

MMC 5427

Research Methods in Digital Communication

University of Florida, Online Masters in Digital Media

Instructor: Andrew Selepak, PhD

Email: aselepak@ufl.edu

Office: 3053 Weimer Hall

Course time: Wednesday 6:00 – 9:00

What you will learn

This course is designed to make you think strategically about how, why and with whom you interact via digital media. By the end of the course you should have a fundamental understanding of research tools that will help you both plan for and evaluate the effectiveness of online communications methods including a multitude of social media and web tools. Specifically, you will understand Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and the consequences – costs and benefits -- of local and global messaging and interactivity.

Expectations

Attend class lectures, complete assignments on time, produce class presentations, and participate in online class discussions.

Assignments

Students will produce weekly blog posts based on course readings and comment on blog posts by other students. In addition to the blogs, students will be responsible for leading two discussion sessions during the term and write and present a research proposal with a specific focus on in-depth evaluation of an online interactive medium of their choosing. Late work will not be accepted.

Requirements

You must be prepared to create a WordPress blog for this course. Your blog will serve as a personal introspective on the work covered each week. You will be provided instruction on how to set up the blog. There is no cost associated with creating a WordPress page.

Readings will be assigned weekly. The posted readings should be read by for the day listed on the syllabus and not as homework for the following class. Students will be responsible to check the course website (Sakai) weekly for assigned readings which will be included on the syllabus. A total of 13 of our 15 weeks of class have assigned readings. As much as 40% of your grade will be based on your readings to post blog comments about and to comment on the posts of other members of the class.

Recommended books:

1. American Psychological Association (2009), *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6th edition, Washington, DC: APA.

Grading

Your work will be evaluated according to this distribution:

- Class attendance and participation in class discussions: 10%
- Weekly blog posts: 25%
- Weekly blog comments: 15%
- Discussion leader presentations: 20% (10% each)
- Final paper: 30%

Class Discussion:

A portion of our class time will be spent in discussion. In addition, you may be called on during class about the topic being discussed. Completing the readings and paying attention during the online discussions will be crucial in being able to participate fully. This should be the easiest to complete portion of your grade as you should all be interested in the topic and want to engage in discussions on the topics.

Weekly Blog Post:

You are expected to write a weekly blog post or “thought paper” (approx. 250-500 words based on the readings or topics assigned each week). Blog posts will be due by noon each Monday throughout the term.

Blog posts should provide a short summary of the readings, your analysis or insight, an example of the technology or method discussed and at least two questions you had based on the reading. Questions should be included as a means to demonstrate how you believe the topic could have been expanded or where you believe the reading did not fully cover a given issue. These questions will also be used to provide classmates ideas for comments they may post in response to your blog. Please follow appropriate netiquette rules.

You must be prepared to create a WordPress blog for the purposes of this course. If you do not already have a WordPress account, you can create one by going to <http://wordpress.com/>. Step-by-step instructions on how to create your blog are provided on their site. These should be set up by week TWO and you should inform the instructor of your WordPress site name.

Be sure to allow comments when you create your blog.

Weekly blog posts are awarded points of 0 -100 according to levels of completion:

- 100 points: Completed task fully and on time and demonstrates an understanding of the reading and not simply a summary of what was read. It is your job to take the information and apply it to a real-world situation.
- 75 points: Blog did not fulfill word requirements or merely summarized the readings but did not advance the material
- 50 points: Blog post was posted late and did not demonstrate any evaluation of the readings
- 0 points: No blog post listed

Weekly Blog Comments

Blog posts seem pointless if no one is reading them, and blog comments show a blogger that someone is paying attention. Thus each week you will be asked to comment on three posts by fellow students. Each comment of substance is valued as a completed response. To be counted, a comment must appear on the other student's blog by 4 p.m. on the Friday in the week assigned. No more than three comments will be counted in any single week.

