

# MMC 5427

## Research Methods in Digital Communication

University of Florida, Online Masters in Social Media  
3 Credit Hours

**Instructor: Donna Davis, PhD**

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Office: The metaverse

Virtual Office Hours: Mondays at noon and by appointment

Course Website: <http://lss.at.ufl.edu>

### 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 develop a better understanding of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and the consequences – costs and benefits -- of local and global messaging and interactivity.

### Expectations

Complete assignments on time, produce class presentations, watch and commentate on class lectures, participate in online class discussions, and complete research proposal.

### Assignments

Students will produce weekly blog posts based on course readings and comment on blog posts by other students. In addition to the blog, each student will be responsible for leading two discussion sessions during the term and will conclude by writing a research proposal with a specific focus on in-depth evaluation of an online interactive medium of your choosing. Students will be required attend lectures and interact during the lectures. Late work will not be accepted.

### Requirements

You must be prepared to create a WordPress account for this course if you do not already have one. You will be invited to join the [OnlineResearchMethods.wordpress.com](http://OnlineResearchMethods.wordpress.com) blog as an author. Your posts will serve as a personal introspective on the work/readings covered each week. There is no cost associated with creating a WordPress account.

Readings will be assigned weekly. The posted readings should be read for the week 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 11 of our 12 weeks of class have assigned

readings. As much as 35% of your grade will be based on your readings to post blog comments about and to comment on the posts by other members of the class.

### **Recommended books:**

1. American Psychological Association (2009), *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6<sup>th</sup> 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: 10%
- Discussion leader presentations: 25% (12.5% each)
- Final paper: 30%

### **Class Participant & 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. As there is no way to participate in discussion without attending the online class time, any unexcused absence will cause a 10-point deduction in your overall participation and discussion grade.

### **Weekly Blog Post:**

You are expected to write a weekly blog post or abbreviated “thought paper” (approx. 250-300 words based on the readings or topics assigned each week) on our class blog at <http://OnlineResearchMethods.wordpress.com>. Blog posts will be due by noon each Monday throughout the term of the week the readings are assigned.

Blog posts should provide a short summary of the readings, but more importantly, your analysis or insight on the readings, as well as an example of the technology or method discussed. You should also include at least **two questions** 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 write in response to your blog post. Please follow appropriate netiquette rules. Your posts should discuss **ALL** the readings assigned to demonstrate you have completed the assigned readings.

Your classmates will comment on your blog post and you will comment on theirs. For full credit, you are expected to respond to every comment made on your blog post. Only

if no students post reactions to your blog post are you are not required to make any additional comments.

Your WordPress accounts should be set up by week TWO and you should inform the instructor of the email addressed used to set up your WordPress account in order to be added to the class 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. Should cover the readings assigned and pose at least two questions to classmates, and respond to their posts in reaction to what you have written.
- 90 points: No questions were posed to your classmates, but otherwise satisfied the objectives of the assignment OR questions were posed, but your responses to your classmates' posts were not made.
- 75 points: Blog did not fulfill word requirements (250-300 words) or merely summarized the readings but did not advance the material. Going over the word count is equally penalized as going under.
- 50 points: Blog post was posted late and did not demonstrate any evaluation of the readings OR post did not include at least two questions AND did not cover all 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 **two** 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 two comments will be counted in any single week.

Students will be required to read and comment on at least 2 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. Remember, blog posts are due on Mondays and you have until Friday to comment on these posts.

To allow for a greater discussion on the blog posts, you will be required to check the comments made on your blog and respond back to them. In other words, you will comment on the comments made on your post as part of your **Weekly Blog Post** grade.

Weekly blog comments are awarded points of 0 -100 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 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 comment made by another student which could further the discussion.

### **Discussion Leaders:**

Each student will lead two class discussions by preparing a 50-minute presentation on the topic scheduled for class that week. Students will sign up for the weeks they will lead at the beginning of the term. You can post your presentation before the week assigned, but as this class builds on your overall knowledge level, the closer to the week assigned, the more prepared you will be.

