see Course Policies section of this syllabus.

- **Readings and Assignments – 40%**

There will be assigned readings for classes. Be sure to read all assigned material and be prepared to discuss it before you come to class. Discussion is an integral part of this course: you will be asked to comment on the readings and to discuss your thoughts about them, both in our online discussions and in class. Please be respectful of the contributions of others and help create a class environment that is welcoming and inclusive.

- **HubSpot Accreditation – 20%**

HubSpot, an inbound marketing company, provides an online social media certification and is considered an industry standard. This online module takes approximately four hours and 15 minutes to complete. Students will be expected to [complete the online certification process](#)[Links to an external site.](#)

- **Final Reports – 20%**

Throughout the semester, you will create and curate content for a topic of your selection on your class social media channels. In addition, you will write blog posts on these topics on a WordPress site that you will create for the class. You will use your social channels to promote these blog posts and track the traffic that comes to that you on those social media channels.

## Grading Policy

Each assignment is worth a set percent of the final grade. Completion of each assignment and submission by the deadline earns the points for that assignment. Assignments must be received by the final day of class to be applied unless prior authorization has been given for an incomplete.

## Questions about Grades

If you would like to ask about a grade, please make an appointment to meet with me outside of class time, as I will not discuss grades during class. If you have a question or concern about a grade on a quiz or assignment, you have 48 hours to contact me after the grade is returned to you. Questions or appeals must be made in writing and sent via email within the stated time frame.

If you are concerned about your overall grade, please contact me or come to my office hours to discuss. Meeting with me early can often help both of us find ways to improve understanding and quality of work.

## Course Grading Policy

### Graded Assessments

| Graded Assessments                          | Due Date                | Percent |
|---|-------------------------|---------|
| Attendance, in-class and online discussions | In class                | 10%     |
| Weekly assignments                          | Each week before class  | 20%     |
| <a href="#">14 Day Photo/Video Essay</a>    | October 16              | 20%     |
| <a href="#">HubSpot Accreditation</a>       | November 20             | 10%     |
| Social Media Campaign                       | November 13             | 25%     |
| Final Presentations                         | November 21, December 5 | 15%     |

## Grading Scale

### Grading Scale

| Percent | Grade | Grade Points |
|---------|-------|--------------|
| 92-100  | A     | 4.00         |
| 90-91   | A-    | 3.67         |
| 88-89   | B+    | 3.33         |
| 82-87   | B     | 3.00         |
| 80-81   | B-    | 2.67         |

## Grading Scale

| Percent | Grade | Grade Points |
|---------|-------|--------------|
| 78-79   | C+    | 2.33         |
| 72-77   | C     | 2.00         |
| 70-71   | C-    | 1.67         |
| 68-69   | D+    | 1.33         |
| 62-67   | D     | 1.00         |
| 60-61   | D-    | 0.67         |
| 0-59    | E     | 0.00         |

See the [current UF grading policies](#) for more information. If applicable, grades are rounded to a tenth of a point.

## Course Schedule Summary

*Weekly topics are subject to change. Please check the class Canvas board for updates at least weekly.*

| Week | Date | Topic  | Assignments due |
|------|------|--|-----------------|
| 1    | 1/10 | Introduction   |                 |
| 2    | 1/17 | Foundations and goal setting   | Syllabus quiz   |
| 3    | 1/24 | Tone and voice   |                 |
| 4    | 1/31 | Social media and accessibility   |                 |
| 5    | 2/7  | Community management and crisis comms  |                 |
| 6    | 2/14 | Analytics and social listening   |                 |
| 7    | 2/21 | Building an audience for news and for yourself / media polarization and politicization |                 |

| Week   | Date | Topic  | Assignments due                    |
|--------|------|--|------------------------------------|
| 8      | 2/28 | The attention economy and getting the story right    |                                    |
| 9      | 3/6  | Working in an age of fake news / trust in media      |                                    |
| 10     | 3/13 | <b>Spring Break, no class</b>                        |                                    |
| 11     | 3/20 | Citizen journalism and media literacy                |                                    |
| 12     | 3/27 | Working at scale                                     |                                    |
| 13     | 4/3  | <b>No class</b>                                      |                                    |
| 14     | 4/10 | Ethical considerations of social media and society   |                                    |
| 15     | 4/17 | Protecting oneself in social media                   | Protecting oneself in social media |
| 16     | 4/24 | Mental health and dealing with burnout               |                                    |
| Finals |      | <b>No Final Exam - HubSpot certification instead</b> |                                    |