Students will be required to read and comment on at least 3 posts of their classmates on their blogs. Comments must add something of value to the conversation thread (be thought provoking). You have the week to read and comment on the posts of the other members of the class. The instructor will evaluate the degree to which your posts add to the conversation and not done simply to fulfill the grade requirement.

Weekly blog comments will be awarded points of 0 – 100.

Grading For Blog Posts

Weekly blog posts are awarded points according to levels of completion:

- 100 points: Completed task fully and on time of three posts on other student's blogs that add substance to the discussion.
- 66 points: Two completed blog comments on other student's blogs that add substance to the discussion.
- 33 points: One completed blog comment on other student's blogs that add substance to the discussion.
- 0 points: No blog comments posted or the comments posted do not add to the discussion.

The grading here is partially subjective on the part of the instructor. While you may comment on the original post made by one of the students in the class, you may also feel compelled to react to a blog comment made by another student which could further the discussion.

Discussion Leaders:

Each student will lead a class discussion by preparing a 50-minute presentation on the topic scheduled for class that day. Students will sign up for which week they will lead at the beginning of the term. As discussion leader, students should prepare to engage thought and debate about the topic having read through the materials and identified additional examples of the topic to share. These examples can be relevant Web sites, blogs, social media influencers, or magazine/newspaper articles about the topic.

This is not an opportunity to simply summarize the readings. Everyone in the class will already have done the readings and made blog posts about them. Use the readings as a starting off point on the topic. As little as 10 minutes of your presentation should be about the readings, 30-minutes should be based on new material you provide to the class based on readings you find, and you should leave 10-minutes for Q&A.

The easiest way to present your class discussion will be through a PowerPoint.

PowerPoint tips:

- The most boring presentations use only words and involve the presenter reading the words aloud. Instead, use relatively few words and discuss the material. In addition, offer visuals (pictures, graphics, charts, etc.)
- Use the PowerPoint default for type size, which is usually 32-point. That keeps the slides readable and ensures that you use fewer words.
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A typical presenter takes about two minutes per slide.

Discussion Date, Topic And Discussion Leader

August 29 th	Interactive media use	
September 5 th	Search Engine Optimization	
September 12 th	Web analytics	
September 19 th	Online surveys	
September 26 th	Customer Relationship Management	
October 3 rd	Digital ethnography	
October 3 rd	Second Life	
October 10 th	Mobile analytics	
October 17 th	Reputation management	
October 24 th	Crowdsourcing	
October 31 st	Eye tracking	
November 7 th	Message testing	
November 14 th	Aggregators	
November 28 th	Data security	

Final Paper:

Each student will prepare a final research proposal paper in APA style (if you are unfamiliar with APA style please see the APA Style Book). The final paper will be a research proposal that will include an introduction, a literature review, and a proposed research method for measuring effectiveness of an interactive medium of your choice. This could serve as the catalyst for the method you will choose for your final project/thesis for the program. The proposal paper is not a final research project, but provides clear understanding of the method you would choose to answer a research question or organizational issue and a proposal of how you would do it. Final papers should be between 12-15 pages without a title page and references.

By week Seven you should email a one to two page summary of your projected research proposal to the instructor to demonstrate you have begun working on the paper and that you are on the right path toward completion.

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.

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>.

****Netiquette: Communication Courtesy:**

All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats. [Describe what is expected and what will occur as a result of improper behavior]

<http://teach.ufl.edu/docs/NetiquetteGuideforOnlineCourses.pdf>

Getting Help:

For issues with technical difficulties for E-learning in Sakai, 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
- 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.

Schedule

WEEK ONE – 8/22

- Introduction and overview of research tools for digital media
- Introduction to Social Media: Why they matter and what you need to know about their impact on our influence– Blogs, wikis, tweets, podcasts, social networks, apps, bookmarking

WEEK TWO – 8/29

- Identifying goals and objectives of interactive media use
- Understanding and developing target audiences/online communities, both internal and external

READ

- <http://www.qscores.com/Web/Brands.aspx>
- http://www.comscore.com/Press_Events/Press_Releases/2012/1/comScore_Rel_eases_Report_Next_Generation_Strategies_for_Advertising_to_Millennials

Download whitepaper at

http://www.comscore.com/Press_Events/Presentations_Whitepapers/2012/Next_Generation_Strategies_for_Advertising_to_Millennials

You must have your WordPress blog set up by Week Two (8/29). You will already have readings due by this date and need to have completed your first blog post by 8/27.