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 websites, 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 questions and examples. The best presentations will focus on new material you bring to the presentation, specifically new social and online media sites relevant to your topic. If you include videos in your presentation, limit them to less than 10 total minutes of your presentation.

Presentations will be done live with you presenting material while on your webcam.

The easiest way to present your class discussion will be through a PowerPoint, Keynote or Prezi which should be emailed to the instructor no later than one hour before class.

### *PowerPoint tips:*

- The most boring presentations (also known as "Death by Powerpoint") use only words and involve the presenter reading the words aloud. Instead, use relatively few words and discuss the material. Present material but don't let the PowerPoint

become your entire presentation. 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.
- A typical presenter takes about two minutes per slide.
- Incorporate your area of expertise to your presentation.

### Grading For Presentations

Presentations are awarded points according to levels of completion:

- 100 points: Briefly covered readings for the week, majority of presentation on new material, incorporated visual elements into presentation, and responded to reactions from classmates to your presentation.
- 85 points: Majority of presentation only discussed week’s readings and not new material, but was engaging and incorporated visual elements, and responded to class reactions.
- 75 points: Majority of presentation only discussed week’s readings and not new material, but was engaging and incorporated visual elements, but no responses were made to classmates’ reactions.
- 65 points: Majority of presentation only discussed week’s readings and not new material, also was not engaging and did not incorporate any visual elements.
- 0 points: Did not present any material.

### Presentation Date Week, Topic And Discussion Leader

We have more topics than students. Pick the two that most interests you. Let your instructor know which topic interests you. First come, first served.

May 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Search Engine Optimization	
May 29 <sup>th</sup>	Web analytics	
June 5 <sup>th</sup>	Online surveys	
June 12 <sup>th</sup>	Social analytics	
June 19 <sup>th</sup>	Digital Ethnography	
July 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Mobile analytics	
July 10 <sup>th</sup>	Reputation management	
July 17 <sup>th</sup>	Crowdsourcing	
July 24 <sup>th</sup>	Big Data	
July 31 <sup>st</sup>	Data Security and Privacy	

### 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 use 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 SIX you should email a 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. The summary should be at least one page and include some background and your proposed area of study.

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](mailto: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

## COURSE INTRODUCTION

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- 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 including blogs, wikis, tweets, podcasts, social networks, apps, bookmarking, etc.

## COURSE SYLLABUS

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- Explanation of course requirements and assignments

## WEEK ONE – 5/15

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- 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\\_Releases\\_Report\\_Next\\_Generation\\_Strategies\\_for\\_Advertising\\_to\\_Millennials](http://www.comscore.com/Press_Events/Press_Releases/2012/1/comScore_Releases_Report_Next_Generation_Strategies_for_Advertising_to_Millennials)
- [http://www.booz.com/media/uploads/BoozCo\\_Digital-Commerce-Capabilities-Toolkit.pdf](http://www.booz.com/media/uploads/BoozCo_Digital-Commerce-Capabilities-Toolkit.pdf)

Download whitepaper at

[http://www.comscore.com/Press\\_Events/Presentations\\_Whitepapers/2012/Next\\_Generation\\_Strategies\\_for\\_Advertising\\_to\\_Millennials](http://www.comscore.com/Press_Events/Presentations_Whitepapers/2012/Next_Generation_Strategies_for_Advertising_to_Millennials)

You must have your WordPress account set up by Week Two.

