

# MMC 5427

## Research Methods in Digital Communication

University of Florida, Online Masters in Digital Media

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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 your 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/readings 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 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 12 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*, 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: 15%
- Discussion leader presentations: 20% (10% 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 “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, 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 post in response to your blog. Please follow appropriate netiquette rules. Your posts should discuss **ALL** the readings assigned to demonstrate you have completed the assigned readings.

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. Should cover all the readings assigned and pose at least two questions to classmates.
- 90 points: No questions were posed to your classmates, but otherwise satisfied the objectives of the assignment.
- 85 points: Not all the readings were covered in your post, but otherwise satisfied the objectives of the assignment.
- 75 points: Blog did not fulfill word requirements (250-500 words) 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 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 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. 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.

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.
- 90 points: Failed to respond to comments on blog post, but otherwise satisfied the objectives of the assignment.
- 66 points: Two completed blog comments on other student's blogs that add substance to the discussion.

- ❑ 50 points: Two completed blog comments on other student's blogs that add substance to the discussion but failed to respond to blog comments.
- ❑ 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 day. Students will sign up for the 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 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 Q&A. 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 and give the class time to watch the video before discussing.

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 which should be emailed to the instructor no later than one hour before class.

### *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. 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, and incorporated visual elements into presentation.
- 85 points: Majority of presentation only discussed week's readings and not new material, but was engaging and incorporated visual elements.
- 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 or attend class the day of presentation.

## Discussion Date, Topic And Discussion Leader

January 16 <sup>th</sup>	Interactive Media Use	
January 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Search Engine Optimization	
January 30 <sup>th</sup>	Web analytics	
February 13 <sup>th</sup>	Customer Relationship Management	
February 20 <sup>th</sup>	Digital Ethnography	
February 27 <sup>th</sup>	Mobile analytics	Maria
March 13 <sup>th</sup>	Reputation management	Maria
March 20 <sup>th</sup>	Crowdsourcing	Erin
March 27 <sup>th</sup>	Eye tracking	
April 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Message testing	
April 10 <sup>th</sup>	Aggregators	Erin
April 17 <sup>th</sup>	Big Data	

## 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 Seven you should email an Introduction 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.

An actual final paper submitted in a previous class, along with the instructor's grade comments, is available on Sakai.

#### 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

## WEEK ONE – 1/9

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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.

## WEEK TWO – 1/16

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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 blog set up by Week Two. You will need to have completed your first blog post by 1/14.

Your first blog comments will be due by 1/18.

## WEEK THREE – 1/23

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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

- <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](http://www.meclabs.com/marketing_experiments)
- Internet Retailer <http://www.internetretailer.com/>
- SEOmoz <http://SEOMoz.org>
- Search Engine Land <http://SearchEngineLand.com>

**WEEK FOUR – 1/30**

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- 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 – 2/6**

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Using online surveys for both formative and evaluative research

- Survey Monkey
- OpinionLab
- Qualtrics

**TO DO:**

Be ready to talk about a survey you have done recently (this may mean taking a survey if you have not done so recently) and we will discuss its validity and use in class.

**READ:**

Evans, J. R., & Mathur, A. (2005). The value of online surveys. *Internet Research*, 15(2), 195-219. <http://shlee.myweb.uga.edu/onlinesurvey/valueofonlinesurveys.pdf>  
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 – 2/13**

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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 SEVEN – 2/20**

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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>
- Masten, D. L., & Plowman, T. M. (2003). Digital ethnography: The next wave in understanding the consumer experience. Design Management Journal (Former Series), 14(2), 75-81.  
<http://www.dmi.org/dmi/html/interests/research/03142MAS75.pdf>

**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.

We will use Second Life in class and talk about our experience there after the lecture.

**WEEK EIGHT – 2/27**

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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>

- <http://techcrunch.com/2012/03/27/apsalar-user-segments/>  
<https://springerlink3.metapress.com/content/e825158r40844315/fulltext.pdf>

## **WEEK NINE – 3/6**

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- SPRING BREAK

## **WEEK TEN – 3/13**

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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)
- You Will Need to be logged in to the UF Library system with your GatorLink Account for the next two:
- 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.

## **WEEK ELEVEN – 3/20**

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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)
- 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 TWELVE – 3/27**

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- Mapping effective design with eye tracking and click tracking technologies

**READ:**

- Poynter eyetracking and newspapers: <http://www.poynter.org/extra/Eyetrack/previous.html>
- Poynter eyetracking and tablets: <http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/newsgathering-storytelling/visual-voice/191875/new-poynter-eyetrack-research-reveals-how-people-read-news-on-tablets/>
- 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](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](http://results.mediative.ca/Mediative_White-Paper-Eye-Tracking-and-Click-Mapping-Google-Places.html)

**WEEK THIRTEEN – 4/3**

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- 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:**

- You will need to be logged in to the UF Library system with your GatorLink Account for:
- 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 FOURTEEN – 4/10**

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

**READ:**

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

**WEEK FIFTEEN – 4/17**

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- Big Data, 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>
- 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>
- <http://money.cnn.com/2012/12/18/technology/social/instagram-sell-photos/>
- <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203937004578078820874744076.html?mod=djemalertNEWS>

**WEEK SIXTEEN – 4/24**

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- 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.