Your first blog comments will be due by 8/31.

WEEK THREE – 9/5

- Search Engine Optimization (SEO) – Understanding who you want or need to reach and how to target them using optimization tools.

READ

- <http://www.whichmvt.com/>
- [Google Webmaster Guidelines](#)
- <http://www.anvilmediainc.com/search-engine-marketing-resources/search-engine-marketing-glossary>

RECOMMENDED READING:

- Unbounce Blog <http://unbounce.com/blog/>
- Marketing Experiments http://www.meclabs.com/marketing_experiments
- Internet Retailer <http://www.internetretailer.com/>
- The UX of Search <http://www.slideshare.net/gaijinstu/the-ux-of-search-1898939>
- Beyond Search. The Gilbane Group <http://gilbane.com/beyond-search.html>
- SEOmoz <http://SEOMoz.org>
- Search Engine Land <http://SearchEngineLand.com>

WEEK FOUR – 9/12

- Web analytics (i.e. Google Analytics, Omniture, etc.)
- Measuring, collecting, analyzing and reporting Internet data for the purposes of understanding and optimizing Web usage.

READ:

- [Google 101: How Google crawls, indexes and serves the web.](#)

WEEK FIVE – 9/19

Using online surveys for both formative and evaluative research

- Survey Monkey
- OpinionLab
- Qualtrics

READ:

Find an article from an academic peer-reviewed journal from your area of interest that features online survey methodology and summarize what you learned in your blog. Also, familiarize yourself with <http://www.surveymonkey.com/>, <http://www.opinionlab.com/> and <http://www.qualtrics.com/>. Identify one service, register for the free trial and explore how you might use one of these programs to answer a research question you may be considering. Blog about your experience.

WEEK SIX – 9/26

- User testing and social analytics/scores (Customer Relationship Management (CRM)): Looking beyond “likes” and “friends” as measurements of satisfaction

READ:

- <http://googleanalyticstutorials.com/>
- <http://hootsuite.com/features/custom-analytics>
- <http://mashable.com/2012/05/05/adobe-digital-selves/>
- <http://mashable.com/2012/03/28/google-adobe-social-media/#55495Google-AnalyticsConversions-1>
- <http://www2012.org/proceedings/companion/p1221.pdf>
- http://www.americanbanker.com/btn/24_6/social-crm-tough-worthy-goal-1038025-1.html

WEEK SEVEN – 10/3

- Digital ethnography – Conducting in-depth research of digital cultures using Second Life online 3D virtual world as a case study

READ:

- Boelstorff, T. (2008), Coming of Age in Second Life, Chapter 1 available online at <http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/s8647.pdf>
- Davis, D. (in press), forthcoming (will be provided via email).

TO DO:

Create an account (free) in Second Life by going to Secondlife.com and spend at least 2-4 hours orienting yourself to the space including learning to move, fly, alter your appearance and communicate. As part of your blog post, you may want to include your experience using Second Life.

WEEK EIGHT – 10/10

- Mobile analytics – Using mobile applications and sites and how they differ in use and analysis

READ

- http://www.cisco.com/en/US/solutions/collateral/ns341/ns525/ns537/ns705/ns827/white_paper_c11-520862.html

- <http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/linking-consumers-to-your-cause-with-qr-codes.html>
- <http://techcrunch.com/2012/03/27/apsalar-user-segments/>
<https://springerlink3.metapress.com/content/e825158r40844315/fulltext.pdf>

WEEK NINE – 10/17

- Reputation management and environmental scanning – have you “Googled” yourself?