**Your first blog posts will be due by noon on 5/20.**

## WEEK TWO – 5/22

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

### READ

- [Google Webmaster Guidelines](#)

- <http://www.anvilmediainc.com/search-engine-marketing-resources/search-engine-marketing-glossary>
- [The Beginners Guide to SEO](#) (This is very long, so take a look but you are not required to read all of it)

**RECOMMENDED READING (ADDITIONAL READINGS IF YOU WANT MORE INFO):**

- Unbounce Blog <http://unbounce.com/blog/>
- Marketing Experiments [http://www.meclabs.com/marketing\\_experiments](http://www.meclabs.com/marketing_experiments)
- Internet Retailer <http://www.internetretailer.com/>
- SEOmoz <http://SEOMoz.org>
- Search Engine Land <http://SearchEngineLand.com>

**WEEK THREE – 5/29**

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- Web analytics (i.e. Google Analytics)
- 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.\](#)
- [Google Analytics – social reports](#)
- [Share Your Google Analytics Data As An Infographic](#)
- Google Analytics for [WordPress](#)

**WEEK FOUR – 6/5**

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Using online surveys for both formative and evaluative research

- Survey Monkey
- OpinionLab
- Qualtrics

**READ:**

- [Online Surveys for Smart Phones](#)
- Evans, J. R., & Mathur, A. (2005). The value of online surveys. [Internet Research](#), 15(2), 195-219.

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 FIVE – 6/12**

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- 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/>
- <http://www2012.org/proceedings/companion/p1221.pdf>
- [http://www.americanbanker.com/btn/24\\_6/social-crm-tough-worthy-goal-1038025-1.html](http://www.americanbanker.com/btn/24_6/social-crm-tough-worthy-goal-1038025-1.html)

## **WEEK SIX – 6/19**

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- 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>
- Murthy, D. (2008). Digital Ethnography An Examination of the Use of New Technologies for Social Research. *Sociology*, 42(5), 837-855.
- Wiecha, J., Heyden, R., Sternthal, E., & Merialdi, M. (2010). Learning in a virtual world: experience with using second life for medical education. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 12(1).

### **TO DO:**

Create an account (free) in Second Life by going to [Secondlife.com](http://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 SEVEN – 6/26 - SUMMER BREAK**

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## WEEK EIGHT – 7/3

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- 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.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>

## WEEK NINE – 7/10

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

### READ

- <http://www.adweek.com/news/technology/data-points-social-faux-pas-142062>
- PR Newswire, [http://content.prnewswire.com/documents/WP\\_Amplifying\\_Your\\_Social\\_Echo.pdf](http://content.prnewswire.com/documents/WP_Amplifying_Your_Social_Echo.pdf)
- Zheng, W., & Jin, L. (2009). Online reputation systems in web 2.0 era. [Value Creation in E-Business Management](#), 296-306. (you may need to be logged into the UF library system to read this article if the link does not work)
- Liu, L., & Shi, W. (2010). Trust and reputation management. [Internet Computing, IEEE](#), 14(5), 10-13.

## WEEK TEN – 7/17

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- 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](http://download.boulder.ibm.com/ibmdl/pub/software/dw/university/smartplanet/Jam_Report2009.pdf)
- Poetz, M. K., & Schreier, M. (2012). The value of crowdsourcing: can users really compete with professionals in generating new product ideas?. [Journal of Product Innovation Management](#), 29(2), 245-256.

## WEEK ELEVEN – 7/24

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- Big Data – what is it and what does it mean for all of us?

### READ:

- Gantz, J., & Reinsel, D. (2012). THE DIGITAL UNIVERSE IN 2020: Big Data, Bigger Digital Shadows, and Biggest Growth in the Far East. [Technical report, IDC](#).
- [Big data](#): The next frontier for innovation, competition, and productivity

## WEEK TWELVE – 7/31

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

### READ:

- <http://verdict.justia.com/2012/03/27/can-employers-legally-ask-you-for-your-facebook-password-when-you-apply-for-a-job>
- <http://money.cnn.com/2012/12/18/technology/social/instagram-sell-photos/>
- <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203937004578078820874744076.html?mod=djemalertNEWS>
- [Supercookies: What You Need to Know About the Web's Latest Tracking Device](#)

## WEEK THIRTEEN – 8-7 FINAL PRESENTATIONS

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- Final presentations

### **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.