## Course Expectations and Demeanor

### Attendance

Students are expected to show respect to one another and the instructor. Attendance and arriving on time for the class are necessary. We have a lot of subjects to cover and very limited time together. If you are absent, you are responsible for finding out about any missed material by consulting another student or by contacting your teaching team.

Because we only meet once a week, it's important to attend. I understand that life can sometimes get in the way. If you miss one class, consider it a free pass, with no questions asked. If you need to miss more than one, please contact me. If you are sick, have a serious family emergency, or have a special curricular assignment, let me know and we will handle it in line with [UF Attendance Policies](#).

Points will be deducted if you miss more than one class meeting, are chronically late to class, or repeatedly show inattention. Participation in discussions is expected. At times, you will be working on assigned projects during class.

Work assigned in advance of the class should be completed as directed. Full participation in online and live discussions, group projects, and small group activities is expected.

## **Class Demeanor**

My role as an instructor is to identify critical issues related to the course, direct you to and teach relevant information, assign appropriate learning activities, create opportunities for assessing your performance, and communicate the outcomes of such assessments in a timely, informative, and professional way. Feedback is essential for you to have confidence that you have mastered the material and for me to determine that you are meeting all course requirements. At all times it is expected that you will welcome and respond professionally to assessment feedback, that you will treat your fellow students and me with respect, and that you will contribute to the success of the class as best as you can.

## **Electronic Devices**

We will be using mobile devices or computers in class. It would be hard to talk about social media any other way. Please refrain from using your phones or electronic devices for uses other than class discussions and assignments. Please give your attention to your fellow students.

## **Zoom Professionalism**

If we should move to Zoom for any reason, you are expected to have your camera on during live class meetings. If you go to black screen for a significant amount of time, points will be deducted from your attendance/participation score at the instructor's discretion. Note that the lecture portion of the class may be recorded for educational purposes only and is not to be distributed or shared. If you have extenuating circumstances or concerns about Zoom attendance, please contact me. If you want to protect the privacy of your environment or surroundings, please use a virtual background.

## **Course Policies**

### **Accommodations**

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center ([352-392-8565, UF Disability Resource Center](https://www.ufl.edu/disabilityresourcecenter/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.



## **Course Evaluations**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available on the GatorEvals' [Providing Constructive Feedback](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via the [GatorEvals](#) website. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at the [GatorEvals Public Results](#) page. More information about UF's course evaluation system can be found at the [GatorEvals Faculty Evaluations](#) website.

## **COVID Considerations**

Your health and safety are the main priority. We will follow all University policies for COVID-19 and some of those policies may differ based on one's vaccination status. If you are not cleared for campus, you are not permitted on campus grounds. In this instance, I will only engage with you virtually via zoom, phone, email, or an alternate platform. The university strongly encourages all students, faculty, and staff to get vaccinated. Please continue to follow healthy habits, including best practices like frequent hand washing.

If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, please use the [UF Health Screen, Test & Protect website](#) and follow the instructions on whether you are able to attend class.

## **Honesty, Integrity and Ethics**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. 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." The Honor Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. Student conflict and conflict resolutions guidelines can be found in [Student Conduct Code](#). If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TA in this class.

All students in this class are expected to adhere to the ethical guidelines and principles of journalism. Some useful resources can be found at [SPJ Code of Ethics – Society of Professional](#)

[Journalists](#) and [Code of Ethics | NPPA](#). If you have an ethical dilemma, seek advice from the faculty.