READ

- <http://www.adweek.com/news/technology/data-points-social-faux-pas-142062>
- Bunting, M., Lipski, R (2000), Drowned out? Rethinking corporate reputation management for the Internet. *Journal of Communication Management* 5. 2 (2000): 170-178
- Dellarocas, C. (2010). Online Reputation Systems: How to Design One That Does What You Need *MIT Sloan Management Review* 51. 3 (Spring 2010): 33-37.
- PR Newswire,
http://content.prnewswire.com/documents/WP_Amplifying_Your_Social_Echo.pdf

WEEK TEN – 10/24

- Crowdsourcing - Harnessing the power of online communities using mashups to create measurable change

READ:

- WIRED, The Rise of Crowdsourcing, online at
<http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/14.06/crowds.html>
- IBM’s “Jamming for a Smarter Planet” available at
http://download.boulder.ibm.com/ibmdl/pub/software/dw/university/smartplanet/Jam_Report2009.pdf
- K. Muthukumaraswamy (2010) WHEN THE MEDIA MEET CROWDS OF WISDOM: How journalists are tapping into audience expertise and manpower for the processes of newsgathering *Journalism Practice*. 4(1). Preprint version available online at:
<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a913393999>
- Optional reading (for those interested in public relations): DiStasco, M. (2012) Measuring Public Relations Wikipedia Engagement: How Bright is the Rule? Available online at
<http://www.prsa.org/intelligence/prjournal/documents/2012distaso.pdf>

WEEK ELEVEN – 10/31

- Mapping effective design with eye tracking and click tracking technologies

READ:

- <http://www.poynter.org/extra/Eyetrack/> (read through each of the links with careful consideration of “Key Findings”)
- Poynter eyetracking history at <http://www.poynter.org/extra/Eyetrack/previous.html>
- Bazar, N. and Brigham, F. (2007) Eye tracking technology: An introduction, available online at http://www.noblis.org/NewsPublications/Publications/TechnicalPublications/TelecommunicationsReview/Documents/TR2007_06_Bazar.pdf
- Download the free whitepaper, Eye Tracking and Click Mapping Google Places, available online at http://results.mediative.ca/Mediative_White-Paper-Eye-Tracking-and-Click-Mapping-Google-Places.html

WEEK TWELVE – 11/7

- Message testing – How do you know who’s reading your online media and how are they reacting to what you say? An exploration of multicultural perspectives.

READ:

- Jordan, A., Piotrowski, J.T., Bleakley, A., & Mallya, G. (2012). Developing media interventions to reduce household sugar-sweetened beverage consumption. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 640(1), 118-135.
- Mazaheri, E., Richard, M., and Laroche, M. (2011). Online consumer behavior: Comparing Canadian and Chinese website visitors. *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 64, Issue 9, September 2011, Pages 958–965

WEEK THIRTEEN – 11/14

- Using information aggregators as information sources – what or who can you trust?

READ:

- <http://www.iab.net/media/file/FromInformationToAudiences-AWinterberryGroupWhitePaper-January2012.pdf>

WEEK FOURTEEN – 11/21

Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class

WEEK FIFTEEN – 11/28

- Data security, privacy and ethical issues of collecting data online.

READ:

- <http://mashable.com/2012/04/08/employer-facebook-password/>, <http://verdict.justia.com/2012/03/27/can-employers-legally-ask-you-for-your-facebook-password-when-you-apply-for-a-job> (including the links to the cases)
- Shilton, K, Burke, J., Estrin, D., Govindan, R., Hansen, M., Kang, J. and Mun, M., Designing the Personal Data Stream: Enabling Participatory Privacy in Mobile Personal Sensing (August 15, 2009). TPRC 2009. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1999839> and scan the Department of Commerce “Commercial data privacy and innovation in the Internet economy: A dynamic policy framework.”

WEEK SIXTEEN – 12/5

- Final presentations
- Students will present their research proposals to the class

Disclaimer:

This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.