Make sure that what you write, shoot, and edit is your own work. Plagiarism is cheating. Using someone's intellectual property without their permission or attribution is an egregious violation of journalism ethics and principles, one in which you will lose your job and possibly your career. If you incorporate music, sound, still images, video, or written words in your work that is not produced by you and you alone, you MUST receive permission to use the material and give appropriate credit. What is not yours should be fully cited. In documenting sources you can use either APA or MLA formatting. If you have questions or concerns about using a particular photograph, video clip or piece of music or sound, please come talk to me BEFORE using it in your blog stories. Any attempt to pass off another person's work as your own will result in a failing grade and your violation will be reported to the Dean of Students office.

We will have assignments during the year that will utilize Chat GPT or similar AI programs. For these assignments, I will ask for you to identify the content that is generated by those programs versus the content that you write.

### **Inclusion, Diversity and Equity**

The University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications Department of Journalism embraces a commitment toward an intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along with a number of dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, class and religion. We expect each of our journalism courses to help foster an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.

It is my goal that all students be well-served by this course and that the materials and activities that are presented are respectful of our diversity. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

If something is said or done in the classroom that is troubling or causes you discomfort, please let me know. In this situation, there are several ways to alleviate some of the discomforts or hurt you may experience:

1. Discuss the situation privately with me. I am always open to listening to students' experiences and want to work with students to find acceptable ways to process and address the issue.

2. Discuss the situation with the class. Discussion enhances the ability for all class participants to have a fuller understanding of the context and impact of course material and class discussions.
3. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable discussing the issue directly with me, please reach out to another venue to address the issue, such as your academic adviser or a trusted faculty member. Joanna Hernandez, the CJC director of inclusion and diversity, is an excellent resource. You can email her at [jhernandez@jou.ufl.edu](mailto:jhernandez@jou.ufl.edu).

## **Recording of Classes**

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

## **Students online course evaluation**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email

they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via [ufl.bluera.com/ufl](http://ufl.bluera.com/ufl).

- [Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner](#)
- [Summaries of course evaluation results](#)

## Getting Help

### Technical Difficulties

For help with technical issues or difficulties with Canvas, please contact the UF Computing Help Desk at:

- [helpdesk.ufl.edu](http://helpdesk.ufl.edu)
- [352-392-HELP \(4357\)](tel:352-392-4357)
- Walk-in: HUB 132

Any requests for make-ups (assignments, exams, etc.) due to technical issues should be accompanied by the ticket number received from the UF Computing Help Desk when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You should email your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

### Health and Wellness

- **U Matter, We Care:** If you or someone you know is in distress, please email [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), call [352-392-1575](tel:352-392-1575), or visit [U Matter We Care](#) to refer or report a concern, and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- **Counseling and Wellness Center:** Visit the [UF Counseling & Wellness Center](#) website or call [352-392-1575](tel:352-392-1575) for information on crisis services and non-crisis services.
- **Student Health Care Center:** Call [352-392-1161](tel:352-392-1161) for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the [UF Student Health Care Center](#) website.
- **University Police Department:** Visit the [UF Police Department](#) website or call [352-392-1111](tel:352-392-1111) (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

- **UF Health Shands Emergency Room/Trauma Center:** For immediate medical care in Gainesville, call [352-733-0111](tel:352-733-0111), or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the [UF Health Shands Emergency Room/Trauma Center](#) website.

## Academic and Student Support

- **Career Connections Center:** For career assistance and counseling services, visit the [UF Career Connections Center](#) website or call [352-392-1601](tel:352-392-1601).
- **Library Support:** For various ways to receive assistance concerning using the libraries or finding resources, visit the [UF George A. Smathers Libraries Ask-A-Librarian](#) website.
- **Teaching Center:** For general study skills and tutoring, visit the [UF Teaching Center](#) website or call [352-392-2010](tel:352-392-2010).
- **Writing Studio:** For help with brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers, visit the [University Writing Program Writing Studio](#) website or call [352-846-1138](tel:352-846-1138).